PROJECT DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE

Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers

by

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Abstract

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Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers, the book manuscript that served as an addendum to this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and for which this document presented a scholarly foundation, proposed that storytelling provides an innovative way to enter and thrive within ever-changing organizations.

Change presents a persistent challenge for organizations. Organization members consistently need to know how to adapt to and communicate about change. Accepting the premise that organizations undergo constant flux suggests that individuals within organizations can facilitate change, ease the stress of change, and help achieve organizational goals by improving the way they communicate about change. A significant challenge to maintaining stability in the face of organizational change is the exit of individuals from the organization that creates the need for new individuals to enter. As they attempt to enter, job-seekers who demonstrate that they can handle, lead, or communicate change may have an advantage in gaining organizational entry and acceptance, in part because new contributors are needed – as former members exit – to promulgate and communicate organizational change. Storytelling, an emergent tool for organizational research, management, and communication, has attained scholarly support as an effective medium through which organization members can communicate organizational change.

The book *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers* explored storytelling as a communication tool to facilitate organizational entry and advancement in changing organizations. This research, conducted through narrative inquiry and online

focus groups, examined the extent to which and the ways in which storytelling enables individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change for themselves and the entire organization. The research paves the way for further study of, for example, change stories in situations beyond those in this study to research that more closely scrutinizes how various populations differ in the way they view and make sense of organizational change, as well as additional research from the perspective of hiring decision-makers about the concept of job-seekers' using storytelling in the job search.

This research suggests a need for additional development and research of the concept of the "storytelling resume" and study of how job-seekers can enhance their storytelling abilities.

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Chapter 1: Context and Statement of the Problem

Prologue: Four Stories

NASA: *Tragedy.*

On January 30, 2002, The United States Government Accounting Office (GAO) released a report entitled *NASA: Better Mechanisms for Sharing Lessons Learned*. Motivated by the costly 1999 losses of the unmanned spacecrafts Mars Polar Lander and Climate Orbiter, the report concluded that "NASA's processes, procedures, and systems" did not "effectively capture and share lessons learned and therefore, NASA has no assurance that lessons are being applied towards future missions" (p. 1). The report noted that NASA had undergone significant organizational change beginning in 1992 with a mandate to complete projects "faster, better, and cheaper" (p. 2). While the GAO acknowledged that NASA had initiated systems to capture and share lessons learned, the failures of the two spacecraft in 1999 "raised concern that NASA was not learning from its past mistakes and applying lessons learned toward future mission success" (p. 43). One of the GAO report's recommendations was that NASA employ storytelling as a mechanism to ensure that lessons were learned. Exactly one year and two days after the GAO report was published, the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, killing all seven astronauts aboard.

NASA: Consultant.

The notion of using storytelling to share knowledge at NASA was not entirely new. Storytelling was a component of NASA's Knowledge Sharing Initiative founded in 2000. Just a few weeks after the 2002 GAO report was issued, a consultant, story proponent, and author of the book *The Story Factor*, spoke at a NASA Masters' Forum, a semi-annual program produced for NASA and other project managers by the Academy of Program/Project and Engineering Leadership (APPEL), a significant player in the space agency's Knowledge Sharing Initiative. The author said, "We need stories because cognitive learning doesn't always cut it" (2002). The author's name is Annette Simmons.

Job-Seeker and Consultant

A job-seeker had been experiencing a frustrating series of interviews over a five-month period with no job offer. The discouraged individual then read a book that suggested composing personal stories. Doing so, the job-seeker found, provided him with better interview preparation than any coaching he had ever experienced. Using stories he had not remembered before he read the book, he said, made him more confident, convincing, and persuasive in his interviews. Stories enabled him to present himself in a personable and powerful way to his interviewers. He again used stories during the next round of interviews. The tale ends happily with his hiring in an executive position that represented a major advance in his career. The job-seeker is a real person who posted a review on Amazon.com of *The Story Factor* – by Annette Simmons (2001).

Knowledge management and NASA

Robert S. Frey describes himself as "a fact-based storyteller" who uses a compelling story form in proposals and resumes to "win hearts and minds" (personal communication, July 20, 2006). Frey, who is senior vice president of knowledge management and proposal development for RS Information Systems (RSIS), Inc., first began to apply a story-based approach to project citations, resumes, and other proposal sections about nine years ago. "A critical milestone in my own professional development process was when a contracting officer from USAID, in speaking to a packed auditorium during a pre-proposal conference, invited the attendees to 'Write me a letter,'" Frey recalls. "I have applied that paradigm, which transformed into fact-based storytelling, ever since." Frey boasts an exceptional 70 percent win rate for the proposals he oversees (the industry average is about 35 percent). He touts resumes and proposals that tell engaging stories and "present a meaningful picture" instead of simply listing dry facts. He recommends weaving a tightly integrated storyline through all elements of a resume or proposal. Ideally, a powerful storytelling resume will serve as a teasing "French postcard" for an employer, who will respond by saying, "I gotta talk to that [candidate]." Frey notes that "fact-based storytelling is effective in building trust and in generating emotional connections with your customers" (2005, p. 52). Among the federal government, civilian, defense, law-enforcement, and intelligence agencies to which Frey and RSIS submit their proposals is NASA.

Context

These loosely related stories capture, to a great extent, the substance of this study. No documented correlation exists, of course, between the Columbia disaster and the GAO's contention that NASA had failed to learn lessons from past failures. However, devoting an entire book to "the decline of the space program," organizational-communication scholar Phillip K. Tompkins (2005) characterized the "preventable disaster" (p. 259) of Columbia as an ineffective response to the change in NASA culture, a change from one of "responsibility with every individual for either fixing problems or reporting them upward" (p. 200) to the "faster, better, cheaper" culture in which "communication broke down" (p. 259). Indeed, the Final Report of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board (2003) pointed to "a pattern of inefficient communication…leaving risks improperly defined, problems unreported, and concerns unexpressed" (p. 187).

The GAO Report (2002) referred to the "changing environment" starting in the 1990s that included budget cuts, reductions in the workforce, and technological advances (p. 8). Just as it has for NASA, change presents a persistent challenge for most organizations. This study claims that change is, in fact, the one constant in organizational life and that little of what happens within organizations is not, at some fundamental level, about change. The study further asserts that organizations from the Catholic Church to the CIA to the Walt Disney Company struggle constantly with change and how to communicate it effectively.

As Simmons, the GAO, and many others have told NASA, storytelling is an effective way to lead and communicate organizational change as well as to make sense of

change and deal with its stress. “A vision story is the antidote to meaningless frustration,” Simmons (2001) writes. “To live in this world with purpose and meaning we must tell ourselves some story of vision that gives our struggle meaning” (p. 17). Given that two out of three transformation initiatives fail (Sirkin, Keenan, & Jackson, 2005, ¶1), organizations could benefit from members who can make the best of change through storytelling.

Storytelling is an emergent tool not only for organizational research, but also for organizational management and communication. As a review of the literature in this study will show, individuals within organizations can use story to facilitate change, ease the stress of change, and help achieve organizational goals. Even before the GAO report and the Columbia tragedy, NASA had begun to recognize the value of organizational storytelling and has since joined such organizations as the World Bank, IBM, Xerox, McDonald’s, and General Electric (Brown, Denning, Groh, & Prusak, 2005) in the forefront of organizational storytelling.

An aspect of the organizational-change dilemma that may be overlooked is the constant flow of people in and out of organizations. In NASA’s case, *The Washington Post* reported in 2002 that about half the space agency’s technical, scientific, engineering, and project workforce was expected to be eligible to retire within five years (Lee, p. A4). Tompkins noted that NASA had let its good people go in downsizing moves after the Apollo Program (2005, p. 135). The Columbia Accident Investigation Board’s report (2003,) cited the words of a veteran space program observer, who said that by 2001, the shuttle workforce had become “The Few, the Tired.” Ten years of downsizing and belt-tightening, the observer said, had left NASA with a less experienced staff (p. 118).

Writing in an Academy of Program/Project and Engineering Leadership publication, another component in NASA's Knowledge Sharing Initiative, Roy Malone (n.d.), who was faced with having to lay off workers, said, "You take a chance when you give notice about a reduction in force. You run the risk of everybody getting agitated and their work performance going down. Maybe the good people will leave, and only the least effective people will remain" (p. 8). As Malone's comment suggests, organizational change can be both the cause and effect of employee exit from organizations. This turnover creates a significant challenge to maintaining stability in the organization, and the instability results in the need for new individuals to enter.

When extra-organizational individuals effectively demonstrate that they can handle, lead, or communicate change, they may have an advantage in gaining organizational entry and acceptance. It is also, after all, to the organization's advantage to invite change-adept individuals to enter because new contributors will always be needed to assist in implementing and communicating organizational change. The Columbia Accident Investigation Board (2003) noted that NASA had recognized, "providing an adequately sized and appropriately trained workforce [was] critical to the agency's future success" (p. 118).

Story No. 3 – in which the job-seeker discovered the effectiveness of using storytelling and began to compose stories to tell in job interviews after he read Simmons's book – gains relevance at this point. Just as storytelling helps organizations communicate, telling stories may provide a particularly effective means for extra-organizational individuals to demonstrate their ability to handle, lead, and communicate

change as well as to describe other relevant skills that will help them gain entry into new organizations.

The contentions of Frey, the "fact-based storyteller" of Story No. 4, who compellingly tells stories in proposals and resumes, build the idea of telling stories in job interviews. Frey's success with the written documents his company develops suggests that storytelling may be effective in selling an individual to a customer, in this case an employer, through multiple stages of the job search.

Statement of the Problem

Change in organizations creates challenges for both the organization and its individual members. For the individual, managing and coping with change require skills or the creation of skills that are then transferable to new opportunities. As the following sequence of assertions suggests and the review of the literature in Chapter 2 supports, these change skills can be described through storytelling to benefit both individual and organization:

- Organizations tend to undergo frequent change.
- Through their membership in changing organizations, many individuals experience organizational change at various points in their careers.
- These individuals thus have an opportunity to gain new skills related to leading, facilitating, or communicating change or simply developing flexibility and adaptability to change.
- Organizational change is often concurrently accompanied by workforce instability, a continual shift in the cast of characters, and the need for new organization members.

- Storytelling provides a communication tool that individuals can use to describe the change skills they have attained.
- Such storytelling may provide these individuals with a competitive edge in gaining organizational entry or advancement.
- When organizations hire these individuals who have demonstrated through storytelling that they possess appropriate change skills, the organizations may then be better equipped to implement subsequent organizational change.

This Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and its addendum book manuscript propose innovative ways, along with a comprehensive program of communication media, that aspiring organizational entrants and current organizational members can use storytelling to advance their careers while coping with ongoing change. The research question underlying the Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and book is this: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change for both themselves and the organization as a whole?

Research Overview, Intent, and Purpose of Study

Representing an intersection of organizational entry, organizational change, and organizational storytelling, this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and its addendum book manuscript attempt to situate storytelling on a line from organizational entry to membership in organizations undergoing change, portraying storytelling as valuable in helping individuals enter and advance in organizations.

The study used narrative inquiry to collect stories from members of organizations undergoing change and from individuals who had recently changed jobs. Participants

were asked about change-related skills gained during the change process. The narrative inquiry further examined how these skills might be incorporated into storytelling, both stories to facilitate the individual's advancement in the present organization and stories to promote entry into new organizations.

The study also included focus groups to gather opinions from recruiters, hiring managers, and human-resources professionals about story-based resumes, cover letters, and job-interview responses.

Book Manuscript and this Project Demonstrating Excellence/Dissertation

For the Ph.D. degree, Union Institute & University requires a significant scholarly work, the Project Demonstrating Excellence (PDE/Dissertation), and accepts PDE/Dissertations in several forms, including a creative project such as a book-length, publishable manuscript (2002), as is the case with this study which includes, as an addendum to this document, the manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, directed at a mass-market audience. This Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation documents the scholarly underpinnings and research foundations for the book, while the book demonstrates applications of the research presented in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation. This document is intended to express clearly, through careful presentation and analysis, how scholarly components relate to the book manuscript. The Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation includes a literature review that places the book in a context of relevant scholarship, showing the relationship between the book, scholarly work that preceded it, and the work of contemporary practitioners and theorists; a chapter describing this project's research methodology, the reason for choosing it, and its application to the study; a chapter describing findings of

the research study accompanied by an interpretation of those findings; and an analytic chapter reflecting on the relationship of the book to contemporary and past theory in relevant fields of study, in this case, the intersection of organizational entry, organizational change, and organizational storytelling. Thus, the premise of *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers* is that storytelling provides an innovative way to enter organizations and to thrive within ever-changing organizations.

The table of contents of *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers* follows:

Contribution and Relevance

The concept of storytelling as a way to research and address numerous organizational issues is not new, having been first set forth by Clark, Mitroff, Kilmann, Martin, Hatch, and Sitkin in the 1970s and 1980s (Czarniawska, 1998; Boyce, 1996) and expanded upon since 1990 by such scholars and practitioners as Boje (e.g., 1991, 1998, 2001, 2002), Denning (2001, 2004, 2005), Gabriel (2000), Gargiulo (2002, 2005, 2006), Neuhauser (1993), and Simmons (2001). However, while the literature has touched in small, implicit ways, on the notion of using storytelling as a means for outsiders to enter organizations, the concept has not undergone comprehensive scrutiny, scholarly review, and research prior to *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers* and this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation.

The paucity of literature about storytelling in career-marketing communication – career networking, resumes, cover letters, job interviews, career portfolios, and personal branding – exposes a niche that the book and Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation attempt to fill.

Definition of Terms

To assist the reader in understanding and evaluating this document, the following terms are defined:

Career-marketing communication: Communication media including networking, resumes, cover letters, job interviews, career portfolios, and personal branding used in job search and for career advancement.

Organizational change: Motivated by "three main driving forces – people, technology, and information," organizational change refers to "leading people on a

different path than what they are accustomed to" (Ehrlich, n.d.) within an organizational context. A more radical view, but one that aligns with the perspective of this study, is set forth by Ford and Ford (1995, p. 542): "Change is a phenomenon that occurs within communication."

Organizational communication: "The process by which individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals by means of verbal or nonverbal messages in the context of a formal organization" (Richmond & McCroskey, 2001, p. 20).

Organizational entry: Organizational entry "includes the wide variety of events occurring when new members join organizations" (Wanous, 1992, p. 1), a process that includes their being recruited to join an organization, the job-seeker's selection of the organization and the organization's selection of the candidate, and the orientation and socialization of the new member.

Organizational storytelling: According to the one thousand & one website (n.d.), "Storytelling with a business focus. The main purpose of Organizational Storytelling is to engage, educate and motivate" people in organizations. Gabriel (2000, p. 32) adds "persuade, warn, reassure, justify, explain, and console" to the list of purposes.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Organizational change occupies a large portion of recent organizational literature. A smaller body of work addresses the emergent form, organizational storytelling, which has been a part of the literature for no more than the last 30 years. Scholarly literature addresses the communications tools of organizational entry such as resumes, cover letters, and employment interviews, but the larger body of information on those topics is found in popular press literature.

While hundreds of academic journal articles and numerous books have addressed organizational change, this literature review focuses particularly on the frequency, pervasiveness, persistence, and constancy of change as an issue for organizations. The review also looks at what the literature has to say about the individual's role in organizational change: how membership in changing organizations creates both opportunities and challenges and how managing and coping with change require skills that are then transferable to new opportunities. Organization members can choose to develop these "change skills" by leading, facilitating, or communicating change or by simply honing their flexibility and adaptability. At the same time, as this review will address, organizational change is frequently accompanied by workforce instability, a continual shifting of the cast of characters, and the need for new organization members.

The review then examines the literature's coverage of storytelling to address organizational change from both the organization-wide perspective and from the individual perspective as well as storytelling in organizational-entry communication. The

review explores scholarly discourse on the concept that storytelling provides a communication tool that can be used to describe change skills and thus gain a competitive edge in attaining organizational entry or advancement. Organizations, in turn, that hire individuals who have demonstrated through storytelling that they possess appropriate change skills benefit by hiring the resource they need to implement organizational change.

This Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and its addendum, the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling That Propels Careers,* propose innovative ways and a comprehensive program of communication media through which aspiring organizational entrants and current organizational members can use storytelling to advance their careers while coping with ongoing change. Presenting a theoretical framework as a backdrop against which the research stands, the literature review examines the scholarly and popular press conversation regarding the research question underlying this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and the book manuscript: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change, both for themselves and for the organization as a whole?

The Inescapability of Organizational Change

McNamara (1999, ¶ 1) referred to the body of literature on organizational change as an "explosion of literature" about a topic that has "reached evangelical proportions," while Weick and Quinn (1999, ¶ 11) cited the "sheer sprawl of the change literature." Seminal scholars in the organizational change field include Lewin, who developed a three-stage planned change process and force-field analysis in the 1950s; Senge (1994),

who extended and popularized Argyris' and Schön's (1978) concept of the learning organization, building on Bateson's (1947) work on deutero-learning; Axelrod, who critiqued the major change-management models (Block, 2001); and Weick (1969) who called "organization" and "change" two sides of the same coin.

The scholarly literature on organizational change is prodigious in itself, but so pervasive is organizational change that Barger and Kirby (1995, p. xi) observed, "The business section of your local bookstore is full of books on organizational change." Similarly, Wanous, Reichers, and Austin (2000) cited the plethora of popular books on change along with business magazines and newspapers directed at managers. Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, and Weir (2006) conducted a thematic analysis of 38 of the best-selling popular press books that focus on communicating during organizational-change implementation. While the authors characterized the books as "extremely sloganistic" and offering "underspecified advice," the books point to a "surprising alignment between some of what has been consistently found in the scholarly literature and what is advised in these books" (p. 134). Replicating a search for books on Amazon.com in 2006, as suggested by Sirkin, Keenan, and Jackson (2005), using search terms "change and management" produced 6,381 results. Replicating the search of Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, and Weir (2006) on Amazon.com for the term "organizational change" resulted in 1,628 publications.

The persistence of organizational change has been characterized as a "metamorphosis" (Schein, 1996, ¶ 1), a "constant reality" (Wojtecki & Peters, 2000, ¶ 1), "a way of life" (Kanter, 1999, ¶ 8), "not an option … a necessity" (Bhatti, 2001, ¶ 14), a "major philosophical shift" (Vicere, 2000, p. 1), and "the name of the game today"

(Bridges, 2003, p. x). Ogilvie and Stork (2003, ¶ 65) referred to change as "a late twentieth century buzzword." Change," wrote Kemelgor, Johnson, and Srinivasan (2000, ¶ 3), "appears to be replacing stability as a key trait of forward-looking organizations;" and Wanous, Reichers, and Austin (2000) observed the "widespread change-oriented turmoil in which many American organizations currently find themselves." Some scholars (e.g., Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998) compared the current age of organizational change to the Industrial Revolution. Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, and Weir (2006, p. 114) remarked, "Organizations appear to be drawn – almost cultlike – to embrace constant change;" similarly, Hauer (2001, p. A15) wrote, "Change is worshipped as a value in itself."

Factors that drive change. Citing global competition, flattening hierarchies, quality-improvement programs, new technologies, the encouragement of entrepreneurial initiative, and increasing diversity, Barger and Kirby (1995, p. ix) asserted that "change is the rule in organizations…constant, even relentless change." Similarly, Goman (2006, ¶ 1), who cited the 40-year-old prediction by former *Fortune* editor Max Ways that change would accelerate so quickly that "trying to make sense of change will become our basic industry," updated Ways's prognostication by noting that "change is no longer a force in the environment. It is the environment" (¶ 2). To the list of factors that drive organizational change, Bhatti (2001) added cost reduction, production, and customer service, while Elving (2004, p. 1) mentioned deregulation, privatization, and business process design concluding, "The only constant factor within organizations is the continuous change efforts of these organizations." Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie (1998) pointed to expanded financial resources, a blurring of industry distinctions, and erosion in the

divide between industrial and service businesses. Olson and Eoyang (2001, p. xxxii) added to the list of change causes including high-speed communications, emerging markets, distribution of decision-making power across the organization, reduced regulation and increased competition, corporate mergers and acquisitions, and customer demands for increased speed and quality at reduced prices. Several authors, in fact, mentioned intensified customer requirements and heightened expectations (e.g., Englehardt & Simmons, 2002). *Chief Executive* (2003, ¶ 26, 32) noted that customers are more demanding and have more powers. Change drivers in the nonprofit sector include funding cuts, new clients, and the need to dramatically increase services (McNamara, 1999). McCann (2004) cited unexpected events, such as the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the SARS outbreak, and the Northeast power grid failure of 2003 as ignition for disruptive change. Certainly the Southeast Asian tsunami of late 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 would also fall into that category. Clampitt and Williams (2004) noted that change aligns with nature, "Most social scientists and organizational theorists accept the fact that the world is chaotic, contradictory, and incompletely apprehended" (¶ 3). Table 2.1 summarizes the factors driving change.

As Nadler and Tushman (1999) observed, innovations can occur in any aspect of products, services, processes, and distribution, even in the organizational approach used. In the current environment of what D'Aveni (1994) called in his book title "hypercompetition," organizational change is tied to information intensity and complexity.

Table 2.1

Factors that Drive Change

Author(s)	Factors that Drive Change
Stuart (1995)	• Global competition
	• Flattening hierarchies
	• Quality-improvement programs
	• New technologies
	• Encouragement of entrepreneurial initiative
	• Increasing diversity
Bhatti (2001)	• Cost reduction
	• Production
	• Customer service
Elving (2004)	• Deregulation
	• Privatization
	• Business process design
Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie (1998)	• Expanded financial resources
	• Blurring of industry distinctions
	• Erosion in the divide between industrial and service businesses
Olson and Eoyang (2001)	• High-speed communications
	• Emerging markets
	• Distribution of decision-making power across the organization
	• Reduced regulation and increased competition
	• Corporate mergers and acquisitions

Author(s)	Factors that Drive Change (cont.)
Olson and Eoyang (2001), Englehardt & Simmons (2002)	• Customer demands for increased speed and quality at reduced prices • Intensified customer requirements and heightened expectations
(McNamara, 1999)	• funding cuts • new clients • the need to dramatically increase services [in the nonprofit sector]
McCann (2004)	• unexpected events

Forms of change. Rooted, according to Block (2001) and Clardy (2003), in the emergence of organizational development in the 1960s and 1970s, organizational change today may take numerous forms. Mercer Delta Consulting, LLC, (2000) reported changes including new or redefined strategy; design and deployment of new organizational structures; profound changes in culture/operating environments; major innovations in products, processes, or distribution; strategic combinations such as mergers and acquisitions, which Kanter (1999) placed under the umbrella of "industry consolidation;" joint ventures; breakups, spinoffs, and divestitures; downsizing; expansion into new regions; emerging markets, enhanced technologies and offerings; and the appointment of new senior management. Adams and McQuillen (2000) cited lean production and broadening and intensification of jobs, while Kemelgor, Johnson, and Srinivasan (2000) pointed to a need to reduce cycle times. Olson and Eoyang (2001) listed structural changes, shifts in organizational mission, alterations in resource allocation, new change intervention strategies, and transformed human interactions.

Organizations may also morph into learning organizations or new forms not yet imagined, but Schein (1996, ¶ 1) asserted, "No one would challenge the fact that profound changes are occurring worldwide." Peck (2006, p. 1) explained much of organizational change as a short-term management perspective in which outsourcing jobs, engaging contingency workers, and laying off employees are "standard management tools." Barry and Elmes (1997, ¶ 47) colorfully characterized forms of change as "blurred organizational boundaries … dispersed intelligibilities, diverse realities, disrupted chains of authority, and erosion of organizational autonomy."

Challenges of change. Olson and Eoyang (2001) wrote also about change looking at the future:

> All of these developments point toward the need for more flexible and adaptable organizational roles, responsibilities, and structures. Organizations must be able to recognize environmental changes on the spot and respond with products and services that fit the demands of the marketplace. (p. xxxii)

Indeed, at the turn of the 20th century, organizational change was seen as a pervasive issue going forward into the new century. Interviewing business school administrators in 1999, Clerk learned that their prognostications for new millennium managers centered on the huge challenge of steering and managing their businesses through enormous changes. The pace of change has compounded the challenge for organizations, with leaders noting a striking increase in the frequency and velocity of change (Clerk, 1999; Englehardt & Simmons, 2002). In fact, Moran and Brightman (2000, ¶ 3) asserted that "the rate of change is greater than at any time in history," with the delivery of ideas to market in the form of products or services in a mere 5 months

instead of the 18 months they took in 1996 or the six years in 1966 (Moran & Mead, 2001). Noting that some of the most successful contemporary organizations such as Microsoft and Intel are those that can change continuously, McCann (2004, ¶ 20) observed that organizations in the current climate have had no choice but to embrace change and "even accelerate it further, if possible."

Consequences of inadequate response to change. Change is seen as an inevitable and constantly occurring process in organizations, and the ability of organizations and their leaders to respond successfully to change is viewed as an imperative for future organizational and career survival. In an environment in which two out of three transformation initiatives fail (Sirkin, Keenan, & Jackson, 2005, ¶1), scholars predicted that the future's most successful organizations will be those that respond effectively to change (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999), and those that fail to mount a timely response to change will not last (Bridges, 2003, p. x). In a 2004 Conference Board report on CEO challenges (Rudis, 2004), organizational flexibility and adaptability to change were ranked among the greatest leadership concerns by 88% of the 539 European, Asian, and North American CEOs surveyed, and was ranked the No. 1 issue for 42% of the executives. Carl Steffen, a vice president at PeopleSoft, which co-sponsored the study, noted, "Developing an agile, adaptable workforce that embraces change and aligns itself quickly will be tomorrow's competitive differentiator" (¶ 5), while Conference Board researcher Barrington observed that survey respondents were adamant in their contention that "adaptability and innovation continue to be the keys to sustainable advantage" (¶ 6). *Chief Executive* declared in 2003 (¶ 18) that the secret of organizational prosperity is the "capacity to respond to change."

The consequences for leaders who fail to respond to change can be dramatic. A four-year study by LeadershipIQ.com (2005) found that 31% of CEOs are fired for mismanaging change, contrary to the commonly held belief that these leaders are terminated (or forced to resign or retire under pressure) because of current company financial performance. The study was based on interviews with 1,087 board members from 286 public, private, business and healthcare organizations that fired or otherwise forced out their chief executive.

The Flow of Member Exit and Entrance: Organizational Change Cause and Effect

Although Morrell, Loan-Clarke, and Wilkinson (2004, p. 161) noted "little research specifically exploring the link between organizational change and turnover," some of the literature does document the flow of members into and out of organizations (characterized as employee turnover) as both an impetus for organizational change and the result of change. Hoag, Ritschard, and Cooper (2002) noted that when even one person enters or leaves an organization, change has occurred. The human capital management services firm, DBM (2005), reported that the average mid-to-senior executive spends almost 20% of his or her career in role transition. The journal *Chief Executive* (2003, ¶ 24) noted that in 1980, the average Fortune 300 CEO spent eight years at the helm of his or her organization, but by 2000, that tenure had been halved.

Turnover creates need for new people. Employee turnover, downsizing, change in top leadership, employees moving from one function to another, and workers who resist change being purged are among factors that create a need to recruit new people into the organization. DBM reported the trickle down effect of management change in a 2005 article:

> Every time a mid-level executive changes roles, 12 other people's productivity is affected. The more senior the role, the more profound and widespread the impact. Since 24 percent of executives change roles every year, these role transitions present a major risk – or opportunity – for business. (¶ 2)

Loss of organizational memory. Another negative consequence of high turnover, Kransdorrf (1997) wrote, is loss of organizational memory, which makes assimilation and socialization of new hires difficult – it can take up to a year for new hires to become productive – and weakens decision-making among senior managers. At the time Kransdorrf expressed his concern about organizational-memory loss, U.S. employees were staying at their jobs an average of just five years, a phenomenon the author called "among the most damaging influences on productivity and competitiveness in companies" (¶ 5).

Change as contributing cause of turnover. While the flow of members exiting and entering organizations presents a challenge in executing organizational change, the change itself frequently contributes to member exit and entrance. In an annual survey by DBM of career-transition experiences in 2004, 93% of respondents said that "significant organizational transitions were the primary reason for job loss in the United States" (DBM, 2005, ¶ 2). The results mark the fourth consecutive year in which organizational change was cited as the top reason for job loss. The findings cited record amounts of merger and acquisition activity in the two years preceding the survey.

Kets de Vries and Balazs (1999, ¶ 84) pointed to the "fight or flight mode" that some individuals enter as a result of the shock and stress of change in their organizations. Those who do not fight resort to flight behavior, with some leaving the organization as

soon as the work situation becomes stressful (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999). Pointing to top performers who leave when change becomes uncomfortable, or when they begin to fear job instability, or when competitors hire them away, Critchley (2001, ¶ 6), in fact, cited a statistic from the American Management Association, "One-quarter … of top performers leave within 90 days of the announcement of a major change event." In short, organizational change can leave a "workforce in turmoil" (Wojtecki & Peters, 2000, ¶ 3).

Top executives are the most likely members to leave organizations on their own accord as a result of organizational change, according to the research of Baron, Hannan, and Burton (2001). The authors also surmised that leadership changes at the CEO level spur employee turnover in startup companies since the CEO, as the embodiment of the company's culture, has likely been a catalyst for luring new talent into the company.

Involuntary turnover. One strategy for change, eliminating those who are underperforming – the dead wood and "burned out fuses" (Pace, 2002, ¶ 47) – clearly creates a need to bring in new people. Successful change, Pace asserted, means changing personnel. Pace's research indicated that the organizations that changed most effectively were the ones that replaced top managers whose performance was not up to standards created by the change. For example, at a company that terminated 50 of 61 senior executives, "Almost without exception, meaningful improvement in the highly successful transformers we studied," Pace reported, "began only when they made significant personnel changes at the most senior levels" (¶ 53).

While downsizing is often seen as a cost-cutting measure that will make an organization more competitive, Hosmer (2001, ¶ 1) is one of several scholars who noted that laying off employees can be counterproductive. Because downsizing ensures "that

many of the best and brightest survivors will be departing just when their traumatized company needs them most," the organization may later discover a need to replace those it has downsized. Indeed, sometimes hiring new workers, shifting employees to other parts of the organization, and terminating individuals is inherent in the change. Commenting about the downfalls of poorly conceived change, Bishop (2001) observed this:

> In the rush to change, managers and human resources departments fail to assess whether people are really capable of carrying out new strategies or working in new ways. As a result, they don't make the right decisions about whom to develop, whom to transfer, whom to bring in from the outside, and whom to let go. (¶ 3)

Voluntary turnover. Voluntary career change also plays a significant role in the flow of members into and out of organizations. Career change is a huge and sprawling topic that, while only marginally addressed in this review, must be mentioned as part of the employee-turnover equation. In listing 21st-century human resources trends, nonprofit CEO John McMorrow (1999, ¶ 9) predicted that career change would become the rule rather than the exception, in part because of the "erosion of the implied good-faith contract between employer and employee." Under that traditional "contract," employees and their employers assumed workers would spend long careers with one organization. Today, this tacit understanding is often supplanted by employers who downsize to cut costs and workers who frequently change jobs or careers.

Change as opportunity. While change may quash the opportunities that once existed in the organization, Bridges (2003, p. 151) wrote that "it is equally true that it creates new ones." For example, the tendency for employers to "re-deploy skilled

employees when restructuring takes place" (Appelbaum, Ayre & Shapiro, 2002, ¶ 11) may create needs to fill the slots from which those employees have been moved. Rothberg (2000, ¶ 51) suggested that those who experience change in the form of a merger or acquisition can renew their careers by forging "new collaborative relationships with colleagues." The notion that "change is constant, but brings with it new opportunities" is part of a "new career management paradigm" that Phillip Jarvis (2003, ¶ 39) described. Indeed, more than half of the professionals who suffered job loss as a result of organizational change found full-time employment, and their flexibility provided opportunities in new industries and job functions, according to DBM's 2004 annual survey (2005, ¶ 3, 4) on career-transition experiences.

Change as driver of quest for new skills. Organizational change and its concomitant employee turnover create requirements for new employees with different characteristics from those hired in the past, including employees who are flexible, trainable, technologically savvy, and more highly educated (Adams & McQuillan, 2000). The Adams and McQuillan research also revealed needs for new hires who can work in teams, demonstrate written and oral communication skills, and have an aptitude for multi-tasking. A report by Mercer Delta Consulting, LLC, (2000, ¶ 36) added that "a new strategy… might require people with entirely new managerial or technological skills."

In fact, O'Daniell (1999, ¶ 23) argued that defining competencies to catalyze change is a practice that – because of its potential for employee skill enhancement, career enrichment, and performance management – "cannot be underestimated." Employers and managers should "dedicate more resources to identifying and developing transferable competencies (such as adaptability to change) that employees can use in diverse settings

to achieve shifting strategic objectives," Gutteridge, Leibowitz, and Shore (1993, ¶ 125) suggested. The "new career management paradigm" that Jarvis (2003, ¶ 39) referred to includes a "life-long process of skill acquisition," especially emphasizing sufficient "flexibility and adaptability to allow for change along the way" (¶ 59).

A key indicator of a trend toward seeking competitive advantage by recruiting new hires with the right competencies is the "explosive growth" of search firms (also known as recruiters and headhunters), according to Vicere (2000, ¶ 15). Pointing to the need to recruit talented people to implement change strategies, the author cited a 1997 study, *The War for Talent*, by McKinsey & Company (2001, ¶ 1), which revealed the "war for talent" as a strategic business challenge and critical driver of corporate performance. The study, which surveyed 13,000 executives at more than 120 companies and included case studies of 27 companies, asserted that talent management is critical to every company's success and that competitive advantage derives from having superior talent. The research revealed that, on the average, companies that did a better job of attracting, developing, and retaining highly talented managers earned 22 percentage points higher return to shareholders.

Caroli, Greenan, and Guellec (2001, ¶ 5) have taken the skills discussion a step further, arguing that the accumulation of skills is an explanation for organizational change rather than an outcome of organizational change. "A more highly skilled labor force leads to faster technical change and hence to changes in work organization aimed at reducing the cost of implementation of the new technology," the authors wrote, noting that this phenomenon is widely acknowledged in the recent literature.

Whether the need for skilled workers represents cause or effect of change, when Moran and Brightman (2000, ¶ 14) advised managers to "analyze the skills gaps that will always be created by change," it is not too great a leap to argue that organizations may need to bring in new people to fill those gaps. In changing organizations, Chowdhury (2000, ¶ 53) noted, "The relentless pursuit of talent should be a main management strategy." Hosmer (2001) argued for the critical strategic importance of attracting and retaining employees in part because these organizations can more easily deal with change when they have a stable employee base. Peck (2006) found in survey research that 91% of responding leaders/managers placed equal or greater importance on retaining skilled, high-performing employees than five years ago (2001 vs. 2006) with more than half finding worker retention more important than previously.

One company that deployed employee selection as part of its change strategy was Albert Einstein Healthcare Network. As described by Shafer, Kilty, Dyer, Amos, and Ericksen (2001), the company changed its human resources practices and began to assess the core values of job applicants, rejecting those whose values did not align with the company's. Organizations that implement change effectively assemble teams with members who have "the credibility and skills to be 'change leaders,'" according to Dan Cohen, a consultant specializing in organizational transformation who was interviewed by *ABA Banking Journal* (2002, ¶ 16). Added Barry and Elmes (1997, ¶ 46), "Surrounded by an ever-growing pool of unpredictable, rapidly fleeting opportunities, tomorrow's organizations will need to rely more on quick-thinking, knowledgeable employees who can attend to environmental shifts and work innovatively with paradox."

Role of the Individual in Organizational Change

In the foregoing descriptions, the literature makes a case that workforce shifts engendered by organizational change create a need for new individuals to enter the organization. To further understand how organizational change creates opportunities for job-seekers and those who seek to advance their careers, this portion of the literature review examines the role of the individual in organizational change.

Individual as key to organizational change. Many experts and consultants in organizational change seem to approach the issue from a broad, systemic, or organizational standpoint. Bishop (2001, ¶ 5) pointed out that management is prone to "broad, sweeping statement such as 'our people are...,' or 'our managers are…,' assuming that change takes place in homogenous groups." Others, however, point to the individual member as the key to organizational change. "The central challenge is not strategy, not systems, not culture," Kotter and Cohen wrote (2002, p. 2). While acknowledging the importance of those aspects, the authors observed, "The core problem without question is behavior – what people do, and the need for significant shifts in what people do." Kemelgor, Johnson, and Srinivasan (2000) added that real change happens only through individual initiative and innovations. Echoed Ford (1999, p. 488), "Organizational change does not occur without individual change."

Noting that most books on organizational change are directed at top executives and managers, Barger and Kirby (1995) differentiated theirs:

> [Our book] focuses on *people* at all levels of the organization: how *people* experience the requirement to fundamentally change the way they work; the impacts on *people* of change decisions and implementation procedures; and what

> individual *people* need to do in order to make the basic and far-reaching changes required in the present environment. (p. xi)

In sum, change cannot be implemented without people (Bishop, 2001).

Organizational change, indeed, cannot happen unless managers appeal to intellectual and emotional issues so that individuals within the organization adopt new thinking and behaviors (Duck, 2001; Seijts & O'Farrell, 2003). Doing things in a new way requires that individual members let go of old ways, noted Bridges (2003), even change their values and beliefs (McNamara, 1999).

Successful change depends not only on individual people but also on the recognition that each individual is different and experiences change differently (Barger & Kirby, 1995, p. xiii). In fact, because change is filtered through organizational members who then interact with each other throughout the change process, the change desired by management is often transformed into "an emergent and unpredictable process," Balogun and Johnson (2005, p. 1574) pointed out. Organizational psychologists perceive organizational change as "embedded in the process of individual change" and that "a lack of attention to the inner experience of the individual person with respect to change will abort the process" (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999, ¶ 10).

Despite the emphasis on teamwork in the literature, Clarke and Meldrum asserted that the role of the individual in organizational change is even more important than the role of teams "because the teams' ability to surpass individual effort is founded on the abilities of individuals to create that synergy" (1999, ¶ 8). Taking the next logical leap, Moran and Mead (2001) contended that individual employees can create more change than the organization as a whole. Similarly, George and Jones (2001, ¶ 5) argued that

"even the most collective activities that take place in organizations are the result of some amalgamation of the activities of individual organization members."

Change skills. "The question is: are you resisting [change], coping with it, or capitalizing on it?" wrote Peck (2006). The literature suggests that resistance to change is human nature. The individual psychology of change is the subject of an article in *Fast Company* magazine by Deutschman (2005) who discussed people's reluctance to change even when their lives depend on it, as in the case of heart patients who would benefit from lifestyle changes.

While change can be disruptive and traumatic for organization members, numerous experts on organizational change suggested that certain skills are advantageous to intra-organization individuals faced with change, and that indeed, change-management skills are "the core competency of business leaders in the 21st century" (Nadler, Shaw & Walton, 1995, ¶ 10). Similarly, Jarvis (2002) declared, "Adaptability, the skill of making the best of ever-present change" is a key skill that "Knowledge Age" workers need (¶ 28). Although "managers tend to forget that employees must acquire … new skills" (Harrison, 2005, ¶ 28) a 2002 survey developed by temporary staffing service Accountemps of 1,400 chief financial officers from a stratified random sample of U.S. companies with more than 20 employees, indicated that more than a third (35%) said embracing change is a critical success factor for employees (Accountemps, 2002). Kaul (2000, ¶ 8) advised developing "a positive hunger for change," noting that "interviewers and search committees look for evidence of change in a candidate's background." To stay competitive, wrote McMorrow (1999, ¶ 20), employees will have to keep their skills

"razor sharp" in the face of relentless change. Neuhauser (1993, p. 113) observed that change-adept companies "hire people who can handle change and who are risk takers."

Interviewing administrators of business-school MBA programs for her article in the *International Herald Tribune*, Clerk (1999, ¶ 15) cited Paul Strebel of the International Institute for Management Development, who pointed to two essential skills for change management: "The ability to sense and identify the kind of change needed … and the ability to develop a change process that is appropriate for the context." Clerk also noted that increasing numbers of business schools offer programs and courses in change management.

Among the literature's characterizations of change-induced proficiencies that individuals can attain were these: "skills needed to adjust to … change" (Adams, 1997, p. 149); "mastering change" (Clerk, 1999, ¶ 5); possessing "change resilience" (Sanborn, n.d., ¶ 19); "imagination to innovate … professionalism … openness to collaborate … passion, conviction, and confidence in others" … serving as "idea scouts, attentive to early signs of discontinuity, disruption, threat, or opportunity" (Kanter, 1999, ¶ 6); self-reliance, responsibility, self-monitoring, and "the capacity to learn from their own experience and the experience of others (Schein, 1996, ¶ 50); analytical skills, especially in analyzing workflow, systems, and finance, as well as interpersonal communications skills and the ability to speak the languages ("organizational dialects") of socio-technical systems, marketing, manufacturing, finance, human resources, and legal (Nickols, 2004, ¶ 75). Pritchett and Pound (1996, p. 33) asserted that "personal responsibility for change management" is now a "core element of *every* job in the organization." Confidence, challenge, coping, counterbalance, creativity, and collaboration form the overarching

change skills in "Change Adept," a questionnaire created by Goman (2004). Krumboltz and Worthington (1999, p. 314) asserted, "Learning how to adapt to changing conditions in the workplace will be one of the essential skills for success." Mergers and acquisitions," Rothberg (2000, ¶ 41) wrote, may provide opportunities for workers to "develop different perspectives for engaging in client business or use new methodologies and unique research tools to drive creative work." Citing a widespread "glorification of change" in which "restructuring, reengineering, transformation, and renewal are seen as marks of progress," Clampitt and Williams (2004, ¶ 30) noted that a worker's skill set is now expected to include flexibility. Table A1 (found in Appendix A) summarizes the literature's characterizations of change skills.

In changing organizations, transformation may not be limited to organization-wide change. Individual jobs are "dynamic rather than static," Schein (1996, ¶ 47) observed, and members must play increasingly fluctuating roles requiring change-adaptive skills and characteristics. Similarly, Kemelgor, Johnson, and Srinivasan (2000, ¶ 28) suggested that organizational change threatens career longevity, forcing many employees to "learn new skills, perform new tasks, and hold new jobs."

Rather than being forced, however, individuals can, Hiatt suggested, "take advantage of the change to develop new skills and grow professionally" (2004, p. 24). It is up to the individual, Appelbaum, Ayre, and Shapiro wrote (2002, ¶ 15) "to maintain and upgrade an inventory of marketable skills." Change managers will need people for their teams who possess relevant skills (Nickols, 2004). The advantage for job-seekers, as Sanborn (2003) wrote, is that change-inspired skills are transferable. Job-seekers can, for example, distinguish themselves from the competition by citing examples in cover letters

and during job interviews of seizing change as an opportunity instead of a barrier, asserted Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps (2002). Workers, especially in the high-tech realm, whose skills change faster than the organizations for which they work can change, have tended, according to Moran and Mead (2001), to take their skills and ability to change to new organizations.

Respondents in Buchanan's study (2003) of the "lived experiences" (¶ 2) of managers involved in organizational change reported that they gained significant personal development and greater self-confidence, as well as interpersonal, influencing, negotiating, and political skills, during their change effort. Participants reported using and developing numerous new skills they had not had the opportunity to use and knowledge they had not possessed before the change. Many of the individuals Buchanan studied, especially women, used their new skills and knowledge to pursue new career avenues leading to "considerable personal development and career rewards" (¶ 72). Similarly, Kezsbom (1997) pointed to invaluable opportunities for those who take personal responsibility within the change environment, while O'Daniell (1999, ¶ 38) referred to "ownership for defining careers" and focusing on "continuously improving … job skills and employability."

Change, self-concept, and career development. Beyond the realm of change-inspired skills is the notion that organizational change actually affects individuals' self-concept and future career development. Acknowledging in his 1990 book, *Career Anchors* (p. 35), the difficulty of matching the "dynamic processes" of changing organizations and changing individuals, Schein posited that even when organizational change through promotion, termination, change in job function, or geographic

transfer forces an individual to make a choice, she or he holds onto unwavering values and motives.

Self-awareness and the ability to learn from a multiplicity of individual voices (both within and outside the self) will enable individuals to become "more effective organizational change agents" (1994, p. 72), Hazen suggested. "You cannot change until you acknowledge who and where you are," Hazen wrote (p. 79).

Capitalizing on change. Also beyond the discussion of change skills is Bridges's (2003, p. 151) concept of a mindset in which people capitalize on constant organizational change instead of merely adjusting to it. Bridges advised workers not to think in terms of fixed jobs but instead of how they can solve organizational problems and meet organizational needs. In much the same way that *Chief Executive* (2003, ¶ 26) suggested that turbulent change provides the "perfect opportunity" for an organization to distinguish itself from competitors, so too can individuals stand out through their ability to handle change. Organizational members and the organizations to which they belong have a huge stake in change because, as Godin (2005, p. 135) pointed out, "It's hard to be remarkable when you and your organization insist on not changing the status quo."

Use of Organizational Storytelling to Address Organizational Change

Given the potential for organizational members to develop self-concepts, specific skills, and mental attitudes for handling, leading, communicating, and capitalizing on organizational change and then take those characteristics to a new organization or to a higher-level position in the current organization, the current study examines how these skills might be incorporated into storytelling. Storytelling here means both stories to

facilitate the individual's advancement in the present organization and stories to promote entry into new organizations.

Having explored organizational change and how it may create opportunities for individuals to use skills gained during times of change to advance their careers, this review now examines a tool, storytelling (story), by which tales of change can be communicated. Change, J. Ford and L. Ford (1995, p. 541) asserted, is "a communication-based and communication-driven phenomenon," as well as a "story of stories" (Ford, 1999, p. 487), and "stories are the single most powerful form of human communication" (Solovy, 1999, ¶ 5). This examination begins with definitions and moves to an overview of the literature on organization-storytelling research and storytelling's uses within organizations, especially to address change. Table A2 in Appendix A summarizes organizational uses of storytelling.

Definition of story. Scholars tend not to rally around a single definition of "story." Denning defined story as "any account with time, place, and a sequence of events" (Melymuka, 2004, ¶ 2). Dickman (2003, ¶ 3) defined story as "a fact wrapped in an emotion that can compel us to take action and transform the world around us." "Thematic, sequenced accounts that convey meaning from implied author to implied reader," is the definition set forth by Barry and Elmes (1997, ¶ 3). Boje (1991, p. 8) defined story as "an exchange between two or more persons during which a past or anticipated experience was being referenced, recounted, interpreted, or challenged."

Although some scholars (e.g., Boje, Gabriel) distinguished between the terms "story" and "narrative," both terms are used interchangeably in this study.

Definition of the storytelling organization. Writing in 1998 (¶ 9) that "stories are not indicators, they ARE the organization," Boje (2002, ¶ 20) later defined the storytelling organization as "the collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense-making and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory." He continued by noting that "storytelling organizations exist to tell or 'narrate' their collective stories, to live out their collective stories, to be in constant struggle over getting the stories of insiders and outsiders straight."

Types of organizational story-based research. The literature on using story and narrative in organizations and organizational research has been called "burgeoning" (Brown & Humphreys, 2003, ¶ 3). Boyce (1995, ¶ 35) characterized storytelling literature as "deep and varied." A major variation in the literature is a sometimes blurry demarcation between pure research on organizational storytelling and works about applied uses of storytelling in organizations that suggest ways that story can improve organizational life.

On the pure research side, Czarniawska (1998, p. 13-14) identified four forms of organizational storytelling research: (a) organizational research written in storylike form ("tales from the field"), (b) organizational research collecting organizational stories ("tales of the field"), (c) organizational research conceptualizing organizational life and storymaking and organizational theory as storyreading (interpretive approaches), and (d) a disciplinary reflection taking the form of literary critique. Rhodes (1997) offered his own similar four categories of storytelling as the basis for inquiry into organizational life: (a) stories as a communicative phenomenon within organizations, (b) stories as

organizational metaphors, (c) stories as a means of gathering data about organizations (similarly, Callahan, 2006), and (d) stories as a way to represent the text of organizational research. Yet another overview of the variety of uses for story in organizations comes from Morgan and Dennehy (1997, ¶ 33) who wrote, "Storytelling is an emotion-capturing tool managers can use to learn more about their organizations, interpret behaviors they observe, and understand the organization's culture." The authors further suggested that managers gather and tell organizational stories "to understand the complexity of organizational life" (¶ 33). In addition, research has studied the narrative styles of managers (Beech, 2000) and introduced storytelling as a way of interpreting managerial complexity and paradox (McKenna, 1999). Gabriel (2000, p. 2) characterized organizational storytelling research as a way to learn about organizations and their nature as "distinct forms of human collectivity" as well as a way to learn about the "nature and functions of storytelling."

Historical roots of applied organizational storytelling. Storytelling, of course, dates to ancient times as a "medium for communication and meaning making" (Boyce, 1996). Durrance (1997, ¶ 10) called story "our oldest, proven motivational tool." On the applied side of the literature, Starr-Glass (2002, ¶ 48) suggested harkening all the way back to the ancient Roman poet Ovid, whose mythological stories of metamorphosis could be used as examples to guide "the appreciation and imaginative changing of organizational culture," further noting that viewing events mythologically can foster "a different insight of the present possibilities and change." Maguire (1998) pointed out that before the printing press, a major means of conducting daily commerce was through personal stories. While the literature on the use of storytelling in organizations has grown

in the last 30 years, as has the popularity of using storytelling as a management approach, scholars Hough and White (2001, ¶ 19) asserted that even as early as 1911, when Frederick Taylor developed scientific management theory, he used stories both as "simple illustrations of potential gains associated with systematic management" and as emotional connections with his audience. Gabriel, whose book, *Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions, and Fantasies*, included an informative history of organizational storytelling, observed that after being marginalized for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, storytelling "had made a spectacular comeback" as the new millennium approached (2000, p. 3) and has generated a "formidable bibliography" (p. 19).

Applied organizational storytelling. The history and content of the applied portion of the literature is equally varied. In the *Chronology of Organizational Storytelling* he compiled, Kahan (2000) pinpointed the first National Storytelling Festival in 1973 as the earliest landmark in the applied discipline of organizational storytelling and goes on to cite about 16 books in the field as well as conferences, organizations, publications, classes, and events interspersed between 1973 and 2000.

In a broad, overarching statement about storytelling's applied uses, Gargiulo (2002, p. 3) observed that "stories can be used strategically to galvanize an organization in a lot of different ways." More specifically, Boyce's frequently cited critical review (1996) of the literature on organizational story and storytelling lists uses for organizational storytelling that include problem solving and action, organizational renewal, socialization of new employees, collective centering, sense making, learning, innovation, and new product development. In her previous study, Boyce (1995) cited five

"intentional uses of shared storytelling" that she deemed worthy of consideration by organizational members and those who guide them: (a) affirmation of organizational members' shared experiences and shared meaning, (b) expressions of members' organizational experience, (c) shifting of the organizational reality, (d) generating and honing organizational members' sense of purpose, and (e) readying members to make plans and decisions that align with their shared purpose and then implementing those plans and decisions.

In tracing scholarly literature on organizational storytelling, Smith and Keyton (2001, p. 150) cited explorations of stories in organization messages, their use in depicting organizational culture and values, their ability to bring organizational members together and bond members to the organization, and their display of the competing discourses of organizational members. In their review of scholarly literature on organizational storytelling, Sole and Wilson (2002, p. 3-4) listed additional storytelling applications that include initiating individual and group change, implementing therapeutic interventions, conducting training and development, communicating and sharing knowledge, resolving conflict, facilitating unlearning, sharing norms and values, developing trust and commitment, and generating emotional connection. Brownell (2003, ¶ 34) pointed to storytelling's ability to help employees "share a common emotional involvement and commitment; they develop similar attitudes because they are shown how to structure experiences in a meaningful and common manner." Carder and Silverman (2004, ¶ 19) noted that storytelling is so important to the Kentucky League of Cities that stories are mentioned in the organization's personnel policies manual.

Also in the applied realm, the Ryan Group, Inc. (2005, ¶ 1) called "The New Narrative Age" a "cultural phenomenon," and increasing numbers of organizational consultants who primarily use storytelling and narrative to facilitate organizational change and identity (branding) are apparent (for example, these firms, whose Web addresses appear in Appendix B: Narrativity, StoryQuest, StoryWork Institute, Loren Niemi, Joel ben Izzy, Conkling Fiskum & McCormick, Envisioning + Storytelling, Corporate Storyteller Polaris Associates, Stories That Work, and Wisdom Tools).

Storytelling to address organizational change. Although Ford (1999) noted that relatively little of the significant body of literature on organizational change is from a language-based perspective, the foregoing scholars and practitioners have hinted that storytelling is seen as a medium for addressing organizational change, a medium that Callahan, Rixon, and Schenk told organizations (2005, p. 1) "can dramatically improve your chances of achieving successful change." Noting that "stories are fundamental to a corporate transformation," Gray and Castles (2006, p. 252) pointed out that stories have always been part of organizations but are "lost in a sea of PowerPoint slides and boring speeches." Storytelling-as-change-communication began to gain currency around the same time, the mid-1990s, that T. J. and Sandar Larkin (as cited in Gray and Castles, 2006, p. 254) created a "minor revolution when they announced that change communication had been failing to deliver." The Larkins (1994) did not cite storytelling as a solution, but their recognition of the malfunction of extant change communication techniques may have generated organizational receptivity to storytelling. Molinsky (1999, p. 18) also did not cite storytelling as the solution, but he noted that a major reason for cynicism about organizational change and for the subsequent failure of change

initiatives is the paradox of "a rhetorical charade in which the real situation is unspoken and the spoken situation is unreal." In other words, organizational members say the change is going well and fail to voice problems with it, or a change may be announced but nothing actually changes.

"In a time of head-spinning change, we need our stories to hold on to who we are," Durrance (1997, ¶ 11) wrote, while Rhodes (1997, p. 3) observed that "stories … both generate and reflect change in great detail." Joensuu and Ilmola (2005, p. 1) cited storytelling for "transformation, radical change of organization culture;" the authors also touted storytelling as a way to cope with the threat of a "whole generation of experienced experts leaving the organization within a couple of years." Boje (1991, ¶ 54) added, "As organizational boundaries become more permeable and the organization structure flatter, requiring more networking and communication skills, storytelling can be a useful tool for managers trying to cope with rapid change." Similarly, Allen (2005, ¶ 1) characterized the value of storytelling organizations, calling them leaders who go beyond facts "and place them in context, then … deliver them with emotional impact." Allen went on to point out that sharing knowledge through story "sparks transformational change" (¶ 22). Simmons (2001, p. 37) wrote, "Organizations are using story to replace the old strategic plan's goals/objectives/strategy format." Olson and Eoyang (2001, p. 142) deployed the metaphor of a container as a safe place or model in which change can take place, and the authors noted that "a good story enlarges the container. The accomplished storyteller knows the audience's values, concerns, and interests." Opening the lines of communication, providing individual empowerment (by inviting workers to be part of the story), and enhancing "understanding of systemic integration" compose Shanahan's and

Maira's (1998, p. 99) summation of how storytelling works to create change. "The simple act of making time for people to share their organizational stories and encouraging them to listen actively yields tremendous results in employees' level of engagement and excitement," Gargiuluo wrote (2006, p. 51), adding that a "tapestry of key stories emerges."

Organizational storytelling and resistance to change. Goman (2005, ¶ 13) asked managers if they were telling stories to communicate about change, explaining that good stories are "more powerful than plain facts. … Stories give facts meaning. Stories resonate with adults in ways that can bring them back to a childlike open-mindedness – and make them less resistant to experimentation and change." Organization members resist change communicated through analytical means because of "frequent changes in parameters and assumptions," Seijts and O'Farrell wrote (2003, p. 3), adding that analysis tends not to motivate people significantly. While failing to provide support for her statement, Dietz (2004, ¶ 7) wrote on her Polaris Associates Web site that stories reduce resistance to change by 20 percent or more. Delving deeper into the notion that employees resist change, Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven, and Kroupa (2006, ¶ 2) questioned the common approach of simply telling workers about the looming change through such conventional means as memos, PowerPoint slides, and speeches. "Then the leaders … wait to see the seeds of change take root and blossom," the authors wrote. "Usually, not much happens, leaving managers scratching their heads and lamenting to each other about how much people hate to change." Kaufman (2003, p. 12) related an example in which a CEO employed storytelling effectively to overcome resistance to change, in this case, the storyteller's own leadership. The CEO had replaced a much-

loved, 20-year veteran of the healthcare organization. The new CEO used stories of her children's hospital stays to personalize her narrative and enable employees to relate to her and her experience of patient care. "Stories allow people to liken organizational change to personal change," the CEO told Kaufman. Stone (2003, ¶ 2) posited that "the collection and sharing of positive stories coupled with dialogue and reflection can lead to remarkable shifts in culture." People resist change, Godin suggested (2005, p. 124), because they hate admitting they were wrong about their former belief. To get people to change their beliefs and behavior, Godin said, "you must tell a different story and persuade those listening that your story is more important than the story they currently believe."

Stories as visions of the future. Expanding on how storytelling works to address organizational change, Gargiulo (2002) started with the assumption that most people dislike change but suggested that stories give organization members tools to envision new possibilities, specifically stories that serve as guides, generate insights, and open minds in the face of uncertainty. "Effectively managing change," Gargiulo (p. 92-93) wrote, "requires telling stories that move peoples' locus of attention away from dwelling on the negative and paralyzing emotions of fear and toward the empowering ones of hope. Powerful stories of change trigger people's minds to envision a path." More recently, Gargiuluo (2006, p. 51) wrote that stories can become "beacons of purpose and volition." Expressed another way by Cripe (1993), "Strategies are the 'stories' management tells about how the vision will be realized." Similarly, Breuer (1998, ¶ 1) noted that "stories make it easier for people to visualize what the future would look like after change is implemented," and Creekmore (2003, p. 3) asserted that "only a story can create a clear

vision that allows stakeholders to see themselves living in a common, inspiring future." Indeed, according to Zachry (1999, p. 113), a function of management … is the construction of visionary narratives." Future stories should paint a picture of "desirable behaviors (and the consequences of those behaviors)," wrote Seitjs and O'Farrell (2003, p. 5). Richards (2004, p. 62) similarly asserted that a "full story must emerge" for a vision to win commitment from organization members. Connecting the present and past stories with the "future ideal state" is key, Kolb (2002, p. 9) advised. Effecting lasting as opposed to temporary change is the objective of change stories, Clampitt and Williams (2004) asserted.

Examples abound of the ways organizations use stories to communicate about change. Discussing the change effect at a major British public utility, Collison and Mackenzie (1999, ¶ 22) noted that the company used story as part of a change process to foster the imagining of new directions and career options in workers' minds. "Through creating pictures of their ideal future, story proved a pragmatic way to help people move through a crisis situation on to imagining possible next steps." The authors thus included adapting to change on their list of ways organizations are using story.

In another practical example, Kolb (2002, 2003) described a simple activity he conducted in an organization about to undergo change that resulted in "developing a narrative story of organizational change." The activity consisted of providing prompts to a group of workers at the company so that they told stories of their experience there. Kolb and his co-facilitator collected these stories in a group setting beginning with the worker who had been with the company the longest and working up to the one who had started most recently:

> Link[ing] the past to the present and the present to the future, but … without the levels of anxiety and apprehension we might have expected from other techniques such as asking individuals to "share their feelings" about the shift change with the group. (¶ 13)

Kolb stated that the activity seems to have provided organizational members with a perspective on the proposed changes that "not only greatly reduced resistance to change but also provided a link between staff members across the years of experience and differences in their respective backgrounds." The looming changes did not seem as radical when compared with the changes some of the old-timers described; in fact, they "seemed to lose their status" (2002, p. 8). In addition, the activity was "extremely straightforward" and participants could partake with minimal preparation or prompting (2002, p. 7).

Callahan (2004) described using stories to refute an organization's senior management's belief that younger workers probably would not stay with the company for a long time. In gathering stories from young organization members, Callahan and his associates discovered the younger employees actually identified with the company and looked forward to long careers there.

In yet another example, Brittain, Swain, and Simpson (2005, ¶ 20) described a CEO who used story to enable his employees to envision the potential of industry-changing technology in a way that "showed that he understood and empathized with people's emotional response to change." By making a "clear and simple case for change [and tracing] the path to a desirable future state," the CEO "modeled the response to

change that he felt would make the company's employees successful – a willingness to embrace the future and continue to learn" (¶ 20).

Storytelling and the social constructionist view of change. Perhaps most germane to the current study is Ford and Ford's view of change as a "process of social construction in which new realities are created" (1995, p. 542). This perspective assumes a theoretical stance that no single objective reality exists. Instead, pluralistic, relativistic, and subjective reality (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) is constructed through language (Ford, 1999), with various scholars arguing for a label to describe such language, among them "current and historical stories, discourse, narratives, and arguments" (Ford, 1999, p. 483), and "conversation" (Ford & Ford, 1995, p. 541). Reality is socially constructed in organizations, including within the context of organizational change. In the same way, individuals establish their own realities, also through language, by building storied constructions of selves and careers (Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2003).

This constructivist perspective buttresses the blunt question that impelled Ford's article (1999, p. 480) on organizational change: "What might be the implications for organizational change management if we took the idea of organizations as socially constructed realities seriously?" In 1995, Ford and Ford (p. 542) maintained that "change is a phenomenon that occurs within communication." Later, Ford (1999, p. 480) had specified language as discourse, writing that through the traditional "structuralist-functionalist" perspective, "successful change … depends on the ability to accurately mirror or represent reality and to choose and implement interventions appropriate to that reality." As a counterpoint, Ford asked, "But what if we consider organizations as

socially constructed realities in which the reality we know is interpreted, constructed, enacted, and maintained through discourse?" (1999, p. 480).

Amid the "network of conversations that constitute the realities called organizations" (Ford, 1999, p. 486), leaders use language to implement change (Taylor 1999, ¶ 81). Ford (1999, p. 486) elaborated that "change managers work with and through conversations to generate, sustain, and complete conversation in order to bring about a new network of conversations … that result in the accomplishments of specific commitments."

As mentioned in Ford's summation (1999) of organizational language, a commonly cited permutation of language used in organizations is narrative or story (Dunford & Jones, 2000, p. 1208) – in fact, "a story of stories" (Ford, 1999, p. 487). Even more relevant to the current study, Dunford and Jones (2000, p. 1208) wrote that "narratives are especially likely to be of significance during times of strategic change." The authors also pointed to the mental processes that narrative generates in times of change: "Strategic change involves the constituting of a new reality in the minds of organizational members" (p. 1209), which Taylor (1999, ¶ 5) referred to as "identity construction," going on to write that "the stories people tell about organizational change reflect their sensemaking of the change" (¶ 15). Ford (1999, p. 488) underscored the individual role in socially constructed reality during organizational change, "Within conversationally constructed realities, the idea that organizational change can occur independent of individual change becomes problematic; … changing the conversations that constitute an organization necessarily changes the conversations that constitute individuals in the organization" (p. 488). Indeed, Stuart's research (1995) demonstrated

that "when change is understood as a language shift, resistance can be seen as an issue of language maintenance" (Ford, 1999, p. 495).

When change is examined from the social constructionist perspective, the effectiveness of a communication medium such as storytelling gains greater clarity. For example, storytelling to lead a change effort resulted in increased morale, greater worker satisfaction, and a steep drop in turnover at San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington, NM, as reported by Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven, and Kroupa (2006). Here, leaders created a new reality by crafting an adventure story, "Raiders of the Lost Art" of patient care (¶ 17), and engaging employees in voluntary small-group discussions, attended by nearly 70 percent of the facility's 1,300 employees.

Many organizations face the change challenge presented by rapid growth such as the restaurant chain Breuer (1998) described that planned to open 200 new stores in a two-year period and intended storytelling to enculturate new hires. Breuer quoted the chain's operations director as noting that, "We expect stories to come in handy" (¶ 11).

The scholarly literature is replete with additional examples of how storytelling has played a major role in communicating about and effecting organizational change (e.g., Callahan, 2004; Callahan, Rixon, & Schenk, 2005; Dunford & Jones, 2000; Ready, 2002; Stone, 2003). The foregoing descriptions of ways storytelling are useful in understanding how storytelling promulgates organization change, but it is perhaps even more illustrative to view an actual story such as this one that Richards presented (2004):

> An executive who headed a product line division of a petrochemical firm asked his senior managers to attend a meeting at a seaside resort. The division was in serious trouble, and he knew that business as usual would not solve their

> problems. The managers arrived with their presentations and handouts as they always did. They were well prepared to report to him and their peers about the progress of projects, about financial results and projections, and about opportunities and challenges. They expected each would have a turn at the lectern, but as they arrived he invited them to join him on the beach and to bring all of their material. The charts, graphs, and handouts were set ablaze in a bonfire. When the flames settled he said, "Now let's go inside and talk honestly to one another about what we must do." (p. 69)

Storytelling for organizational learning and for sensemaking to ease the stress of change. Organizational stories, wrote Collins and Rainwater (2005, ¶ 19), "are not mere reflections of organizational identity, but are, instead, properly viewed as creators of organizational meaning and organizational realities." Indeed, stories can "better [than facts] create sense out of chaotic experience," such as organizational change, asserted Birchard (2002, p. 2), who also noted that "perhaps the most powerful role of stories today is to ignite and drive changes in management policy and practices" (p. 3). Callahan, Rixon, and Schenk (2005) pointed out that collecting organizational stories can assist in examining the need for change. The research of Brown and Humphreys, who studied members of two merging companies (2003, ¶ 85), indicated that "collective narratives were a means of making sense of complicated historical and current events and of anticipating likely future scenarios." These narratives, the scholars said, comprised a portion of the "socially constructed cognitive apparatus" that helped organization members cope with "a high-load, high-complexity, and high-turbulence information environment." The authors went on to specify that they identify change in organizations

as “change in participants’ understandings,” which organizational members frequently expressed in narratives. Their view is not unlike that of O’Hara (1996, p. 38), who related organizational change to individual learning, observing that the process of learning to adapt in changing organizations involves completing old stories by organizational members and subsequently creating new stories. Gargiuluo (2006, p. 51) noted that “new networks of learning” spread throughout the organization as stories are told. In addition to being rooted in conversation, Balogun and Johnson (2005, p. 1576) asserted, sensemaking is primarily “a narrative process.”

Reviewing the literature on the relationship between stories in organizations and understanding, Taylor (1999, ¶ 4), too, identified a strong link between stories and how members make sense of organizational life. Citing significant research into the role of story in organizations, Taylor’s study asked organizational members to tell the story of the “revolutionary” change their organization had undergone, using these stories of change to theorize how and why individuals made sense of the change in different ways. His premise was that the stories people tell about organizational change reflect the way they make sense of the change. Similarly, Fleming (2001) made this assertion about vision and change:

> One of the most powerful ways for leaders to make sense of the ambiguity-opportunity cycle is to tap the power of one of humanity’s oldest art forms, storytelling. The dull organization has lost its plot, devalues its characters, and long ago exchanged its narrative urgency for the status quo. A thriving organization sees its mission as an ever-emerging story with all the necessary twists and turns. (¶ 4)

Noting that stories are told daily in the workplace, Fleming (2001, ¶ 24) observed that storytelling enables the organization to reflect on where it is now and where it is headed. He asserted that corporate narratives can assist the organization in making prognoses about future growth and change, and further, stories illustrate options organizations might pursue to adapt to change and transition. Gabriel (2000, p. 57) went so far as to say that stories can be a "symbolic means of coping with pain … harshness, unpredictability, and arbitrariness."

In his book on workplace decision-making, Klein (2003) cited Weick, a progenitor of the storytelling movement and originator of the term "sensemaking," noting that when we evaluate situations, "we generate stories and explanations to account for the discrepancies" (p. 124). Detailing descriptions of organizational change, Klein continued by explaining that people use pattern recognition 90% of the time when they evaluate a situation, but the other 10% "they consciously build stories" (p. 134), and "once the story is constructed, it becomes a powerful means of organizing the data" (p. 135) and making sense of the situation. Klein warned of building inaccurate stories or building them too early so that all future data are "colored by that story" (p. 136).

Storytelling to catalyze change. While organizational members can accept and make sense of change through story, according to the literature, narrative also can be used to propel change. Straddling the space between storytelling for sense-making and for promulgating change is Rhodes's research (1997), a collection from individuals in diverse jobs and organizations:

> Stories … include rich detail and carry multiple interpretations. They are an appropriate way to conduct a comparative analysis of how people make sense of organisational change and how change is legitimated as learning. (p. 5)

Dividing organizational stories into four types – epic, romantic, tragic, and ironic – Rhodes suggested that it is the epic story in which "the hero of the story guides change through the employment of mythical leadership qualities" with the change resulting in "redemption through organisational rebirth" (p. 5).

In the forefront of scholar-practitioners who advocate the use of storytelling to catalyze change is Denning. Stories, he asserted, are far more effective in driving change than the "mechanistic analysis" (Denning, 2001, p. xvii) embodied by charts, graphs, and bullet points. In his book *The Springboard*, Denning (2001) described his experiences in using stories to help people and organizations to effect change:

> I found that a certain sort of story enables change by providing direct access to the living part of the organization. It communicates complicated change ideas while generating momentum toward rapid implementation. It helps an organization reinvent itself. Storytelling gets inside the minds of the individuals who collectively make up the organization and affects how they think, worry, wonder, agonize, and dream about themselves and in the process create – and re-create – their organization. Storytelling enables the individuals in an organization to see themselves and the organization in a different light and accordingly make decisions and change their behavior in accordance with these new perceptions, insights, and identities. (p. xiv-xv)

Flouting the conventional wisdom proffered by "innumerable books on leading change [that] don't seem to help," Denning (2001, p. 78) further asserted that stories help avoid individual resistance to change by enabling listeners to "fill in the blanks" (p. xx) as the change moves forward. Dunford and Jones (2000, ¶ 3) also pointed to the mental processes that narrative generates in times of change: "Strategic change involves the constituting of a new reality in the minds of organizational members," wrote the authors, whose research focused on identifying narratives as a "thread through the change initiatives through organizations" (¶ 9). Noting that language is critical to organizational change, Dunford and Jones observed that organizational language frequently takes on the narrative form, which is used to connect events in a continuum.

Dickman (2003, p. 56) elaborated on why and how stories can foster organizational change: "Because human beings have an innate ability to take in information and organize it in narrative form, and because shared stories are at the core of every culture, the key to changing a corporate culture lies in eliciting, understanding, and clarifying the stories on which it is based." Further, Dickman (p. 55) identified transformation as one of four vital elements of a successful story, which then becomes a metaphor for desired change in the story's audience. Transformation is not only an elective story element but also one that has the "power to change the life of the audience" in a meaningful and positive way. Stories can mirror the emotional effect that leaders would like the actual change to create in organization members: in moving from problem to solution, tension to relief, stories can have a cathartic effect (Ramzy, 2006).

Despite the growing body of literature on the use of storytelling in organizations, especially for communicating about and sparking change, Roth and Kleiner (1998, ¶ 3)

contended that most organizations are "mythically deprived" with "official documents and presentations … bereft of stories."

Storytelling and change in popular-press literature. The popular-press portion of the literature contains examples of volumes written in story form to help organizations and individuals cope with change. Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese?* (2002), which has remained on the *New York Times* list of Hardcover Advice Bestsellers (*New York Times*, 2006) for years after its initial 1998 publication, described change in one's work and life told as the story of the search for cheese by two mice and two little people, depicting four typical reactions to change. Although the heart of the book is even called "The Story," and despite its story format, the book does not particularly promote storytelling as a way to cope with change. Stephen Denning's 2004 *Squirrel, Inc.*, however, both touts storytelling as a technique for promoting organizational change and is told in story form. "A cast of furry characters," Denning wrote (p. xviii) "…together learn the art of storytelling in their quest to overcome obstacles, generate enthusiasm and teamwork, share important knowledge, and ultimately lead their company into a new era of success and significance." Denning also included guidelines for crafting a story to spark organizational change (p. 23-23). Among seven types of organizational storytelling that Denning described (2004, p. 47) are "a story to ignite action" and "a story to lead people into the future." In his popular book, *A Whole New Mind* (2006, p. 1), Pink asserted that society has moved beyond the mindset of the Information Age and into the Conceptual Age in which we are "creators and empathizers," "pattern recognizers," and "meaning makers." Story is an important tool in this age because it enables us to "encapsulate, contextualize, and emotionalize" (p. 104). Pink referred to story as "context enriched by

emotion" (p. 103) and explains that "story is high touch because stories almost always pack an emotional punch" (p. 103). We have a "hunger for what stories can provide – context enriched by emotion, a deeper understanding of how we fit in and why that matters," the author asserts (p. 115). Pink warned that "minimizing the importance of story places you in professional and personal peril" (p. 102).

The Individual as Storyteller within Changing Organizations

Compared with the literature on storytelling in organizations, the body of literature about the individual as storyteller within organizations, especially those undergoing change, is much smaller; yet it begs to be examined when looking at how individuals can take advantage of organizational change by telling change stories to advance their careers.

The most fundamental level of research on the individual and storytelling focuses on neuroscience. Cozolino (2002) explained that developmental processes of the human neural networks are shaped by storytelling in childhood; stories help individuals begin to organize their internal and external worlds to form a sense of self. Schank (1990) explained knowledge in this way:

> [Knowledge is] experiences and stories, and intelligence is the apt use of experience, and the creation and telling of stories. Memory is memory for stories, and the major processes of memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories. (p. 16)

Both the neuroscientific and epistemological significance of storytelling likely explain narrative's appeal to listeners as exemplified by Reamy's statement that "stories are fun and interesting to human brains" (2002, ¶ 6) and Willingham's that "everybody

loves a good story" (2004, ¶ 3). Willingham described the "cognitive consequences" and "psychologically privileged" status of story in that human minds "treat stories differently" from other kinds of information. No matter the topic, Willingham asserted, "people find material presented in story format more engaging than if it is presented in expository text" (¶ 5).

In the pure research sphere, Boyce (1996) noted Boje's 1991 contribution to the literature, "First-hand observation of storytelling as it is naturally performed in an organization." Boje's research was new because storytelling research previously had consisted primarily of interviewing individual organizational members to collect their stories. Instead, Boje became a "fly on the wall" in an office-supply organization to observe stories as they actually unfolded.

The individual story's importance. Some strands of the literature deal with the importance for individuals within the organization to develop their own story. "Part of the warp and weave of organizational yarns are the personal stories told by individuals," Kaye and Jacobson wrote (1999, p. 46). "As each of us strives to fulfill the promise of a satisfying life, we can find patterns and themes that create our own narratives." Similarly, Marshall Goldsmith in a Commentary on Dickman (2003) suggested that "everyone in the organization needs to write his or her own story of personal change and growth. We all need to understand how we fit in the larger story of the organization and how we can demonstrate passion and be the hero of our own drama." The postmodernist view, Eisenberg and Goodall asserted, is that "doing one's job… involves 'telling the story'" (1997, p. 183). Beyond documenting change and growth, individuals can *effect* change and growth by rewriting their stories. Peck (2004) wrote: "Making you aware of your

story shows you how simple it is to change it" (p. 2). In McKay's interview (1998, ¶ 7) with David Barry, Barry echoed this view of the individual storyteller: "Storytelling rights should be given to everyone in an organisation, and not just the PR group or the top executives. I think this makes for less insular and more adaptive organizational functioning." Barry, in an article co-written with Elmes (1997, ¶ 47), relates individual change stories to turnover, noting that workers' short-term organizational encounters "will necessitate narrative structures than can adapt to rapidly changing discourses and varied readers."

Leader/employee storytelling. Another thread in the literature addresses the role of leaders in both telling their own stories and listening to the stories of their employees. Richards (2004, p. 67) called leaders "narrators of the change process," suggesting that when leaders deploy this change narrative, they are saying, "Come share my life" and the "consequences, struggles, sacrifices, pain, and joy" that the change may entail. "When executives and managers share tales about their own career challenges and failures or relate how the company survived a crisis," Clark (2004, ¶ 11) pointed out, overwhelmed employees take comfort in the notion that they will also be able to tough it out. Kotter, in fact, predicted dire consequences for leaders who do not tell stories (2006, ¶ 3): "Those in leadership positions who fail to grasp or use the power of stories risk failure for their companies and for themselves." Buchanan's (2003, ¶ 2) description of his study's findings indicated that "despite the pressures and unpredictabilities of strategic change, there can be significant personal development, and career benefit for those in driving roles." He never used the word "story," yet story is implicit in Buchanan's frequent description of his research about the "lived experience" of change drivers. Simmons

(2001, p. 193) asserted that executives must listen to employee stories of post-change fear and resistance if they hope to address and quell those negative feelings. To ensure leadership and employee retention, Henry and Henry (2002, p. 53) prioritized storytelling as "the single most effective strategy" and noted that the majority of individuals members seek group membership and long-term acceptance in groups with whom they experience deeply shared meaning. Similarly, Barge (2004, ¶ 11) suggested that "managers weave their own and other stories together" as opposed to the conventional approach in which organization members become a "passive audience" for the story the manager imposes on them. Telling stories to "bring about behavioral changes" is not enough in Gardner's view (1999, p. 23); leaders must also "embody" the change narrative in their own behavior. Not all research views leader-to-employee change-storytelling as positive. Describing storytelling at the Saturn Corporation, Mills, Boylstein, and Lorean (2001, ¶ 5), detected a pattern of "subtle coercion" as opposed to empowerment.

Transformative power of storytelling. Finally, portions of the literature suggest the individually "transformative power" of stories (McKay, 1998, ¶ 2) and "conversion story" effects comparable to religious conversions (Bryant & Cox, 2004, ¶ 1, 2). These characterizations mirror the role of story in organizational change. "Change the story and life changes," Barry said in McKay's interview (1998, ¶ 2). Emphasizing that effective stories should have drama, Ready (2002) discussed a hypothetical and compelling story that a worker might tell about lacking sufficient skills to complete an assignment:

> The drama centers on the storyteller's need to make tough choices, usually without perfect information or the complete alignment of the stakeholders involved. The drama challenges participants to reflect on whether they

> want – and will be able – to make the similarly tough choices that are required of leaders of today's complex organizations. (¶ 18)

This type of scenario and drama could also relate to a job-search situation in which the job-seeker tells how he or she overcame insufficient skills to complete a project. The drama could stem from whether the prospective employer would see the candidate as "able … to make the similarly tough choices that are required of leaders of today's complex organizations" (¶ 18) based on the applicant's story.

Drama also plays an important role in the conversion story that Bryant and Cox (2004, ¶ 2) described of "dramatic and spectacular accounts of transformation." In their study, participants told stories of experiencing the process of organizational change as personal turning points "that opened up opportunities for career and personal development and allowed them to depart from the old ways" (¶ 24). Organizational change facilitated significant individual change for participants.

Use of Storytelling in Organizational Entry and Career Development

The body of scholarly literature addressing the general areas of storytelling and narrative in organizational entry and career development is small, but some scholars suggested it may be growing (Christensen & Johnston, 2003, p. 149).

Storytelling in careers research. A scant few scholarly works address use of story and narrative in careers research. Among these, Cochran's (1990) chapter in a book on methodologies for career research provided an intensive exploration of using narrative for such research.

Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 48-49) examined the way stories "illuminate the ways in which individuals make sense of their careers as they unfold through time and

space, attending to both the holistic nature of career as well as to specific career transitions." Noting that stories are "both products and processes," Cohen and Mallon defined career stories as "the complex, baggy, sometimes contradictory, often circuitous accounts of their careers that people construct in the course of research conversations or qualitative interviews" (2001, p. 50). Cohen and Mallon also pointed to new understandings of the concept of "career" that could call to mind the discussion earlier in this literature review of the skills workers can gain through the organizational-change process: "more embracing notions of career, based on the accumulation of skills and knowledge and the integration of professional and personal life..." (2001, p. 50). Also mirroring concepts of organizational change, the authors, whose study involved more than 60 workers in the U.K. and New Zealand who were changing careers from middle and senior management to become self-employed, pointed out that "in the context of societal, organizational, and personal change, a focus on individual stories offers a creative technique for studying the process of career creation, re-creation, and improvisation." Even more germane to the present study, some participants in the author's research characterized their career change as "taking on your own responsibility for your career, for building your own competence and skills base, because that is the only way you are going to ensure your personal survival during organizational change." Ready (2002, ¶ 19) suggested mapping stories against "a comprehensive framework of leadership competencies (or skills)" as a way of determining which stories to tell.

In a similar vein, Boje (1991, p. 106) wrote about organizational members constantly fine-tuning new organizational stories and reinterpreting old ones. Individuals, he noted, compare the old stories to new ones at decision-making junctures "to keep the

organization from repeating historically bad choices and to invite the repetition of past successes." It is thus reasonable to speculate that individuals could apply old and new personal career stories to preventing themselves from repeating bad career choices and encouraging the recurrence of past triumphs.

Storytelling and career counseling. Another small but growing collection of research looks at the use of story and narrative in the practice of career counseling. Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, and Owen (1999, p. 205) observed that the "narrative approach has a long history in psychology;" indeed, Maguire (1998, p. 41) said, "Psychotherapy is based on the premise that we each create our own life story from the time we are born." Supported by the notion that "career and work are socially constructed processes" (Parmer & Rush, 2003, p. 29), postmodern and constructivist approaches to career counseling, such as using narrative – having clients build their career story – are growing in popularity (Harris-Bowlsbey, 2003; Niles, 2003; Parmer & Rush, 2003; Hansen, 2003). As Niles noted, "People tend to focus on the process of trying to make meaning out of their life experiences" (p. 74). Storytelling in a career-counseling context is a way to do that; Watts (1998) called the process "helping individuals to be the authors of their own career narratives" (p. 5).

Christensen and Johnston (2003, p. 149) suggested that developing narratives can significantly help individuals to know what to emphasize in their career planning. They proposed that counselors perceive clients as both authors and central characters in their career stories which they are "concurrently constructing and enacting." Constructing their career story, the authors said, enables clients to discover connections and meaning in their careers that they might not have otherwise (p. 152). Similarly, Brott (2001, p. 304)

suggested a counseling approach that "explores the world through story development as the client and counselor collaboratively co-construct, deconstruct, and construct life stories." Brott provided a case example to show how this process works in a real counseling situation. Brott's view of this "storied approach" sets forth several tenets regarding change that parallel scholars' observations about organizational change including the notion that individual change is constant and that it is "punctuated by conflict and contradiction followed by periods of integration and resolution" (p. 306). Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten, and Owen (1999, p. 205) framed this process as clients imagining their desired future stories, thus facilitating their belief that their storied, envisioned future will play out in reality. The authors' research indicated that, indeed, clients who could tell these future stories tended to be "more effective in bringing those plans to fruition." Maguire (1998) characterized the narrative-therapy process as revising or replacing negative stories with positive ones.

While not yet having reached the status of being called a theoretical model, narrative is generally referred to in the literature to as an "approach" to career counseling, one that is "emerging" (Campbell & Ungar 2004a, 2004b). The narrative approach is very different from established models in career counseling in that it focuses on helping clients to articulate their "preferred futures rather than answering the question that is traditionally explored in career counseling, 'Who am I?'... that assumes that the self exists as an essential aspect of the individual, which can be revealed through the exploration of interests, skills, aptitudes, values, and personal styles" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b, p. 28). The authors also noted (2004b, p. 29) that "the self does not have a trait base but rather a narrative base." Campbell and Ungar considered traits among many

components of a client's story but contend that one's skillset does not determine one's future. A future is possible (2004b, p. 32) because "occupational identities are created not discovered" (p. 34). Similarly, Van Buskirk, McGrath, and Dennis (1992, ¶ 13) observed that "if narratives shape the environment which is experienced as real, they also shape the self." The authors connect the type of stories that individuals tell with the ways in which these workers cope with organizational change; a positive story will evoke a positive response to change, for example. For Cochran (1997, p. ix), who has devoted an entire book to the use of narrative in career counseling, the narrative approach is not concerned with the "matching" approach of other career-counseling models (such as the trait-and-factor model), but with "emplotment," which refers to how a person can be cast as the main character in a career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling" (p. ix).

Campbell's and Ungar's iteration of the narrative approach (2004a, 2004b) includes seven stages: (a) Know what you want, (b) Know what you have, (c) Know what you hear, (d) Know what constrains you, (e) Map your preferred story, (f) Grow into your story, and (g) Grow out of your story. Campbell and Ungar summarized one of the major differences in these approaches when they write that "traditional approaches gather information, whereas narrative therapy generates a different experience" (2004b, p. 35).

Peavy (1995, ¶ 1) summarized the differences between traditional trait-based approaches and postmodern approaches with a series of descriptors for traditional approaches, including "efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, objectivity, neutrality, expertness, behavioral reductionism, quantification, measurement," compared to these for postmodernist forms, such as narrative/storytelling: "self-construction, self as narrative, life planning" (¶ 2). He placed self as narrative in opposition to self as traits. Chen (1997,

¶ 14) believed that the traditional models will continue to be pertinent, but "they may not be sufficient to conceptualise the mission of the self in career making in the post-industrial era."

Among other salient features of the postmodern/narrative approach is that it is a holistic approach that links to postmodern theory and approaches being used in family therapy, thus recognizing that career is a whole-life phenomenon (Campbell & Ungar (2004a, 2004b). As these scholars wrote, "Careers are everything that people do with their lives rather than simply their occupation" (2004a, ¶ 34). Unlike other career-counseling models and approaches, the narrative approach recognizes the self as "an entity that evolves and transforms from birth to death, not as a fixed entity" (Campbell & Ungar 2004a, ¶ 9); it also strives for a "contextual sensitivity" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a, ¶ 14) not necessarily found in some of the models, which tend to offer minimal consideration of "family, community, economic, gender and racial contexts" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a, ¶ 14). Chen (1997, ¶ 21) refers to a "person-context integration" enabled by narrative.

The narrative approach to career counseling emphasizes "acceptance of chaos, a positive attitude toward instability, and openness toward changing one's preferred future as opportunities present themselves" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a, ¶ 33) and is characterized by "a turn away from 'psychometric self' and toward 'storied self'" (Peavy, 1995, ¶ 21). Wendy Patton (2005) described the use of story in career counseling this way:

> The individual's career story is the collection of images of the way the individual sees him[self] or herself in the world. While the informational aspects of the self

> (e.g., interest, abilities) and of the world of work constitute the content of the story, it is the individual's constructions of these and the positioning of them within the story – the individual's narrative about self – which provides its uniqueness for each individual. (¶ 24)

Patton further noted that exploring "subjective career narratives" enables individuals to "make links between past and present and make plans for the future" (¶ 27). Such exploration can, according to Collin and Watts (1996, p. 394), help people "'authorize' their careers by narrating a coherent, continuous and credible story; helping them to invest their career narrative with meaning by identifying themes and tensions in the story line; and learning the skills needed to perform the next episode in the story."

Other perspectives on storytelling and career. In popular-press literature, Bronson's bestselling *What Should I Do with My Life?* (2002) is subtitled *The True Story of People Who Answered the Ultimate Question*. The volume is a collection of more than 50 stories of people who made mistakes on the way to discovering their true calling. A similar book is Han's *Nobodies to Somebodies* (2005), stories of how "100 great careers got their start."

The Internet also is a repository of career stories on such sites as AboutMyJob.Com, which offers collections of first-person reports about what it is like to work in a given career or job. The Web site of consulting firm, DBM (Drake, Beam, Morin) (2005), offers career-change stories, although they are designed to promote DBM's services.

McKenna's assertion (1999, ¶ 58) amid the scholarly literature that stories can "help individuals make personal decisions about the appropriateness of their 'fit' with an

organization" sets the scene for popular-press career experts Bolles (2006) and Wendleton (2002), who both suggested exercises consisting of composing seven stories that describe accomplishments and skills to help people develop self- and career-awareness, make decisions about their career direction, and determine how well their skills and accomplishments fit within organizations under consideration. Brown and Reitman (2005) underscored the point about stories and organizational fit:

> From an organization's perspective, having the right people in the right positions is critical. When they are looking for leaders, they choose people whose stories mesh with the organization's needs. (p. 11)

Storytelling in Career-Marketing Communications

Virtually all of the literature about storytelling in career-marketing communications – resumes, cover letters, portfolios, employment interviews, personal branding, and networking – falls into the popular-press realm, and even there, it is generally necessary to extrapolate points relevant to this type of storytelling.

Storytelling to establish identity and become known. Simmons (1999) cited the desire to be known and acknowledged as a driving human need, one that story can help accomplish. Simmons also touted story as a way to make people and their messages memorable. Joining many other scholars in supporting the idea of stories as memorable, Morgan and Dennehy (1997, ¶ 3) noted that "because a story evokes both visual image and emotion, it is likely to be remembered." Clearly, being known and remembered by employers are among the goals of job-seekers, and it is in large part through resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and employment interviews that candidates make themselves

known. Not too great a leap of imagination is required to integrate story with these forms of career-management communication.

Both Simmons (2001) and Stephen Denning (2004, 2001) discussed using storytelling to tell "who you are." Table 2 compares Denning's and Simmons's suggested story types, many of which are applicable to the uses discussed here. Denning (2004) wrote this about story telling:

> Stories of personal identity follow the lines of a traditional story. They talk about what happened to someone – the hero or heroine – who is usually also the storyteller. These stories have a plot. They are told with feeling. Like tales for entertainment, these stories are typically colorful. (p. 58)

Denning further suggested that the "who I am" story should reveal a strength or vulnerability from the storyteller's past, be true, be moving, and be told with context (2004). The result, Denning said, is that the audience will better understand and trust the storyteller.

"Those you wish to influence begin with two major questions: Who are you? and Why are you here?" Simmons wrote (2001, p. 4-6). "Until these questions are answered, they don't trust what you say." Hurt and Metzger (2003, p. 3) suggested answering these and related questions with this sequence: "Let me tell you why I am who I am, and why I do what I do." In resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interviews, job-seekers attempt to tell who they are. The "Why are you here?" question can be translated as "Why are you contacting this employer?" and "Why do you want to work for this organization?"

As Simmons (2001) elaborated on how story can answer these questions, it is not difficult to envision a job-seeker attempting to gain an employer's trust by integrating story into a resume, cover letter, or in an interview:

> Before you attempt to influence anyone, you need to establish enough trust to successfully deliver your message. … People want to decide these things for themselves… the best you can do is tell them a story that simulates an experience of your trustworthiness. Hearing your story is as close as they can get to first-hand experience of watching you 'walk the walk' as opposed to the 'talk the talk.' Before anyone allows you to influence them, they want to know, 'Who are you and why are you here?' If you don't take the time to give a positive answer to that question, they will make up their own answers – usually negative. … You need to tell a story that demonstrates you are the kind of person people can trust. (p. 8)

Brown's and Reitman's view (2005, p. 10) of the role of storytelling in influencing hiring decision-makers is that stories enable the job-seeker to paint a picture of what the organization's future will look like if the candidate is hired. In addition to "who you are" and "why you are here" stories, the authors recommend "what you can do" and "what would you like to do" stories (p. 24). Devoting a full chapter to storytelling, Richards (2004, p. 66) cites stories that illustrate whether the storyteller can help transcend "current circumstances."

Table 2.2

Comparison of Denning's (2004) and Simmons's (2001) Suggested Story Types

Denning	Simmons
Storytelling to Communicate Complex Ideas and Spark Action	
Storytelling to Reveal Who You Are	"Who Am I" stories
Storytelling to Get Individuals to Work Together	
Storytelling to Transmit Values	"Values-in-Action" stories
Storytelling to Tame the Grapevine	
Storytelling to Share Knowledge	"Teaching" stories
Storytelling to Create a Future	"The Vision" story
	"I Know What You Are Thinking" stories
	"Why Am I Here" stories

For Kaye and Jacobson (1999, p. 48) these "who you are" stories are personal histories, encompassing "origins, journeys, feelings, and coping strategies." Screenwriting coach Robert McKee's definition of a story has implications for the individual as teller of the "Who am I?" story. Interviewed by Fryer (2003, ¶ 5), McKee said, "Essentially, a story expresses how and why life changes … the heart of a human being is revealed in the choices he or she makes under pressure." Gardner (1999, p. 23) echoed these ideas when he wrote that "the story that people have always been interested in, particularly today, is the identity story – the story of who we are, why we are here,

what we are ultimately trying to achieve, what are our obstacles, and how we can progress toward our goals."

The who am I/who are you questions most commonly emerge in the job-interview phase of career-marketing communication with the frequently asked interview question, "Tell me about yourself," which writer Goldman (2006, ¶ 6) suggests is a great question to be asked because it "gives the candidate total control of the interview process" and is "a wonderful vehicle to build rapport." Goldman lists personal stories as one way to respond to the question.

Kaye and Jacobson (1999, p. 47) suggested using stories to "examine the plots and themes of your life – your values, priorities, concerns, interests, and experiences together create patterns." They propose looking back at past stories and asking what was learned and discovered about the self and others. The authors advocate creating stories about successes, as well as imperfections, mistakes, failures, and derailments. A story prompt they have used asks, "Why not tell a story about a risky career move that turned out well?" (p. 47). Hurt and Metzger (2003) suggested building stories that support significant skills, such as leadership and teamwork. The authors advised looking for patterns that have evolved over a lifetime as well as examining past successes in using given skills and crafting stories about what made the execution of these skills so successful. Resumes, cover letters, and interviews certainly could contain the elements these scholars describe; stories about developing skills in the face of obstacles, taking chances, coping with change, and learning from mistakes and failures can demonstrate skills the job-seeker has gained during organizational change. Effectively using stories in these job-seeking venues could offer the further benefit of demonstrating the candidate's

communication skills, given Boje's view (1991, ¶ 51) that "people who are more skilled as storytellers and story interpreters seem to be more effective communicators than those who are less skilled." Strackbein and Strackbein (n.d., ¶ 1) certainly could have been talking about career-marketing communication when they wrote on their Defining Stories Web site: "Tell your story. Reveal your personality and showcase your expertise in writing or when you speak. You become memorable and desirable." Durrance (1997, ¶ 9) told a tale that exemplifies the notion of revealing one's personality through story. She described an aspiring dancer exuding happiness and a positive attitude while working in a tollbooth. While many toll-takers might consider such a job soul deadening, the protagonist in Durrance's story radiates joy because he turns on music and practices dancing in his tollbooth throughout his shift. "We can feel the story move us," Durrance wrote, "opening windows of possibilities, expanding our idea of work, and challenging our thoughts about jobs, dreams, and tollbooths." It is not difficult to picture the toll-taker/dancer interviewing for his next job and dazzling the interviewer with his upbeat take on making the best of a dull job.

Storytelling also can work in the job search because people can identify with each other, recognize each other's commonalities, and connect through story (Clark, 2005; Ramzy, 2006). Stories of job-seekers' shared human experience can resonate with employers hearing or reading them (Gold, 1996). Gargiulo (2002, p. 17) went as far as to say, "Stories show how our sets of experiences, memories, fears, and desire match with someone else's."

Storytelling as self-selling, self-marketing, and personal branding. Relevant to "personal branding," an emerging trend in career-marketing communication, several

authors such as Godin discussed storytelling in relation to marketing, suggesting that most people are marketers to some extent. In fact, Godin (2005) *equated* marketing with storytelling. Certainly the job search can be characterized as self-marketing, and Godin identified the job search with his "marketing = storytelling" model (p. 80) numerous times in his book *All Marketers are Liars*. Professional resume writer Dagnall observed, "I've always understood resumes, cover letters, personal branding, etc., as facets of marketing; is it even possible to market without story?" (personal communication, May 31, 2006). Godin did not think marketing without story is possible: "Either you're going to tell stories that move people, or you will become irrelevant," he wrote (2006, ¶ 1). Denning (2005, p. 3) noted, "Narrative is increasingly recognized as central in branding," and when he refers to a "storied product," he could just as easily be referencing a job-seeker as a non-human product. Hilicki (2005) wrote in the popular-press book, *May I Have Your Attention, Please?*, "branding is all about stories and storytelling" (p. 11).

Amid the growing body of literature on the connection between storytelling and marketing/sales is an article in which Hersch (2005, ¶ 6) discussed the value of "storytelling" in insurance sales (Anthony as quoted by Hersch). Hersch's accounts of using story in sales could be applied to the job-seeker needing to sell himself or herself to an employer. Merely being educated about a product is not enough to motivate a buyer to take significant action, Hersch noted: clients need to be emotionally energized through story. "Experts emphasize [that] prospects arrive at conclusions more easily when they're thinking intuitively than when they are analytically," he wrote, advising salespeople to "use storytelling to build rapport and credibility with the prospect. Storytelling is a way to distinguish a product/service – or one's job candidacy." Citing Cary Brazeman, a

principal of The Corporate Storyteller consulting firm, Clark (2005) pointed out that competitors essentially tout that their products/services do the same things. The seller who expresses the product's/service's personality through storytelling is the one that will stand out. The same principle can applied to selling oneself to an employer as a product. "Storytelling is a way to capture what's unique," Post wrote (2002, p. 28), aligning with the advice that marketers and career experts alike proffer – to tout one's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) (Hansen, 1998).

Storytelling in resumes. The scholarly literature does not offer a great deal of material on resumes. A database search of *The Journal of Business Communication* produced 24 results, not all of which focus entirely on resumes; similarly a search of *Business Communication Quarterly* produced 61 results with varying levels of focus on resumes. The literature contains almost nothing about resumes as a vehicle for stories, and the contemporary resume, with its bullet points and terse, clipped phrases, seems antithetical to any type of storytelling device. In their 1985 textbook *Interviewing Principles and Practice*, Stewart and Cash referenced and showed an example of a "story resume" (p. 207, Figure 7.4), although most observers would likely characterize the document shown as a biography written in third-person rather than a resume. Asked about the applicability of storytelling to resumes, Denning responded in this manner:

> In reality, what's happening in the resume/job application process, is that the recruiting firm … is trying to understand the story of the applicant and how it would fit with the story of the organization as they understand it. But this process is often severely constrained because the practice of writing resumes is essentially to preclude telling the candidate's story. "Just the facts, ma'am," as Sergeant Joe

Friday would say. Your personal story might be seen as excessive disclosure by the organization. (personal communication, July 5, 2004)

Seth Godin (2005, p. 135) disagreed, contending that "insisting on telling them just the facts is a sure way to fail." Denning further speculated that resumes that incorporated storytelling into them might look like the biographical sketches of him and his colleagues on his Web site. In his book, *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling* (2005, p. 4), Denning discussed brand management as "adjective selection" in which branding has "amounted to little more than the manipulation of meaningless abstractions." Denning's terms could easily apply to contemporary resumes, which are often collections of adjectives and meaningless puffery with no stories to back up their claims.

Looking at literature written from a human resources perspective suggests the applicability of storytelling to resumes. Gargiulo (2002, p. 43-44), for example, proposed that human resource managers prepare to interview candidates by reading resumes with their "story mind." He advocated using the information in the resume to "construct a story and image of the person." Commenting on a sample resume he has provided in his book, Gargiulo wrote, "On the surface, this resume appears to be dry and straightforward. Hidden in the details, however, are dozens of interesting stories." The author's observation begs the questions: What if the stories were *not* hidden in the details? What if a resume presented stories explicitly? Storytelling enables the listener or reader to visualize one's experience (Frey, 2006), rather than reading bullet points filled with uninteresting facts. When a participant in Cohen and Mallon's research (2002, p. 57), noted that "the curriculum vitae lacks 'the meaning of career as lived,'" the question arises: What if the curriculum vitae were a story-rich and meaningful document? While

failing to provide many details about how to create a story-based resume, Ibarra's and Lineback's 2005 (p. 5) article contains a sidebar entitled, "Does Your Resume Tell a Story?" exhorting that "everything in the resume must point to one goal … the climax of the story you're telling."

Writing in *Resume Writer's Digest*, Shabad (2004, p. 4) cautioned resume writers not to merely write about accomplishments in resumes: "Instead, write compelling stories of client value matched to the company's needs." Brown's popular-press book, *Organization Smarts* (2002, p. 121), noted that individuals tell stories with their resumes based on what they choose to leave out of them, "selecting those parts that we think others are interested in and leaving out a great deal that doesn't advance our personal narrative." Writing about proposals, Frey (2006), who also espoused storytelling in resumes, similarly suggested that inclusion, salience, and exclusion are significant considerations in storytelling documents.

One popular-press book notable for its emphasis on storytelling is *High-Level Resumes* (2005) by Brown and Reitman, who wrote that while seeking a unique angle for their book, they realized a gap:

> [We] didn't know of any senior-level resumes books that identified storytelling as a means of writing a resume and searching for a new job or career. Just as we tell our clients that the uniqueness of their resumes is what separates them from the stack that hiring directors receive, so do their unique stories. (p. 9)

Chapters in the book describe preparing to tell one's story, developing the story, and marketing the story. In personal communication (August 4, 2006), however, Reitman revealed that her "clients don't necessarily produce storytelling resumes." Instead,

Reitman collaborates with clients in "a storytelling approach to gathering the info, deciding what to include, and the format/style to tell their present professional story and project an ideal image." Reitman added, "By taking a storytelling approach in working with them, it's easier for them to get focused and decide how to set-up their 'basic story' and vary it slightly for different targeted audiences."

"The place to start with your … resume is this: what classic story can I tell?" Godin wrote (2005, p. 122) "Your resume should be about inventing remarkable things and telling stories that register – not about how good you are at meeting specs" (p. 30).

Peripherally related to using storytelling in resumes is the concept of "thin-slicing," as Gladwell discussed in his popular book about intuition, *Blink!* Gladwell (2005, p. 23) defined thin-slicing as "the ability of our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behavior based on very narrow slices of experience." Employers can be said to "thin-slice" when they glance at a resume. Rare is the employer who will read even close to the entire resume on the first pass. Yet they will usually place resumes into a "yes," "no," or "maybe" pile based on the tiny slice of a resume that actually catches their attention. The concept of weaving compelling narrative and a story-based theme into a resume is proposed in this study as a way to resonate with the employer in a manner more effective than the usual thin slices of the job-seeker's experience served up in a traditional resume.

The KSA (an acronym for Knowledge – Skills – Abilities), is a close cousin of the resume used primarily in government hiring and is another aspect of career-marketing communication in which storytelling can play a positive role. KSA documents, typically consisting of 3-6 KSAs, are commonly requested for government jobs and sometimes for

non-government positions. Christensen (2004), co-author of *On-the-Job Communications for Business, the Professions, Government, and Industry*, encouraged his business-communication students to write stories about career experiences that enabled them to achieve the knowledge, skill, or ability they are being asked to describe.

Storytelling in employment portfolios. Maich, Brown, and Royle (2000) mentioned storytelling in relation to employment portfolios citing the pride that portfolio users radiate while "sharing stories" (p. 313, 318) as part of the portfolio experience. An individual's career story, wrote Patton (2005), lends itself to constructing a personal portfolio. Indeed, Paulson and Paulson wrote (1991, p. 2), "A portfolio tells a story. It is the story of knowing. Knowing about things... Knowing oneself... Knowing an audience... Portfolios are [people's] own stories of what they know, why they believe they know it, and why others should be of the same opinion" (p. 2). Particularly championing online or digital portfolios, Barrett (2004, ¶ 1) described these tools as "digital stories of deep learning."

Storytelling in cover letters and networking. The literature is also largely devoid of work on storytelling in cover letters and contains little about cover letters in general: A search using the terms "cover letter" yielded 25 results from *The Journal of Business Communication* and 26 from *Business Communication Quarterly*, none of which listed "cover letter" in the title. Searches using "letter of application" and "application letter" yielded five results between the two journals. An exception to the dearth of scholarly literature on using stories in cover letters is Bodow (2001, ¶ 32), who suggested that "a well-prepared cover letter gives you an opportunity to tailor your story to the opportunity that you seek."

Networking, especially with regard to storytelling, is similarly treated in the literature, although Ibarra and Lineback (2005) referred to a networking event in which would-be network contacts had difficulty grasping how they could help the job-seekers in attendance because the job-seekers tended to be "fact tellers" (p. 1). The authors contended that if the job-seekers had, instead of listing facts, told compelling stories, they would "make effective use of contacts and successfully enlist supporters" (p. 1).

Storytelling in employment interviews. Unlike the literature on resumes, cover letters, networking, and portfolios, the integration of story with employment interviewing occupies relatively significant space in the literature, again, primarily in the popular-press sphere.

One of the few scholarly studies (Ralston, Kirkwood, & Burant, 2003) on using storytelling in employment interviewing not only suggested the importance of telling stories in job interviews, but also focused on how to measure and improve the quality of stories told in the interview. Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant noted the necessity of telling stories, particularly during a type of interview known as the behavioral interview, the premise of which is that past performance in similar situations is the most accurate predictor of future performance, up to seven times more accurate than traditional interviewing, according to Schmidt and Conaway (1999, p. 72). "Evidence shows that behavioral description questions require respondents to tell stories and that storytelling is now critical to applicants' success in employment interviews," the authors wrote (¶ 1). Other evidence that Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant found in the literature included the notion that stories told in interviews garner attention, serve as a way to make the applicant memorable, and describe past behavior in an appealing way. The authors

presented a set of criteria for an effective story to be used in a job interview, based on (a) internal consistency, (b) consistency with facts the listener knows to be true, (c) relevance to question asked and claim being made, (d) univocality, (e) detail that supports the claim being made, and (f) reflection of the job-seeker's values, beliefs, sense of self/others, or emotional outlook.

"Whether you're seeking a job or seeking new employees, your ability to write or tell good stories could make an enormous difference in the success of your undertaking," wrote Hagevik (2000, ¶ 1), echoing Ralston's, Kirkwood's, and Burant's (2003) contention that behavioral interviews call for stories in response. When Kaye and Jacobson (1999, p. 48) talked about stories that imagine "how we might behave," they could be talking about the behavioral interview. Typically, career experts advise candidates to respond to behavioral interview questions with stories. "Your examples are best told through a story format," Martin wrote (2004, p. 127). "The more interesting and relevant the story is, the more the interviewer will want to hear further examples."

Gargiuluo (2005, p. 50) referenced the employer's viewpoint when he recommended that hiring managers see each job-seeker as "a story waiting to unfold" and ask interview questions that will "elicit stories." Drawing out stories from candidates is part of hiring "smart," Gargiuluo said, and could result in lower turnover.

Writers frequently advise job-seekers to structure their stories based on formulas expressed as acronyms, as in these mentioned by Whitcomb (2004): the CAR or STAR method (acronyms for Challenge, Action, Result or Situation/Task, Action, and Result) and the SMART format, which stands for Situation with Metrics, Actions, Results, and Tie-in. Klein (2003, p. 201) provided a model with the acronym STICC, which stands for

Situation, Task, Intent, Concerns, Calibration, which although intended for use in giving people directions, could also be applied to formulating interview stories. Career coach Terwelp (2005, ¶ 4) suggested that before each interview, job-seekers, using the CAR format: "Develop at least three case studies that demonstrate your expertise."

Another way to look at a formula for telling stories in an interview is what Morgan and Dennehy described as "the traditional framework of universal steps displayed in myths, hero stories, classic fairy tales, ethnic stories, and many of your own family stories" (¶ 9). The authors cited these "five sequential components" in a good story: (a) setting, (b) build-up ("trouble's coming"), (c) crisis or climax, (d) learning, and (e) new behavior or awareness (¶ 9). Using the story to answer what Morgan and Dennehy characterize as the final questions, "What did you learn?" and "How did you change?" (¶ 10) could comprise an application of this framework to interviewing and other job-search communication.

Storytelling can also provide an effective form of structured spontaneity for job-seekers in interviews. For example, Gladwell (2005) discussed improvisational theater as an example of structured spontaneity in which the action seems to occur completely extemporaneously, yet it actually unfolds against of backdrop of rules unseen to the audience. A job interview can be likened to an improvisation, except that one person, the interviewer (usually), has a script. Because the interviewee must improvise, he or she can benefit from structured spontaneity, with storytelling, using, for example, one of the structured formula acronyms.

Telling change stories in the job search. Change provides an appropriate backdrop for storytelling. Ibarra and Lineback (2005) wrote about change and story:

> Seldom is a good story so needed … as when a major change of professional direction is under way… In a time of such unsettling transition, telling a compelling story … inspires belief in our motives, character, and capacity to reach the goals we've set. (p. 2)

A compelling story at this time, the authors contended, helps the listener feel invested in the storyteller's success, a scenario that would bode well when the storyteller is a job-seeker and the listener is an employer. The authors provided an example of a worker who developed and told change stories about a bankruptcy, a turnaround, and a rapid reorganization -- eventually garnering referrals to employers, as well as job interviews. In another example, a worker learned more about her career passions and became more committed to a planned career change each time she told her story by writing a cover letter, participating in a job interview, or networking with friends. Ibarra and Lineback asserted that "a good story … is essential for making a successful transition" (p. 2) and that the turning point, conflict, and tension inherent in a change story will hook the listener into the story. Neuhauser (1993), an early proponent of organizational storytelling, observed that employers look for new entrants who manage their fears of change and look forward to the challenge of new adventures. Neuhauser noted that these employers "listen for and ask for stories in the interviews that will tell them if the individual has a history of handling change well" (p. 113-114).

Stories that demonstrate successful problem-solving are the recommendation of Washington (2000), who devoted a full chapter of his popular-press interviewing book to storytelling:

> Using anecdotes to describe job skills is a highly effective interview technique. In less than three minutes, you can tell a powerful story that will make interviewers remember you favorably for days, weeks, or even months after the interview. (p. 22)

Washington touted the effectiveness of storytelling in interviews because of the way stories, as opposed to mere words, "create images or emotions in the minds of employers" (p. 21), "imprint vivid images in the brains of employers" (p. 23) (thus facilitating their memory of the job-seeker), and convey a great deal about the job-seeker in an "evocative, concentrated way" (p. 22). Washington supported the notion that stories can be a vehicle for describing skills asserting that "the beauty of stories is that they can evoke a recollection of many skills, qualities, abilities, and characteristics" (p. 22).

Questions about candidates' strengths and weaknesses are standard fare in job interviews, and stories about turning weaknesses into strengths can be especially compelling. Barry and Elmes (1997, ¶ 30) pointed out that "as strengths are employed and weaknesses transformed, the protagonist becomes a hero."

The story recounted in Chapter 1 of this study (p. 3) of the frustrated job-seeker who found success by using stories in interviews and posted a review of Simmons' book, *The Story Factor* (2001), on Amazon.com, also illustrated the potential for storytelling in career-marketing communication.

Research Question

The paucity of literature about storytelling in career-management communications exposes a niche that the current Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and its addendum book manuscript attempt to fill. Because most individuals experience

organizational change at points in their careers, they have an opportunity to gain new skills. At the same time, organizational change is frequently accompanied by workforce instability and the need for new organization members. Storytelling provides a communication tool that individuals can deploy to describe the change skills they have gained. The research question underlying this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and the book manuscript is: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change, both for themselves and for the organization as a whole?

This Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and especially its accompanying book manuscript propose innovative ways individuals can use story to advance their careers while coping with ongoing change.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study is grounded in the qualitative research methods of narrative inquiry and online focus groups, thus using storytelling not only as the centerpiece of its premise, but also as the focus of its research methods. This chapter provides a rationale for the choice of these methods. It details the research process and the ethical protection of the human participants.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach, more accurately called the qualitative paradigm (Lincoln, 2005), has strong proponents in the field of organization studies. Luhman (1998), for example, wrote, "Scientific knowledge, in its drive to be comprehensive (to reduce and simplify), ignores the placing of meaning on human experience which fails to gain insight into people's lives and social reality." Patton (2002, p. 196) noted that "qualitative inquiry can be used to discover, capture, present, and preserve the stories of organizations, programs, communities, and families." Contending that tests and measurements do not offer inquiry into such sensemaking, Lincoln (2005, p. 225) argued that "qualitative methods offer the best possibility for understanding how individuals make sense of and enact their social (and organizational) worlds."

In sum, "qualitative research is no longer the poor stepchild of quantitative inquiries," Jones (2004, p. 95) asserted, continuing by saying that over the last decade, "qualitative research has come into its own."

Rationale for Narrative Inquiry

Progressing downward through a hierarchy in which qualitative research embraces narrative as a sub-category, strong support is evident for narrative as a research method. Champions of narrative inquiry pointed out its salient features:

- "The narrative capability of humans is a unique, fundamental cognitive process, which is crucial to the interpretation and reconstitution of cultural and personal reality" (Sinclair, 2005, p. 56).
- "Narrative analysis allows for systematic study of personal experience and meaning" (Riessman, 2001, ¶ 45).
- "Narrative is the bread and butter of qualitative work … qualitative research is always about story reporting and story making … narrative is a democratizing factor in social science research" (Jones, 2004, p. 96).

Quantitative research, Schostak (n.d., ¶ 10) noted, assumes a certain homogeneity among subjects studied, but "it soon becomes apparent to any social researcher that no one organisation, nor single individual is identical to another." Schostak argued for using narrative to capture the quintessence of human existence, the importance of narrative structure in analytical research, and the consistency of the narrative form in describing the human experience. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 42) noted, "The contribution of narrative inquiry is more often intended to be the creation of a new sense of meaning and significance to the research topic than it is to yield a set of knowledge claims that might incrementally add to knowledge in the field."

Patton (2002) recognized narrative as an emergent, specific approach for studying organizations. Of four of Czarniawska's forms that Patton delineated (p. 118) as ways of

using narrative to study organizations, the one that most closely aligns with this study's methodology is "organizational research that collects organizational stories (tales of the field)."

Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 48) observed the increasing recognition of stories as "a powerful research tool." Narrative inquiry is especially appropriate to the current study and its exploration of the role of organizational change in constructing individual career stories.

Several scholars, for example, have made a case for narrative inquiry in careers research. Despite a predominance in careers research of a positivistic approach, Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 48-49) wrote, "Stories … can be a valuable instrument in illuminating the ways in which individuals make sense of their careers as they unfold through time and space." "To describe a person's career is to tell a story," wrote Cochran, (1990, ¶ 1), who also noted Tiedeman's and Miller-Tiedeman's 1985 argument that "career theory and research have been distorted and restricted by an unexamined adoption of a positivistic stance on research, a myopic focus on current practice, and the materialistic and mechanistic worldview of scientism" (¶ 37).

"In the context of societal, organizational, and personal change," Cohen and Mallon wrote (2001, p. 53), "a focus on individual stories offers a creative technique for studying the process of career creation, re-creation, and improvisation" and provides "potential for elucidating this subjective level and the relationship between individual action and wider social and cultural contexts" (p. 48-49), while Mensinga (n.d.) cited "the challenges and delights of using a narrative approach to explore students' career choices" (p. 2).

The use of narrative also enables previously unheard voices to speak. Noting the postmodern aspect of collecting stories, Rhodes (1996) made this assertion:

> Using storytelling as a research technique aims at giving voice to stories which are not heard in traditional (modern) narrative of organisational theory… The value of the approach is that it creates the opportunity for reflective discussion and comparison of the diversity of story meanings and themes. (¶ 15)

Thus, storytelling opens "discursive spaces for research subjects" (Riessman, 2001, ¶ 46). Walker (2003, p. 46) described narrative inquiry as a responsive and participatory method of data gathering and interpretation," providing "direct open-ended engagement with people."

Finally, narrative inquiry aligns with this study's theoretical framework that reality is socially constructed. In situating the individual as the originator of reality and identity construction during organization change, both Taylor and Ford provided a jumping-off point for considering social construction of the self and career and "the now well-accepted idea that our identities are continually being made and remade through the stories which we tell to ourselves and others, about various aspects of our lives" (Cohen, 2006, ¶ 2). Taylor (1999) and Ford (1999) also supported the theoretical underpinning that "meaning is constructed through the telling of the story" (Walker, 2003, p. 16). Similarly, Lambert (2003) called stories "the large and small instruments of meaning, of explanation, that we store in our memories. We cannot live without them" (p. 1). Further, Polkinghorne (1988) described narrative:

> A form of "meaning making" … Narrative recognizes the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts of the whole. Its

> particular subject is human actions and events that affect human beings, which it configures into wholes according to the roles these actions and events play in bringing about a conclusion. (p. 36)

Ruona's observation (2005, p. 234) that "qualitative data deal with meanings," which are "mediated primarily through language and action," stands in contrast to Cohen's and Mallon's (2001, p. 51) assertion regarding the "inadequacy of positivistic approaches (the stock-in-trade of much career theory) and the need for theoretical approaches which more adequately capture the dynamic ways in which individuals enact their careers." Noting the tendency for research using the positivist approach to "fall into the trap of thinking in binaries" (Mensinga, n.d., p. 6) such as individual vs. organization, Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 52) stated that "the conceptual power of the notion of career is precisely that it recursively links the individual to the organization and the wider, changing social world." Similarly, of the positivist approach to research, Riessman, 2001, wrote this comment:

> Verification of the "facts" of lives is less salient than understanding the changing meaning of events for the individuals involved – and how these, in turn, are located in history and culture. Personal narratives are, at core, meaning-making units of discourse. They are of interest precisely because narrators interpret the past in stories, rather than reproduce the past as it was. (¶ 36)

The theoretical framework of the narrative-inquiry portion of this study mirrors that of Bryant and Cox (2004, ¶ 10, citing Guba & Lincoln, 1998): "A constructivist approach to gain an understanding of how individual employees interpret and talk about their experiences of organizational change." The study finds its roots in constructivism

not only because it examines meaning in participants' change stories but also because it looks at ways that creating meaning through stories can help individuals advance their careers. The research may benefit both scholars and study participants, a reflection of Luhman's assertion, "Organization studies should strive to enable people to realize an understanding of themselves and the process of social construction of reality." As in Cohen's and Mallon's (2001) description of individuals "gaz[ing] backwards and invest[ing] past events with meaning that resonates with the present" (p. 56), the researcher explored how study participants may have imbued their past experience of organizational change with meaning that they can then apply to their future careers, especially by textualizing meaning in career-marketing communications (resumes, cover letters, interview responses, career portfolios, and personal branding). As Walker (2003, p. 68) described the transcripts and other raw materials she generated through her narrative interviews as "temporary containers for meanings as they emerged," so, too, were the raw materials in the current study. The researcher then envisioned participants' meaning in further temporary containers – communications that they might use to propel their careers. Participants may have benefited from the method of inquiry based on the notion set forth by Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou (2003, p. 22) that "in performing narratives we can create new possibilities for identities and actions." For readers, too, stories offer the opportunity to ponder "vicariously" (Walker, 2003, p. 22) the experience of others and consider how it might relate to their own.

To that end, and in support of "fuller, richer narratives" about and in support of careers and organizational life, it is appropriate to underscore this study's theoretical framework with Cochran's lament about the persistent tendency in career research and

theory to conceptualize individuals as comprising traits and attributes rather than meaning-filled stories (1990):

> What is lost is the meaning of a career as lived, the interior significance that is peculiarly human and that would allow us to form a story rather than a chronicle. In pursuing a career, we live meanings, and lived meanings make a career narratable, intelligible, and coherent. All that would captivate us in a good autobiography, for instance, would be neglected. Meaning (self-concept, values, etc.) enters as an attribute of an organism, not as the living of a story that endows life with significance or insignificance. Dividing people, for instance, into those with high and low meaningfulness is at best merely preparatory. Careers as texts to be interpreted must still be read to understand the reality that supports and authenticates external attributions. Phrased another way, if we are beings who live in story, represent in story, explain through story, understand through story, and have our meaning in story, then chronicle leaves out the most essential part. We must seek ways to go beyond chronicle to fuller, richer narratives. (¶ 24)

Rationale for Focus Groups/Online Focus Groups

The focus groups were conducted in a computer-mediated fashion – online focus groups – a technique that Patton cited as emergent (2001, p. 389). Focus groups are a widely used form of qualitative research in academia, but especially are used in market research (Chen & Hinton, 1999). Falling in the continuum of qualitative research between participant observation and in-depth interviews, focus groups consist of semi-structured question sessions in which responses propel the discussion forward, new topics emerge,

and the researcher can ask probing follow-up questions of the participants (Rezabek, 2000).

While the Internet is now well established for quantitative research, the same is not true of qualitative research (Sweet & Walkowski, 2000), on which, for example, market research spending is negligible (Wellner, 2003). Still, the Internet has engendered "new forms of focus groups" (Patton, 2002, p. 389), and "the acceptance of online focus groups by qualitative researchers has grown" (Zinchiak, 2001, ¶ 2). Wrote Bradford (2001, ¶ 2), "Recent academic research findings and conference case studies provide compelling evidence that results comparable to traditional methods can be achieved with proper online qualitative methods in appropriate applications." Through hyperlinks, online focus groups also can provide easy access to the Internet-based materials to be viewed by participants (Appendix A-7, n.d.).

Advantages of online focus groups over face-to-face groups include ease of recruitment because participants remain in their own physical site (Chen & Hinton, 1999; Mara, 2000; Rezabek, 2000; Sweet & Walkowski, 2000; Underhill & Olmstead, 2003); lower expenses than face-to-face groups because they require neither expenditure for a physical venue nor any travel expenses for moderators to get to distant locations (Chen & Hinton, 1999; Mara, 2000; Montoya-Weiss, Massey, & Clapper; 1998; Underhill & Olmstead, 2003); and the ability to include geographically dispersed individuals, as well as participants with limited time (Chen & Hinton, 1999; Sweet & Walkowski, 2000; Zinchiak, 2001).

Pilot Studies

The researcher conducted pilot studies for both methodological approaches: narrative-inquiry interviews and online focus groups. The pilot study interviews were conducted according to the procedures described in a subsequent section (Sample Selection and Data Collection: Narrative Inquiry) with one participant in each of the two participant categories:

- Former job-seekers who recently successfully changed jobs or careers.
- Organization members in organizations undergoing change.

The researcher did not find, as a result of the pilot study, that changes were warranted in the narrative-inquiry interview portion of the study.

An online focus group was piloted with three participants on the topic of story-based resumes according to the same procedures described in a later section regarding the main study. As a result of this pilot study, the researcher determined that the research design needed significant adjustment, particularly in the sample resumes that participants were asked to review.

Focus group participants in this pilot study were asked to review two resumes. One was a typical resume with traditional content and format. The other attempted to incorporate elements of storytelling. Except for participants' exposure to the name of the study (which includes the word "storytelling") in the informed consent forms, participants were not led to look for storytelling elements. An aspect of the research was to discover if subjects could identify the storytelling elements in the story-based resume as "storytelling elements" without prompting. Participants were only marginally able to identify the storytelling elements in that resume. The "storytelling resume" therefore

needed adjustment to distinguish it more clearly from the traditional resume so that the research could explore whether storytelling can be identified and used effectively in resumes.

Of resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interviews, resumes are the media in which storytelling is the most unexpected. Some degree of storytelling is usually already inherent in cover letters, portfolios, and interviews, as the scholarly literature demonstrates. The researcher chose resumes as the topic for the pilot study with the knowledge that creating a story-based resume for focus group participants' reactions would be more difficult than creating story-based cover letters, portfolios, and interviews – and that the pilot study could serve as a test of whether adjustments were necessary on the sample resumes.

Sample Selection and Data Collection: Narrative Inquiry

To address the research question underlying this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, stories were collected from two groups of individuals using narrative interviews. The research question is this: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change, both for themselves and for the organization as a whole? The study included two groups:

- Former job-seekers who recently successfully changed jobs or careers. Using in-depth, loosely structured interviews, the researcher asked participants to tell their career stories and to describe how they had experienced organizational change.

- Organization members from several organizations in the process of major change or that have recently undergone major change. Again, using a relatively unstructured, in-depth interviewing technique with a limited number of questions, participants were asked to describe how they had experienced change in their current and previous organizations.

Participants were chosen based on "purposeful sampling," which Patton (2001, p. 230) described as "information-rich cases" selected "strategically and purposefully," and were solicited through Quintessential Careers (http://www.quintcareers.com), a career-development Web site with which the researcher is associated.

Both groups comprised normal volunteers (Union Institute & University, 2003) who were employed adults of both sexes. Since the intent of the study was not to gather generalizable results, the researcher did not attempt to recruit a representative sample across demographic groups. Inclusion criteria included participant interest, willingness, and comfort with being recorded and reviewing transcripts, and consent that the material would be used in published research, albeit anonymously (Walker, 2003).

Patton (2001) asserted that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244), and initially the researcher envisioned interviewing up to 20 subjects in each of the two categories; however, more recent research suggested that 12 participants in a qualitative study would yield appropriate data (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). Ultimately, the number of participants (a total of 16) for this research was based on theoretical saturation, also known as redundancy (Patton, 2001, p. 246), a situation in data collection when participants' descriptions become repetitive and confirm previously collected data, and "no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during

analysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). As Adams (2003) pointed out, "In qualitative research, when no new themes are emerging, it is a good indication that enough information has been collected."

At Patton's suggestion (2001, p. 343), an interview guide (see Appendix C) was created to "provide topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject." The researcher developed a set of questions but remained open to expanding the conversation about particular topics, phrased queries spontaneously, and used a conversational style without straying far from the topic (Patton, 2001). Patton noted that loosely structured/open-ended interviews and those that follow a guide are not mutually exclusive, and the approaches can be combined (p. 347). Dunford and Jones (2000, p. 1210) suggested that using a set of universal questions ensures "some commonality of topic across interviews." The clarifying questions that Taylor (1999) asked in his research provided a foundation for the questions used. He asked his subjects if change had occurred in their organization and requested that they describe their position within the organization. Taylor endeavored to discover – with minimal influence from him – what had been most salient about the change the subjects had experienced. He asked for clarification in cases of confusion, as well as specific examples or elements that especially stood out.

On that basis, the questions that provided the framework for this study's interviews of both groups of participants focused on a brief description of the subjects' career histories, their position within their current organizations, an account of the change their organizations had undergone, the personal significance of and learning from that

organizational change, and a description of skills acquired or sharpened as a result of going through the change. Participants were asked if they had undergone job interviews for recent jobs or promotions and if they had been asked in the interviews about skills related to change. They were then asked to imagine that they were interviewing for a new job in an organization that anticipated major changes. Participants were asked if they could envision themselves telling a story about how they handled change. Finally, they were asked the story they would tell it as though they were in the interview.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted an average of 30 minutes each. Interviews were audio-recorded on a laptop computer using an application called SoundStudio; the researcher also took notes in case of equipment failure, which happened once in the pilot study but not during the main study. Interviews were conducted at and near the DeLand, FL, and Celebration, FL, campuses of Stetson University. It was the researcher's intent to conduct the interviews in an unobtrusive fashion with minimal disruption to participants' time. Participants were briefed comprehensively and in writing in advance, using an informed consent form (see Appendix D).

Participants were provided with the time to consider whether they would participate as well as the opportunity to ask questions before the interviews began. The interviews were transcribed soon after the interviews took place. Transcripts of the interviews were transmitted to participants by postal mail or a password-protected Web link for validation to give them the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies and to make comments and changes.

After completing 11 interviews, the researcher noted no appreciable difference in the questions being asked of the subjects in the job-seeker category compared to the

questions asked of the subjects in the organization-member category, nor was there an appreciable difference in the type of narrative data collected. Thus, the two categories were blended into one with data saturation sought across just one category instead of two.

Sample Selection and Data Collection: Focus Groups

To collect data for the portion of this study that addressed storytelling media in the job search (resumes, cover letters, and interviews) focus groups were conducted with normal volunteers who are recruiters, hiring managers, and human-resources managers, or volunteers who had recent (within two years) experience in any of these capacities. Members of the focus groups included adults of both sexes.

A typical focus group consists of a moderator/facilitator guiding 3 to 10 people of similar backgrounds through a focused discussion of a specific topic (Reid & Reid, 2005, p. 132). Noting Patton's observation that focus groups typically seek reactions to something (2001, p. 388), participants' reactions were sought to storytelling techniques in resumes, cover letters, and interview responses. The researcher initially also sought to conduct a focus group on career portfolios but did not succeed in recruiting participants for such a group.

Given that the use of focus groups for collecting data is essentially a subset of interviewing, procedures for the focus-group portion of the methodology were similar to the process of interviewing to cull stories.

The online interface most commonly mentioned in the literature for online focus groups was the synchronous chat room in which all participants interact simultaneously. Other formats mentioned included asynchronous chat rooms (Burton & Goldsmith, 2002), customized software (Miller & Dickson, 2001) e-mail, and e-mail

listserve/discussion groups (asynchronous). Asynchronous online methods are useful when participants are in multiple time zones because coordinating a time when geographically far-flung participants could participate synchronously can be difficult..

The interface chosen for the focus groups in this study was an asynchronous discussion board, which aligns closely with a model used in market research. The technological interface that market researchers refer to as a "bulletin board" (Bradford, 2000) is essentially the same as the discussion board used in the present study where participants "log on, read messages, and post them at their convenience" (Belisle, Humphreys, & McNeish, n.d., ¶ 18). Zinchiak (2001) noted that in Bulletin Board Focus Groups, "respondents can respond at their leisure and take more time to compose their answers – often generating lengthy transcripts" (¶ 12). Burton and Goldsmith observed in their 2002 focus-group study that in an asynchronous format, "participants may not feel pressed for time and are able to respond at greater length to discussion group questions, and therefore may provide more detailed responses than those reported in synchronous online focus groups" (p. 9).

The asynchronous online interface chosen for this study was a site called "ezboard" (http://ezboard.com/) based on the researcher's previous successful experience with it and its relative ease of set up and manipulation. Ezboard is also relatively inexpensive – $30 for six months at the premium service level. As the registration process on ezboard was a bit cumbersome and required a number of steps, clear instructions were provided to participants, whose persistence through the registration process tended to demonstrate their commitment to participating in the focus group. Participants could not gain access to the instructions or to ezboard itself without agreeing

to the Web-based informed consent form at http://www.stetson.edu/~khansen/hansen_informed_consent.html. Asking them to register and perform a test log-in also provided an early indicator of anyone who might have technical trouble with the interface and be unable to use it, which was, in fact, the case with a few would-be participants. The board also enabled password protection; therefore, the focus group could be assured security and confidentiality. Had any participants acted in an inappropriate or dominating manner (which none did), ezboard provided features that enabled the researcher to send the offender a private message, block the person from participating, or delete his or her postings.

The literature (e.g., Appendix A-7, n.d.; Montoya-Weiss, Massey, & Clapper, 1998) suggested that 8-12 people is the ideal number for an online focus group, but that there is a high rate of attrition of those who express interest versus those who participate; of prospective participants who were recruited into an online focus group, only 10 percent actually participated (Appendix A-7, n.d.). Focus group guru David Bradford noted that participants who opt into online focus groups via e-mail are 50% likely to actually participate (Andrus, 2000), and in his own article, Bradford (2001) recommended "over-recruiting" (¶ 14). Zinchiak (2001) cited a similar 2:1 ratio of those who commit to those who actually participate. Montoya-Weiss, Massey, and Clapper (1998) added that recruiting online focus group participants is "a rigorous task" (¶ 27). Andrus (2000) pointed out that because many people participate in online focus groups from home, the focus group competes with such activities as watching television. In this study, recruitment and attrition were indeed issues. For the interviewing focus group,

eight individuals committed to participation; five actually participated. For the cover-letter group, three committed, and two participated.

For the initial attempt at a resume focus group, seven people committed, but only one participated. The resume group was reconstituted using the three participants from the pilot study and ultimately had six participants, including one person from the failed attempt, three pilot-study subjects, and two additional subjects recruited by one of the pilot-study subjects. To ensure the integrity of the data, the pilot study participants were asked a special set of questions to determine whether their prior knowledge of the purpose of the study had affected their responses in the reconstituted group; the researcher determined that the new data had not been tainted by the participants' prior experience in the pilot study.

As with the narrative-inquiry portion of the study and with the exception of the reconstituted resume study subjects from the focus group and their recruits, participants were recruited through notices on the Quintessential Careers Web site and its ancillary newsletter, QuintZine, which has a circulation of about 6,700.

The detailed procedures for conducting the focus groups were virtually identical to those that the researcher described in the Proceedings of the 2006 Applied Business Research Conference (Hansen & Hansen, 2006) regarding an earlier focus group. The researcher served as moderator for the focus groups, which were set up employing a discussion forum for each question along with a check-in and welcome forum with instructions on how to participate. A handout was offered in this forum as an attachment to anyone who needed more detailed instructions on how to participate, which no one requested. Another forum contained links to samples that the participants were asked to

review, evaluate, and discuss: interview responses, cover letters, and resumes, respectively. E-mailing participants the pre-focus group links and attachments to the samples they were expected to review, as well as making these links available for viewing when participants arrived at the check-in forum, seemed effective in light of Zinchiak's (2001) caution that if participants were clicking on links during the focus group itself, they might drift away from the discussion. The remaining forums each contained one of the focus group questions. Each focus group posed six to eight questions with an additional forum for comments not covered by the questions.

The focus groups were each scheduled over a five-day, Monday-to-Friday period, and participants could log in and comment at their convenience during that time. They had been told in advance that their total participation over the five days would probably not exceed one to three hours, and in fact, no one spent more than about an hour responding to the questions. Participants were told that they could respond to the questions in any order, and that they were not required to answer all questions.

Some respondents visited the board once, answered the questions, and did not return to interact with others or the moderator. In some cases, moderator's questions asking for elaboration or clarification were posed to specific individuals who never answered because they did not return to the board. Other participants clearly returned and responded to questions and comments that had been posted since their last visit. Some participants waited until the last day of the focus group to participate, creating little opportunity to interact with other participants or the moderator.

Protection of Human Subjects

"Research involving stories requires a degree of trust," Gabriel (2000) wrote:

> The researcher must put him or herself in the position of the respondent as storyteller and appreciate the latter's vulnerability – will his or her story be believed, will it be understood, will it be respected, will it be appreciated, will it be twisted or misrepresented, will it be misreported and to the wrong people? (p. 138)

Participants had the option to leave the study if they objected to the transcript; no participants elected to leave the study. Audio files and transcripts were handled with discretion and confidentially. Subjects' confidentiality was reasonably ensured through steps to prevent anyone outside the study from knowing or determining the subjects' identities. These steps included carefully securing study data and records as well as limiting access to them.

To protect the identities of participants, no names of participants or their employers are used in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation or the accompanying book manuscript, and identifying characteristics are masked. The researcher also indicated to participants that overall research findings would be shared with them via postal mail or password-protected Web link, inviting comment.

To ensure participant confidentiality in the online focus groups, the discussion board interface ezboard includes a "Membership by Approval" option that was used. No one could gain access to the discussion board and read participant responses without the researcher's approval. Ezboard also enabled participants to use a screen name to protect their identities, so only the researcher knew which screen name matched each participant. No responses to focus-group questions were transmitted via e-mail, so no concern arose about intruders accidentally reading e-mailed responses. Informed-consent forms for the

focus group portion of the study were Web-based and anonymous. Participants could not obtain instructions for focus group participation unless they clicked the "I accept" button on the Web-based informed consent form.

Security was provided to those who e-mailed the researcher to express interest in participating through deletion of all e-mails for potential participants who decided not to participate. No one but the researcher had access to e-mails expressing interest. No names or other identifying information including e-mail addresses were shared, and e-mails were deleted when no longer needed for the study.

Only one issue arose – during the pilot study – that presented a challenge to protecting human subjects. One subject of a narrative interview was the researcher's student in an undergraduate class. The researcher, being in a position of authority or perceived authority with this subject and other potential subjects (teacher/student) in the class, took extra precautions in the informed-consent process so that student(s) would not feel coerced into participation. Potential subjects were presented with equivalent alternatives (the equivalent alternate being nonparticipation without consequence), so they knew they would not suffer any negative consequences should they choose not to participate nor would they feel pressured or coerced. Two students also became participants in the current study after the class was over, and while the issues of authority/perceived authority and coercion were no longer present, the same caution was exercised with these individuals as with any research subjects.

Data Analysis Methods: Narrative Inquiry and Focus Groups

Boje (2001) observed that "the postmodern and chaotic soup of storytelling is somewhat difficult to analyse" (p. 1). The fundamental question in analyzing narrative

data is this: "How does the researcher determine the meaning or significance of any story?" (Walker, 2003, p. 19). Patton noted that "qualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages" (2001, p. 454). Indeed, to approach the stories collected while considering the research question, the researcher used inductive theme analysis. Without surmising in advance what would be the most important dimensions to be analyzed, the researcher allowed the significant dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the participants' stories (Patton, 2001). Jones (2004) further explained the rationale for inductive analysis:

> Inductive rather than deductive reasoning is involved, allowing for modification of concepts and relationships between concepts… No analysis is considered final, since reality is constantly changing. The emphasis in analytic induction is on the whole, even though elements and the relationships between elements are analysed. A specific case need not necessarily be "average" or representative of the general phenomena studied (p. 105) … The goal is to discover meaning and achieve understanding (p. 106). … Analytical induction is "predecessor and bedrock of the now more frequently invoked grounded theory." (p. 108)

Several scholars (e.g., Lincoln), however, emphasized that qualitative researchers eventually invoke deductive analysis to test the theories they have developed through inductive analysis.

The data analysis in this study did not include what Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, and Weir (2006, p. 129) referred to as a "fine-grained content coding," to determine "possible categories, patterns, and themes" (2001, p. 453) but instead used a method that Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 88) classified as a "scrutiny technique," which involves

"pawing" through texts and marking them up with different colored pens and then using a simplified version of the cutting-and-sorting process the authors detail (p. 94). Compared with the "microanalysis" Lancy described (1993, p. 21), the analysis in this study perhaps more accurately aligns with the "skimming the cream" approach he discusses.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the data analysis was "living with the data" and being open to it – what researchers frequently call "becoming immersed" in it (Patton, 2001, p. 454). This process required reviewing the data repeatedly, "thinking deeply" about it (Ruona, 2005, p. 239), reading, re-reading, intuiting, analyzing, synthesizing it, and looking for turning points (Riessman, 2001). Ryan and Bernard (n.d.) suggested performing an "interocular percussion test – which is where you wait for patterns to hit you between the eyes" (¶ 41).

While in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation, participant narratives are reproduced virtually verbatim, the researcher created "literary" narratives – change stories for the book manuscript – that were inspired by the stories gleaned from the interviews (Denzin, 1989, as cited by Reissner, 2004). Organizational researcher Czarniawska (1997, p. 203), heavily influenced by literary theory, found "no clear difference between fact and fiction" in narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 11) wrote of Czarniawska's view, "The documents produced by the narrative organizational researchers are part fact, part fiction, in some inseparable way," Thus the participant narratives selected for the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling That Propels Careers*, shared with Czarniawska's research narratives a "fictional quality" that is "smoother," has "fewer rough edges," and offers a "cleaner application of narrative structure" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 11).

By seeking commonalities in the interviewees' stories and soliciting their feedback on both the raw transcripts and the stories chosen, the researcher triangulated the data. As Reissner (2004) suggested, the researcher also endeavored to allow the interview stories to stand on their own in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and in the book manuscript and speak for themselves as much as possible.

Data-analysis procedures were essentially the same for the focus-group data, featuring researcher immersion in the data and the development of themes and categories of meaning.

Epistemology

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 1-2) traced some historical epistemological influences on narrative inquiry (and especially influences on the authors' journey with narrative inquiry) that include John Dewey and his writings on the nature of experience, Johnson and Lakoff on embodied metaphors, MacIntyre on narrative unity, Geertz and Bateson's roots in anthropology, Polkinghorne in psychology, Coles in psychotherapy, and Czarniawska in organizational theory. A key feature in this historical review was the role of change in these influencers' work. Change took primacy in Geertz's work for example: "change in the world, change in the inquiry, change in the point of view, change in the outcomes" (p. 6). Bateson, who also emphasized adaptation, stressed the individual role in change. Change is an act of "human agency," and "improvisation and adaptation to change allow the past to be connected to and have continuity with the future" (p. 7). Clandinin and Connelly contrasted these two viewpoints: "Geertz focuses on understanding the changing world; Bateson focuses on understanding how one

understands a changing world" (p. 8). In the psychiatry field for Coles, narrative generates change, Clandinin and Connelly noted.

While Squire in Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Tamboukou (2003, p. 22) called narrative analysis a "kind of a compromise between modernism and postmodernism," the current study leans more toward postmodernism in its epistemological orientation, bolstered by Taylor's (2004) observations that key assumptions and critical applications of postmodernism to organizational communication include the notion that organizations are texts; that organizational cultures/identities are fragmented and de-centered; that organizational knowledge/power/discourse are inseparable, and their relations should be deconstructed; that organizational communication involves complex relations of power and resistance; and, as a result of the representationality of organizational-communication knowledge, communication should be reflexive.

Qualitative research with a narrative focus builds on a paradigm in which Rhodes (1997, p. 4) (and similarly, Ford, 1999) asserted, "Organisations can … be understood as socially constructed verbal systems in terms of stories, discourses, and texts." Within this view, Boje, Alvarez, and Schooling (2002) noted that "narrative is subjective account reified as objective knowledge. Narratives are acts of sensemaking." Denning (2001, p. 113) added that "the narrative language of stories" is "the most appropriate instrument to communicate the nature of complex adaptive phenomena." Walker (2003) also noted that "knowledge is … constructed locally, though narrative ways of viewing the world, and through language" (p. 44).

"Fragmented identities and social rules" are features of postmodernism (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 65), as are Clandinin's and Connelly's "narrative fragments, enacted in

storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (2000, p. 17). As Cohen (n.d., p. 9) noted, "Post-modernism asks: What is the point of trying to decipher the book of life when there are no longer any authorized versions?"

In research, the postmodern perspective seeks less to "decipher" the book of life than to portray its density. Manning (1992) exemplified the value of the postmodern approach by noting, for example, that personal narratives of people with AIDS likely reveal a depth of understanding of the AIDS experience that government-funded epidemiological studies cannot. Walker (2003, p. 43) noted, "Positivists might argue that [narrative] research is untrustworthy, because it cannot claim a singular truth, is dominated by human factors, and lacks quantifiable data," but as Manning asserted, the positivist approach is "used to obscure complexity," whereas complexity is seen as a useful feature of the postmodern view.

Limitations

This Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and addendum book manuscript attempt to explore the use of storytelling in helping individuals enter organizations and adapt to organizational change. The study is not an all-encompassing attempt to address exhaustively or comprehensively all questions about storytelling in organizational entry and organizational change. Differing from a study that uses a scientific research method to find answers, it is neither a statistical nor a longitudinal study; results are not generalizable, replicable, or comprehensive, and represent "indeterminate, inconclusive" findings in which each story is "only a slice of the narrator's life" (Walker, 2003, p. 18). Yet, as Van Buskirk and McGrath (1992, ¶ 11)

pointed out, “Storytelling has been shown to be a basic process” that can reduce ambiguity and impart meaning (Walker, 2003). Empirical evidence is not the only way through which researchers can conceptualize knowledge (Eisner, 1998).

In collecting stories from individuals in changing organizations, the researcher does not assert that a given story is meant to represent the entire organization in which a research subject is a member; nor is the contention set forth that a given job-seeker represents all job-seekers or all practitioners of that job-seeker’s occupation. The fact that all the narrative interviewees and most of the focus-group participants lived and worked in a single geographic area – Central Florida – may have been a limiting factor.

Suggesting that the positivistic approach can be “reductionist or mechanistic” (p. 64), Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 66) noted that “eschewing of information in favor of experience and meaning can be both a strength and a limitation of stories as a research tool.” Sinclair (2005) referred to the meaning-carrying capacity of stories compared to the data-bearing capacity. The researcher must weigh a multiplicity of voices and meanings against consistency and generalizability (Walker, 2003). Similarly, the researcher must ponder representations of facts or truths against “participants’ ever-fluctuating internal realities” (Walker, 2003, p. 15) and choose between aggregation of data and “closeness to the individual” (p. 18). As Jones wrote (2004, p. 98), “In qualitative research, the tyranny of numbers is abandoned for the enigma of words.” The researcher sacrifices any “attempt to find a common ground, smooth over differences, or determine a predominant point of view” (Walker, 2003, p. 18). Narrative inquirers have ascribed a richness of data that collected stories provide, information that is “deeper and more complex” (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 65) than in quantitative research, offering

multiple layers of "meaning and insight" (Walker, 2003, p. 14), "portraiture," (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4) of lived experience, and providing as Walker (2003) notes, "essence" (p. 19), "memorable … vivid details, emotional power" and a "visceral quality" (p. 23).

Issues of interpretation also can be viewed as a limitation of this or any study featuring narrative inquiry. Rhodes (1997, p. 5) noted that "stories contain the interpretations, meaning and informal theories of the storytellers. Story 'data' is given to us as already interpreted – any analysis of stories is an interpretation of that interpretation," in which the researcher, is not examining *facts* about participants' lives, but instead participants' interpretation and selective editing of those facts (Rhodes, 1997), followed by the researcher's interpretation both as listener and later as reader of the interview transcripts (Reissner, 2004). Gabriel (2000, p. 137) warned of the danger of the researcher's "imposing his or her definition of what is important, meaningful, or enjoyable" on the narratives gathered. The interviewer does not ask for a factual or ordered account but for a "narrative description" (Cochran, 1990, ¶ 30). Not only do the findings – which are contextual and descriptive – hinge on the participants' and researcher's interpretation, but these interpretations may also not represent the experience of others. Cohen and Mallon (2001), however, found value in noting the themes that participants elect to identify and the significance they place on the context they describe.

In considering these interpretive issues, it may be helpful to adopt Rhodes's characterization (1997, p. 4) of researcher as "ghost writer," which, he noted "recognizes the issue of authorial complicity in the making of meaning in research," but fails to resolve it. The research in the current study became, as Rhodes calls it, a "joint

construction between the researcher and the participant" in which the researcher viewed the collected stories through the participants' lenses and functioned as a witness to varied narratives (Cohen & Mallon, 2001). As Riessman (2001, ¶ 18) pointed out, "The construction of a narrative segment for analysis – the representations and boundaries we choose – are strongly influenced by our evolving theories, disciplinary preferences, and research questions. In all these ways, the investigator 'infiltrates' her texts." Thus, in this study, the researcher's interpretation of the story and focus-group data is, of course, not the only possible interpretation. To address the interpretation conundrum, some experts on qualitative research suggest that researchers include a section in their written product that identifies the "personal values, assumptions, and biases" that the researcher brings into the work and that could contribute to the researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2003, p. 200). In this study, a section entitled "The Researcher's Perspective" is presented in the Appendix E.

This research could not test with any empirical certainty whether individuals who use story-based resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interview responses are more likely to land jobs than those who do not employ storytelling in these communications nor whether job-seekers who tell stories of handling organizational change have a better chance than others of advancing their careers. The researcher took caution in the accompanying book manuscript not to "oversell" the concept of using stories in career-marketing communications and instead attempted to make a case for the promising aspects of storytelling in the job search.

The study also does not attempt to measure the level of change that occurs in organizations or the impact of that change on the organization or its members.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations

Introduction

This chapter describes findings germane both to readers of the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, and to scholars, and it addresses the research question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change, both for themselves and for the organization as a whole?

The researcher also presents interpretations of those findings in the context of the greater scholarly discourse on organizational change, organizational storytelling, and storytelling in career-marketing communication. The chapter provides both stories from narrative interviews on how individuals experience and narrate organizational change and findings from online focus groups on storytelling in career-marketing communication. Findings are summarized in Table 4.3.

Narrative Voices of Organizational Change

The chapter presents stories from the 16 research subjects interviewed for this study using the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. As described in Chapter 3, several participant narratives were selected for the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, that are imbued with a "fictional quality" that is "smoother," has "fewer rough edges," and offers a "cleaner application of narrative structure" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 11) than the actual interview transcripts. In contrast to the "cleaned-up" versions in the manuscript, interviewee change stories appear in this chapter nearly verbatim with only minor editing intended to aid readability. Pause

words (such as “uhh,” umm,” and “you know”), and repeated words and phrases have been deleted. Explanatory phrases have been bracketed to create clarity or to mask the participant’s identity. Typographically, the narratives appear indented and in italics. They are thus presented in a relatively natural state, stories, as Rhodes expressed, of people “whose story has been written and fixed in the text like a dead butterfly pinned on a board” (2000, p. 25) and are open to the observer’s interpretation.

To protect their identities, the interviewees are identified only by their job titles as follows:

- Computer programmer analyst for a local-government agency
- Production control specialist for a large aerospace firm
- Manager of construction services for a university
- Career specialist at a community college
- Contract manager for a social service agency
- Recent neuro-psychology master’s degree graduate seeking a job
- Labor analyst for an entertainment attraction
- Senior communications consultant for a large entertainment/media conglomerate
- Cost accountant for a manufacturing firm
- Corporate secretary for an art supplies manufacturer
- In-house attorney for a cruise line
- Innovation manager for a telecommunications firm
- Speech pathologist at a community hospital

- Senior project manager for strategic planning and business development for a specialty pharmaceutical firm
- Contract and supplier manager for a large entertainment/media conglomerate
- Global product lead for a large software company

A significant overall finding of the study is that the lived experience of the study participants in terms of experiencing organizational change, gaining change skills, making sense of change, easing the stress of organizational change for themselves and for their entire organizations, and learning from the experience aligns well with the literature and the study's research question.

The first part of this chapter intertwines the stories of the 16 narrators as "slice-of-life" tales from these aspects of organizational change. The stories the interviewees tell correspond with the types of stories described in the literature that address part of the study's research question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, ease the stress of organizational change, both for storytellers and for the organization as a whole? In addition, most participants readily tell stories that could be incorporated into career-marketing communications (resumes, cover letters, career portfolios, networking, and especially job interviews), thus addressing the other aspect of the study's research question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations? The storylines most salient to these questions are offered in this chapter with an eye toward the "sharedness" of the stories and their individuality simultaneously.

The Inescapability of Organizational Change

Virtually all participants in the study unhesitatingly identify the organizational change that they had experienced. “I’ll bet you every quarter we’re going through some kind of major process change,” the global project lead says, for example. While the study is not intended to be quantitative or generalizable, in the particular slice-of-life stories from diverse organizations, individuals have universally experienced significant organizational change. Indeed, most participants have experienced multiple forms of change in their careers.

Change-driving factors and forms of change. The types of organizational change the study participants experience reflect those detailed in the literature. They include changes in leadership; extensive organizational growth; major technological changes; changes in company ownership; organizational relocations and relocations mandated by the employer organization (e.g., transfers); mergers and acquisitions; downsizings; high levels of employee turnover; significant shifts in organizational culture; declining customer bases and increased competition; changes in customer service/customer relationship management including relationships with internal customers; responses to unplanned events, such as the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the 2004 Florida hurricanes; organizational restructuring; increased specialization; and globalization.

Challenges of change

In a climate of organizational change occurring at an unprecedented pace (Moran & Brightman, 2000), study participants cite personally significant aspects and challenges of the change they have experienced with some stories exemplifying Stuart’s observation (1995, p. 73) that “significant change can be expected to be a very difficult and often

painful process for human beings." These challenges include organizational politics, power struggles, and "clique-ishness;" poor managerial communication about change; lack of accountability; and management insensitivity, dishonesty, and unethical behavior. "There are just bad people, I guess," the manager of construction services says, "that are willing to take advantage of people. Really, I mean, they really don't seem to care." Participants describe additional challenges, such as competing expectations, lack of stability, hidden agendas, the rumor mill, and competitive pressure. The career specialist, for instance, notes that in the face of the declining customer base at her college, the leadership has begun tying raises to boosting enrollment. "They literally said, 'When you're out mowing your grass, wear a [name of college] shirt,'" she recalled. "When you go into the store, wear your name badge; you might strike up a conversation." The career specialist and other participants refer to an environment of fear wrought by change.

Some participants note the stresses of adapting to sweeping cultural changes, while others observe the tendency for management to shift from benevolence in good times to self-serving behavior in a more difficult climate. "It's gonna probably sound more cynical than I am, but basically … people will be ethical and honest as long as it suits them, but everybody's really out for themselves," the manager of construction services says. Similarly, the senior communications consultant remarks that at a former place of employment, management "could be really open" when times were good, but when times were bad, its actions belied its reputation for openness and caring.

Change as contributing cause of turnover. As a preface to discussing how organizational change affects employee turnover, Morrell, Loan-Clarke, and Wilkinson, (2004, p. 162) cited "linkages between change at the level of structures and social

settings, on one hand, and individual agency on the other." Some study participants note the relationship between change and turnover in their organizations. The study's production control specialist, for example, describes reaction in her organization to the company's relocation to a city 50 miles away:

> *It was a really bad day when they made us [relocate]… We lost over half of our … whole agency; nobody really wanted to go work in [name of new city].*

The contract manager also tells a story about turnover as a result of change:

> *I think over the last couple of months, at least a dozen folks have quit, and that's probably about a … fifth or a sixth of the organization. There's gonna be a lot of turnover. There has been already. We're losing a VP in the next couple of weeks. We've lost our program director, I'm sure the other VP's are looking for jobs.*

Involuntary turnover. Reductions in their workforce, usually to cut costs, comprise a type of change that organizations continue to utilize. Two of the study's interviewees are victims of downsizings. The manager of construction services left one organization before he could be downsized, but was laid off from another. "Ya know, it really … knocked the wind out of my sails," he says of losing his job. Also noting the difficulty of finding a new job afterward, the interviewee says, "That sort of was the not quite an epiphany, I guess, but that sort of said well, I guess … it ain't what it used to be. There is no more security in the world. And that was kind of a rude awakening, I think, to the real world." Following a sharp downturn in the hospitality industry following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the senior communications consultant had been downsized from a previous employer in a layoff she describes as "very sudden" and "very reactionary."

Voluntary turnover. Career and job change represent a significant portion of the lived experience of many of the interviewees. Some have been with the same organization for many years and have advanced through multiple promotions. Others have pursued highly diverse careers, not only changing jobs frequently, but also sometimes changing careers. For example, the contract manager started as a library worker and then became a family teacher in a foster-care home before attaining his current job, in which he was about to be promoted. The in-house attorney had changed the focus of her legal practice from litigation to transactional work. The contract and supplier manager worked in a computer store, then as an adolescent counselor at a psychiatric hospital, and then transitioned into information technology, first at the state department of transportation and then at his current employer. The corporate secretary became an emergency medical technician in the army, worked for a cable-TV firm, joined the Army Reserves and served in Saudi Arabia, became an office temp while attaining her bachelor's degree, and worked for an investment firm and a consultant before landing her long-term job at an art-supply manufacturer – which she is now ready to leave because the company had been sold. Some interviewees had recently changed jobs, were planning to change jobs, or looking for a job.

Role of the Individual in Organizational Change

Given the premise that Ford (1999, p. 488) and others set forth that "organizational change does not occur without individual change," the role of the individual in organizational change is, not surprisingly, evident in this research. The individual role in change manifests itself among the interviewees in at least three ways: acquisition of skills as a result of change, different or increased responsibilities, and

taking personal initiative to drive organizational change. The contract manager expects new responsibilities, including financial oversight, as a result of his pending promotion to program manager. The career specialist, too, faces additional responsibilities because of a leadership change, and the newly graduated neuro-psychology master's-degree student finds, while working in an assistantship in her university, that her boss, who was also her major professor, expects her to take on more responsibilities than were listed in her job description.

Individual as key to organizational change. Organizational change has resulted from the action and initiative of some of the interviewees, as illustrated in several vignettes. The production control specialist describes her efforts to draw attention to her organization's obsolescent computer system:

> *I was one of the ones that was most vocal about it because I was very worried about [the old system]. … I started really campaigning … for the fact that everybody had to wake up because it was a huge expense for the company to go out and … purchase a new computer system. … I actually thought about the system and [the] decision to go out and buy a new computer system.*

The senior communications consultant, who in most of her jobs has been instrumental in "helping the company with … communicating how [the] organization needs changing," describes how she implemented change for one of her former employers to enhance the product-development process:

> *We created something called an idea bank to really encourage employees from different areas of the company around specific targeting campaigns. It wasn't just a blanket suggestion program. It was – here's the kind of market-need*

opportunity. Here's some things we're thinking about. We'd like to understand your ideas. Also embracing them with something – what we did basically [was] a taste-test concept. We realized that … we can … get more feedback earlier in the new product-development process, saving a lot of money … along the way.

The contract and supplier manager initiated change in his organization when he replaced a manager whose subordinates had "turned" on him. "They had no more trust in him," the manager recalls. "They were challenging his decisions. And he had lost control of them. So he was no longer able to manage. So they moved him out of that role, put me into it." The interviewee goes on to describe how he restructured and reinvigorated the team:

The operations group consisted of about 10 … technicians, and their daily role was basically running around and fixing telecom problems throughout our property. … It was not very difficult work, but it was tedious, and it was time consuming, and it was 24 by 7 for some [who] were on-call. … And the very first thing I did was get the group together, find out exactly, from my perspective, what their issues were. So I interviewed each of them, as a group and individually. From that, I realized that the biggest issue that they had with the work environment was the fact that their on-call rotation was shifting, right? … It would be set up one week, and then the very next week it would change because somebody wanted a change, and the manager would change it. So the very first thing I did is I set a schedule up that spanned the calendar year. And my only rule was, if you wanna make a change, you need to work a deal with one of your teammates to swap. And I'm no longer gonna be the person making the changes

and making the decisions. You guys need to work it out, and … once you figure it out, let me know, and we can make the change. I think there's a lot of grumblings upfront because people were able to see six months in advance that they were gonna be on call over Christmas, right? But the benefit of that was six months in advance, they'd have that visibility. And if they wanted to make some changes or adjustments to the schedule, they could do that. But they also realized that it was their responsibility. Along with that came a lot of playful things to try to lighten up the environment.

The interviewee continues by describing activities such as a game he invented using a putting green as well as his introduction of a fishbowl in which team members could drop notes acknowledging each other's accomplishments, with top acknowledgement earners winning prizes and the opportunity for his or her team to attend a breakfast cooked by the management team.

Change as driver of quest for new skills/change skills. Pritchett and Pound (1996, p. 33) encapsulated the value of attaining skills to cope with change when they wrote a decade ago that "personal responsibility for change management" is now a "core element of *every* job in the organization." All interviewees in this study can easily identify skills they have gained as a result of experiencing organizational change, and these self-described skills align substantially with the "change skills" recommended in the literature. Table 4.1 shows commonalities in interviewee change skills and those discussed in the scholarly discourse.

Among skills the interviewees note are maintaining a positive outlook, developing "people skills," adapting to change, building flexibility, developing versatility, learning to

be a change agent, cultivating stronger detail orientation, asking for help when needed, enhancing time management, honing relationship skills and becoming more proactive in building relationships and strategic alliances, communicating globally with many cultures, sharpening listening skills and patience, trading information electronically with others in remote locations, learning to compromise and negotiate, understanding the communication styles of co-workers, and diversifying skills and areas of expertise so as to not become "pigeon-holed into any one area of the business" (as the innovation manager says) or so comfortable as to be unable to change. Some interviewees cite specific technical skills or subject-matter knowledge that they have enhanced as a result of changing technological and other initiatives in their organizations.

Table 4.1

Comparison of Scholars' Characterizations of "Change Skills" with Interviewees' Self-Described Change Skills

Author(s)	Change Skills	Analogous Change Skills Attained by Interviewees
Brightman & Moran (2001)	• Constant dedication to making change a reality	• Being a change agent
Buchanan (2003)	• Being a flexible driver	• Building flexibility, versatility, adaptability to change
Kanter (1999)	• Openness to collaboration	• Asking for help when needed • Honing relationship skills and building relationships and strategic alliances • Communicating globally • Trading information

Author(s)	Change Skills	Analogous Change Skills Attained by Interviewees
Nickols (2004)	• Interpersonal communication skills	• People skills • Understanding co-workers' communication styles
Beatty & Gordon (1991) and Beatty & Lee (1992)	• Interpersonal skills	• People skills
O'Daniell (1999)	• Interpersonal skills that foster the ability to influence, lead and manage	• People skills
Hiatt (2004)	• Enthusiasm for change • Excellent communication skills • Willingness to listen and share	• Openness to change • Being a change agent • Not becoming unable to change • Listening skills and patience • Positive outlook
Stuart (1995)	• Positive viewpoint • Readiness to move on • Aversion to standing still • Learning skills	• Energy and positivism • Not becoming unable to change • Updating and diversifying skills

Change, self-concept, and career development. Participant responses illustrate Hazen's assertion (1994, p. 79), "You cannot change until you acknowledge who and where you are." Several interviewees emphasize that their self-awareness and ability to learn from internal and external "voices" enable them to become "more effective organizational change agents" (Hazen, 1994, p. 72) and apply their self-understanding to their career growth. The career specialist further emphasizes the ramifications of change and the individual's response to it on career progression:

> *I have left places that where you think there's gonna be big changes, and you leave too soon, and you think, gee, maybe I should have waited a while, so maybe being a little more cautious and waiting to see. I mean, you definitely need to have a plan in case something does go wrong.*

Through change, the job-seeking new master's degree graduate has learned about a trait that could guide her future choice of jobs and interactions with other organization members:

> *I've learned that some people want things specific ways and don't want to budge at all and probably that I don't work well with those people. And also that some people present themselves to other people versus their employees differently – because most people have said [my supervisor is] very nice, and they talked to him – and I say the same thing. We get along great as long as we're not in a work situation. Yeah, I think I learned that I don't work well with people like that.*

As a result of the organizational change he experienced, the labor analyst has come to realize that goal-setting is important to his future career development:

I really had to sit down and develop goals. So that wasn't something I really cared to do [at] 18, 19. Your goal is what am I gonna do this Friday, not what am I gonna do when I'm 25. So that mentality had to kind of set in as to where I'm gonna be a few years from now.

The in-house attorney has learned the value of a job in which she could be happy:

I learned that money cannot buy you happiness. That was pretty much what I learned from the overall experience of being [at my former employer]. Those changes just forced me to realize that I'm never going to be happy doing the type of law that was offered at that law firm. Since they were becoming more and more focused on the financial services fields and the insurance fields, and not the intellectual property that I originally thought they were going to, I needed to do something about that. I'd go into work every day, and I was just miserable.

The speech pathologist, who was asked to initiate change by forming a cleft-palate team at a community hospital, discovered she needed to apply her self-concept to plotting her own career development by writing her own job description:

In starting a team in a local community hospital or a local more suburban community hospital, these are the hurdles that I noticed. You walk in and you really have to define your own job because [it's] very specialized – nobody knows what to tell you. So there's a vagueness there that I didn't like. So I made a point just based on years and years in speech pathology and not liking vagueness – I wrote my own job description, passed it around, and said, "Here's my job description, do you like it?" Great, fine everybody. But then … a couple years later some issues came up, and I was able to pull out my job description and say,

"This is the basis on which I was hired." I had it in writing. I had it specific so there were no doubts. If there were boundary issues between disciplines or between employees, I had something in writing.

The contract and supplier manager has learned more about his own skills and characteristics as a result of experiencing change in the form of five leadership changes in eight years and a company initiative to outsource information-technology functions, although his team has been retained with the company instead of bring outsourced:

I've learned that picking up new roles is not difficult as long as you dedicate yourself to basically throw yourself into the role 100 percent. You know, the learning curve. Especially if the information is interesting and relevant, and I tend to pick it up fast. And so I think I've learned that about myself – that I can adapt to my new environment quite quickly.

Similarly, the global project lead has developed new understanding of her management style:

The world's a very big place. What I've been involved in, I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about my management style and how it affects different centers in different ways, and how I'm viewed very differently from the different centers. Certainly within the U.S., I'm viewed with a lot of respect. I'm considered a very strong-minded, strong-willed, fair manager.

Capitalizing on change. At least one respondent exemplifies Jarvis's "new career management paradigm" (2003, ¶ 39) that recognized that "change is constant, but brings with it new opportunities." The innovation manager relates how she transitioned from the disappointment she experienced when her project was cancelled after her company

merged with another. She capitalized on the opportunity to apply for a severance package, seek a less stressful job, and also pursue an MBA degree:

> *The whole environment just changes, and that's all that becomes the talk of the coffee-pot sessions. Everywhere you go, that's all people are worried about and "Who's gonna take the [severance] package, who's not? … I heard such and such was taking it." That's why in my personal situation I stayed out of the rumor mill completely. … I felt a little devious because I didn't even let my current director know that I put my name in the hat for it. But I didn't want them to already start preplanning a replacement for me. I didn't want them to start thinking of me as a quitter. … Two days before the deadline, I did go in and finally sit down face to face with my director and said, "I just want you to know that if it goes this way, and I get the package, I'm leaving. If I don't, game face is back on, I'm here." … She had no idea I was even considering it up to that point. But I did it more out of respect for her because I didn't want the rug to be pulled out from her on Monday when the announcements were made.*

The Individual as Storyteller within Changing Organizations

As Chapter 2 describes, storytelling is seen as a medium in a number of ways for addressing organizational change. In the narrative interviews for this study, participants recount significant portions of their experience of organizational change within a storytelling framework.

Storytelling for organizational learning and for sensemaking to ease the stress of change. All the interviewees articulate learning they attained as a result of experiencing organizational change, thus reinforcing Birchard's 2002 assertion (p. 2) that stories can

"better [than facts] create sense out of chaotic experience," such as organizational change. Interviewees tell stories that recall the organizational-learning and sensemaking storytelling that Brown and Humphreys (2003, ¶ 85) described as "socially constructed cognitive apparatus" that helps organization members cope with highly complex and turbulent information environments and that Jameson (2001, ¶ 4; similarly Reissner, 2002) asserted can help organization members "understand the past, cope with the present, and plan for the future." The respondents recount learning borne out of having to "adapt to a number of changes at a personal and professional level at a rapid pace" (Reissner, 2002, ¶ 1). These narratives are particularly germane to the portion of this study's research question that asks the extent to which storytelling can ease the stress of organizational change, both for individuals and for the organization as a whole.

The computer programmer analyst describes how past change has inured her to future change:

> *We've actually had six directors in the last several years… and then that's been quite eventful. … But it's been--personal conflicts; everybody talks about it in the hall. It's just been quite a dysfunctional environment…. you kind of know what to expect the next time that something changes. Each time the next change happens, you're more and more prepared for things to change. They say as a quote, "Change is the only thing that doesn't change."*

Similarly, the production control specialist has learned to accept change as a constant that doesn't rattle her:

> *We went through the change in the computer system, which was one of the most profound times of my life. … Things can change, and they still stay the same. The*

work still goes on. You still go to work every day. Everything may seem a lot different, but after the first few months, it gets to seem like the same old job.

The contract manager has decided he will not let change make him fearful:

What I've learned – and I'm still learning it – is to not give in to paranoia that I think the changes can create within the organization, because a lot of people are afraid; a lot of people are concerned, and I'm not really as concerned as I feel maybe other folks are because I feel that we do a good job, and the new the boss knows that, and I feel as long as we continue to do our job, I think we'll be okay, but I've really kind of learned to … really kind distance myself from a lot of the petty talk that happens because there's a good deal of it. There's a lot of rumors. There's a lot of hearsay. There are a lot of things that aren't supported by any facts, and instead of relying on facts and information, people are just going off on … impression and not really sitting and waiting.

The senior communications consultant has become wary of organizational cultures that damage professional relationships when they change:

There are different cultures. … Too much of my experience prior to [working at a company from which I was downsized] was working for one culture where … I knew that even if things had changed, things would be handled a certain way. … It's getting more and more competitive. There is different cultures. Some are gonna be more reactionary than being aggressive, and then you need to continue to keep your options open. … I had built a lot of what I thought was professional relationships in my last company. And when the company treats you that way,

when you're kinda left like high and dry and then basically out the door, it's almost like those relationships are severed.

For the speech pathologist, starting a job in a new and different environment has been a cultural shock:

It was harder than I thought going into a new hospital. It was a wake-up call to what the real world is like. This is much more real world than sometimes. I don't know, I felt in teaching I was kind of like I could be in la-la land and just teach my little heart out, and all of the students … love what you say. [The new hospital job] showed me I don't want to work full-time in a hospital. I don't want to work in that environment full-time. Part-time is just fine. It was just a reminder that I've been very lucky in my career because this really is real-world office baloney. People have to spend lifetime careers circumventing the politics – office politics and pettiness and hierarchies. … You get in there, and there are different dynamics and different political issues and different budgets. … And I had started a much smaller program, but when the dynamics are different, everything is different. And so you have to sort of be true to yourself. You have to define what you are … what your mission is. And if things are rough, you have to return to your mission and return to why you're there and shut out the extraneous junk.

The career specialist describes the situation in a previous organization that had changed ownership three times:

It was scary. I mean, you had a lot of fear of the unknown. Are they gonna come in and bring in new people? I worked in HR, so … we were kinda seen as the bad guys. HR is always the bad guys, and it was really disconcerting because we had

to keep changing our stationery. Every time the name changed, it had to be changed on everything. We constantly kept going through these new images with the public with who we were, and it definitely affects morale because you worry if there's gonna be a reduction of force because its always about money. The bad part is I don't think they communicated with us up front.

The corporate secretary describes the surprises she encountered when her company was bought out:

The sale of the company was a big thing. The new management has really focused on head count and just the numbers. You had seven people in information technology; we need to have five. And that's it. … Now, we got rid of somebody at $30,000 a year [and instead] they're hiring a consultant for $50,000 because it won't be an employee number. It's one less employee. What surprised me the most with the sale of the company, which I did not expect, was the management in-fighting. Because the management's pretty much the same. And the management in-fighting, jockeying for position, and trying to impress the [new owners]. I did not anticipate that whatsoever.

The innovation manager cites the changing landscape of large corporations after her telecommunications company and another large firm merged:

Seeing how even the big corporations go away [was significant]. Even what you think will be there for another 100 years, you can't bank on it. Nothing is constant. Well, as much as they'd like to have kept morale up, there's no way. It's an uncontrollable. When you put your business… on the front line like that at risk

of the acquisitions and the mergers, whatever you want to label it, it's because everyone feels that instability

The senior project manager discusses how she coped with organizational changes that included growth, acquisitions, and turnover, with more changes looming in the future:

I think the biggest enabler that helped me deal with the change has been my family, the prospect of growth of this company, and the prospect … that I will have a hand to play in how we grow this business. And the strategy that I put forth may not only prove instrumental to our success but may revolutionize the marketplace as we know it, like… coming up with some really innovative creative ideas. So that, in itself, is very rewarding, knowing that in the end we can help a lot of people access healthcare and achieve [it] … better and more effectively, efficiently. So that's very satisfying and gratifying. To have that as a goal, at the end – into that light at the end of the road, and it's not just about making money.

Transformative power of storytelling. A vignette from the production control specialist illustrates the potential of storytelling to change people's attitudes.

If you go into something feeling positive, and you can give other people a positive impression, you can actually make … whereas you can have people come in who're like, they're not sure. They're hesitant. They're worried about the situation, and that's where your storytelling, I think, comes in. You can actually … influence the outcome by your outlook on it and influencing other people with your outlook.

Storytelling in Career-Marketing Communications: Narrative Voices

Storytelling in job-search media such as resumes, cover letters, career portfolios, employment interviews, networking, and personal branding is primarily the domain of the second portion of this study, of the online focus groups, and of the findings that appear in a subsequent section of this chapter (see page 154). Emerging from the narrative interviews, however, is significant information relevant to storytelling in career-marketing communication, particularly in the realm of job interviews. This information addresses the portion of the study's research question that asks the extent to which and the ways in which individuals can use of storytelling to enter organizations.

Storytelling to establish identity and become known. Within the stories that study participants tell are evocations of the driving human need to be known and acknowledged (Simmons, 1999). The cost accountant in this study, for example, says that his ability "to have a wide, lasting impact… makes for good job security to the point that the work is recognized and appreciated. Makes for great professional satisfaction, which probably … spills into my personal satisfaction. I put a lot of my identity into what I do."

Storytelling as self-selling, self-marketing, and personal branding. Some participants present what can be called "proto-branding," stories that align with Godin's 2005 assertion that most people are marketers to some extent – and that marketing is tantamount to storytelling (p. 80). The senior communications specialist recognizes the need to tell her success stories in the workplace, noting that, "even though I'm not naturally the kind of person to toot my own horn, [but] recogniz[e] that you need to, because not always do other people do it." Using a prelude to telling her story of handling change, the senior project manager says, "Change is not something I shy away from. And

my resume speaks for itself. I mean, there's nothing that I haven't done or haven't tried doing, and haven't succeeded at."

Storytelling in job interviews: *Telling change stories in the job search.* Study participants were asked in the interviews to imagine they were interviewing for a new position and were asked the behavioral question, "Give me an example that demonstrates your flexibility, adaptability, and ability to handle change." They were then asked if they could envision themselves telling a story in response to that question. Several interviewees say the employment interviews they have experienced, especially for their most recent jobs, have been behavioral interviews, which Ralston, Kirkwood and Burant (2003) defined as "a form of structured interviewing in which employers hope to learn what applicants will do based on past performance" (¶ 3). The labor analyst, who had to interview for all four of his promotions says that all the interview questions asked at his company are "tell me about a time…" (i.e., behavioral) questions. Some participants acknowledge having been asked a question just like the study's hypothetical question about change. The global project lead says the change question was asked of "all our potential candidates for hire." All participants say they could envision themselves telling a story if asked this interview question. The contract manager, for example, responds, "Yeah, most of the time I tell stories when I'm explaining things, and I guess in terms of handling a change, I would be able to pull a story right off the top of my head." Most participants quickly and easily identify a story they will tell and then tell the story to the researcher. The job-seeking master's degree graduate notes, "I think telling about past experiences helps to convey what kind of person you are."

Two participants had difficulty identifying a story in response to the question ,yet they had told stories earlier in their interviews to illustrate their flexibility, adaptability, and ability to handle change.

Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant (2003) noted that not all individuals are "equally skillful storytellers," nor does everyone "possess basic storytelling skills" (¶ 6). The authors cite Stevens and Kristof (1995) who said, "Applicants do not always tell particularly effective stories" (¶ 6). It is therefore not surprising that while the participants in this study generally choose change stories with content that effectively illustrate their ability to adapt to and handle change, their delivery, emphasis, inclusion or exclusion of material, and degree of specificity conflict with recommendations in the literature for quality interview responses. The researcher's observation too, based on 15 years of experience in the career development field, is that the responses would need improvement if they were to be used in an actual interview situation. In other words, these participants would likely benefit from coaching and preparation if they were to employ these stories in real interviews. Thus, these stories are here categorized in terms of how effective they might be in a real interview. Table 4.2 summarizes qualitative effectiveness issues and how the interviewees' stories fit these categories.

While all career-marketing communication is highly subjective, four interviewee stories stand out in the researcher's opinion as relatively problem-free and nearly ready to be presented to employers should that situation arise. The cost accountant, in fact tells two such stories:

> *When people ask me … I always talk about adding value, adding permanent value. And like at [a former employer], that database system that I designed*

replaced a patchwork, pencil, paper, word processing, spreadsheet system with a totally integrated, database-driven system. And at the time they had been putting out bids to try and buy a package. [They] had a budget of $500,000 and couldn't find anything that did what mine did. And, you know, this was back in '96. It's now 2006, and that database system is still the cornerstone of the [organization's] budgeting function. So for me the significance is what can I do to permanently improve an organization from my financial systems' role.

The cost accountant's second story veers a bit into the negative, yet it still effectively demonstrates his ability to handle change:

Went to work … as a consultant for a company that … had been under an umbrella of [a large corporation]. [Name of corporation] decided to sell off their commercial division to focus on their military applications. And a venture capital group came along and bought the company. And lost their controller to [name of corporation]. Had tried to replace him, but people just didn't stick. It was a very challenging environment. I was there for six months [and] got them through their first year-end close, got them through their first audit as the new company. But I got ambushed as a consultant there where … there's a landmine 10 feet in front of you. Watch out. And nobody raised the flag. And so after that I was very upfront with management that, "I know you're kind of thinking about me permanent, but it's not gonna happen. You've got too many bad personalities around here, and I don't wanna work in that environment." But I … stayed with them long enough to where they got their new controller on board, got him settled in for a couple of months, fully trained.

The speech pathologist contrasts her early days in practice when she saw young people who had suffered severe head trauma with her current work with children with cleft palates and related issues:

> *You have a patient who comes in and has had head trauma. And he's 17 years old and he has absolutely no – well, he has no words. And he can only phonate by grunting … under great duress. And how would you work with him? And then the next half hour a 17-year-old head trauma patient comes in … but his language isn't impaired. You're just working on the speech output. But he has language. And then the next half hour a 17-year-old head trauma patient … comes in who has no recent memory, severely language impaired and speech impaired …. You're flexible, and there's a flow, and there's an art. There's a blooming of science and art in that, and there's sort of an immediacy… I worked with adult head trauma, teenage head trauma as part of my caseload for four years, and I burned out. … I literally burned out. And I'm not sure I've ever recovered from working with young head trauma accident patients … from cars and motorcycles … because it's so traumatic to see someone near your age just never going to walk again, never going to talk again, eat again, and literally be in a vegetative state for the next 50 years. Now somehow with the kids I see it doesn't [burn me out]. I see them as resilient heroes. … I saw a little girl from Arkansas with no lower jaw. … My surgeon has never seen a live baby with that condition. But this little girl has this amazing, loving town around her and teachers and this delightful father. Mother has left town – but dad and love and town and people and family. And she's so spunky. And so to me she's on the upswing. And so I*

don't get burned out on that. I get very hopeful and tenacious. So somehow the kids I work with right now I don't get burned out on. … I think some people might, but to me [the patients are] hope and tenacious, resilient people.

The contract manager tells a story of covering for his supervisor while she was on medical leave in the midst of his agency's completion of a three-year comprehensive plan that involved data presentations:

When I interviewed initially for the position I was … informed that … I was able to juggle two jobs, and I had the impression that with … my prospective new supervisor being pregnant, I probably would be taking on those positions. So I … had an idea right off the bat that there would be some change, so I had a warning. Someone at least warned me and really right off, probably a couple of weeks into it. I'm trying to pick up on the different service categories, understanding which agencies provide what services for either writing a contract or putting together a contract, sending those out, or doing corrections and also trying to figure out what exactly is that state of presentation about, what was priority setting about, what is resource allocation – and all the while my supervisor at nine months pregnant wanting to train, cram as much into my head because she needed to and because I needed to know as much as I could, and she ended up taking 12 weeks. So from the end of July through the middle of October last year, I was pretty much running the show. I mean … I called my supervisor from time to time for some advice, but it really turned into me running the meetings, organizing the meetings, providing support for other meetings, going out to the agencies, figuring out how to do all of the monitorings, making sure all the reports were in

on time, making sure other reports were in on time, harassing the agencies, making sure that I developed good relations with them because if I didn't, I didn't want to come off as some cold administrator because I wanted to be as personable as possible. I figured that would work out better than just really kind of coming off like a jerk. So I had an idea right off the bat, but I probably couldn't anticipate all of the things that were gonna be happening during the time she was out, so it threw me for a loop… If you have good people, you should let them know that – we value you – and I felt that for someone as new as myself to be thrown into that position for them to feel confident enough to pay me … extra to let me go through this, I thought that well, they must think that I'm doing something okay.

Failure to effectively articulate outcomes/results. The foregoing story could have described the outcomes of the situation more powerfully. Martin (2004, p. 147) stated that leaving off the ending is a common behavioral-interview problem. "What was the outcome?" Martin wrote. "The interviewer is left wondering, 'What happened next?'" The labor analyst describes an excellent outcome; however, the preamble building up to it may be too long and contain too many negatives that would raise red flags for employers. Martin cautioned against taking too much time to set up a story and noted that "examples should not ramble on about irrelevant details" (p. 131).

I was starting getting some negative reviews. Prior to that … it took me about six months before I actually got that opportunity to where they pulled me in and told me, "You need to develop this. You need to change this." And then gave me the worst rating that you can get. It's like a one to five, and one being the worst. I got

a one; then they explained why. And then shortly after that they moved me to another location, and I didn't really even understand why I was getting the negative reviews. … They were supposed to be geared towards your performance, but most of it was it was geared towards my relationship with everyone else. And that's where my ratings were coming from. And then they just moved me to a completely different location, and a different environment. I was at a [name of] location where it was just very controlled. Everything was kinda outlined and specific. And then … there was like 14 of us that worked there. And then they shift me over to [yet another location]. I had a staff of 100 people there … I had to work with. Everything was always ever changing. The volume was higher and the people that you dealt with. And so not understanding that I wasn't a performer, but now I had to go … and be put into an environment where I didn't know anything. And I was forced to really have to change. And I didn't know what to change. And so it was just … hopefully, I will be assimilated in, so to speak. … I didn't really handle the change very well. I'm a very – let see, routine person. Everything has to be routine, so to speak, for me. … The second something gets thrown off, it throws off my whole … cycle, so to speak. So that really did throw off my whole cycle – and new management, the changes in the company. Really, when they finally sat me down to explain, you need to change it, they broke it down into a process. I was able to understand the process. I could build 'em mentally, make the changes, and adjust. And, otherwise, I would've never really adjusted. I probably wouldn't even still be there because of that. … Each role has helped me develop … a different aspect of dealing with the change. And now you

can change me on a whim at work. … Mentally I have to build a picture to make the adjustment. And since I've gone through so many roles, … those ideas are already there. So I can make the adjustment quickly without having to sit down and analyze okay, well, how does this fit into my routine, before I can move forward.

After the following story from the computer programmer analyst, the interviewer elicits the outcome because the interviewee does not include it in the narrative:

[We] actually completely changed our whole project, the whole back source of our project. We had to redo all of our code and everything. So, in handling that situation we actually had a change-management plan. We're going to do things on this timeline, and we're going to meet these goals. We had many goals, large goals, short-term, long-term goals, things like that. And kind of divided the task up between different people and assigned different responsibilities. So, that would probably be a good example of a change that occurred over about a six-to-nine-month period.

Asked about the outcome, the analyst says the revamped system is currently in use.

The global project lead tells a generally effective story that might benefit from a stronger and more positive description of the outcome:

… We started to become a 24/7, 365-day-a-year work organization. … We had the global centers – not as many as we have today, but we did have a few. For my particular product set, we had … a [name of state] center, a [name of state] center, [name of state] center, and then we also had Europe. So what we would

do is we would say, "Okay, we'll work all this work during the East Coast hours, then when the East Coast goes off, we move all the work over to [name of state]. Then when they go off, we move all the work over to [state on the West Coast]." So of course, that didn't work quite as well as they had hoped because certainly what happened is … we had escalating work; things not getting worked because the volumes were growing. But we were only working stuff at X number of hours a day, and then we were transferring all that work over, so someone would pick it up. Well, they would have to learn the issue from scratch, so then you have a delay in time, then we'd send it over again. … I believe our backlog of issues went above 10,000, or something like that, and we were just dealing literally as a reactive call center. All we were doing was greasing the squeaky wheel. So, of course, they removed that. … We went back to something a little more in line with what customers needed, where we owned all of our work. We didn't pass anything. Then when we came into the globalization – and [from when I was] an engineer, I remember all of this vividly. … I'm a manager now, over this team that I'm expected to empower and sort of get to go in enthusiastic about what's going on, and here we go to this globalization effort, and now all of a sudden the process seems to mimic very closely this [previous initiative] that totally blew up. So as a manager, I remember as an engineer how it was, so of course I have no buy-in to this process as a manager. But I know that I've got to somehow sell this to my people because without any kind of buy-in, it's going to fail from the start. We're not even going to give it a chance. So it was very difficult for me because I knew. I was to the point where we had gone through all these repetitive cyclical

processes, like every time we come back to the same thing, and it never works. Then we come back to it again, and it still doesn't work. So it was very de-motivating for me, and I had a lot of struggles with it because I knew that my workload for my engineers was going to really increase, and of course that's going to de-motivate them. I'm going to start having attrition. People are going to say, "What the heck? I'm leaving." So as a manager, I had to be very flexible to this change, and I had to sell it to my people, and that was really tough for me to do. But I did it, and I got my people encouraged and feeling good about it, and it actually wasn't quite as bad as the first time around.

Crediting the team without clarifying one's role in a project or accomplishment. Job-seekers often neglect to single themselves out and give themselves credit for their role in projects, instead crediting the full team (as in the computer programmer analyst's story, page 143). As Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant (2003, ¶ 13) wrote, "An applicant might cast herself as the hero of the story, as a member of a team, or as a bystander." When teaching employees at NASA to tell stories, senior consultant Denise Lee (2000, ¶ 7) said,

> Urging participants to use the first person is key. Most of us, when asked to tell a story or describe our work, report to the royal "we." Speaking as a "we" is vague. "I" shows who you are as an individual. People can better identify with you.

Whitcomb noted (2005, p. 204) that an interviewer will often follow up with a series of "probing questions," including, "What was your specific role?" An employer, while appreciating teamwork, will often be more interested in the candidate's individual

role and contribution. For example, the senior communications consultant also tells her story from a "we" perspective:

> *Early on at [name of company] – it was after 9-11 – we had to go through some downsizing. … I had to work with other people, other members of the leadership team to make some just tough decisions. … We tried to … think through some criteria about how we're making those decisions. To make sure that we were … just being fair and open… And it wasn't one area more heavily hit than others.*

The interviewee goes on to describe how this decision-making group employed creativity to hold onto a targeted but valued employee:

> *She had been with the company a number of years, was valued, and was also directly on a disability kind of situation potentially. We didn't wanna put her at risk so we kept her on… She was having some issues with the pregnancy. So we tried to think about, from the human factor, what we could do to kind of deal with some of those things. And also, that was one of the few times that we did get creative.*

Disparagement of current or former employer. A cardinal rule of job interviewing is to not speak negatively of a former employer or supervisor. "Your examples should not bad-mouth anybody," Martin wrote (2004, p. 131). Martin further cautioned against "whining." The career specialist tells a story in response to the question about handling change that, therefore, probably is not effective:

> *When I worked in [another department], there was nothing but change. That was the most frustrating job I've ever had. … Procedures did not make sense, and it was really difficult coming from I came from [where] it was organized. I worked*

independently. I worked with all the counselors and advisers and kept them all on schedule and on task, and when I was transferred over to [the new department], it was chaos. I mean the supervisor over there … she had favorites, and she didn't know how to supervise people, and it was very frustrating for the students. We couldn't make any decisions. Everything had to be phoned in through [the main campus], which was poor customer service, so it was a tremendous, tremendous change for me. In counseling, I was in power to think on my own and act on my own, and in the other department, if you made any decision, you got yelled at. First thing out of their mouth was, "Who said you could do that?" I've never been so stifled, so I knew if I felt that frustration, I know students did because [they] are dependent on our campus for financial aid and all types of answers, and you can't even get [the department] to answer the phone. I can't even get them to answer the phone. Can you imagine for a student? They can't get them to answer the phone either. It was just the worst department ever. … They actually put me over there to be supervisor, and just being there for six months, I was so stressed, I just said … I can't deal with this. And now the guy they put in there instead of me, the one that took over after me, he's leaving because he just can't take it, but they don't see the problem.

When the researcher asks if the career specialist would really tell that story in a job interview, the interviewee says, "I didn't cope very well," thus seeming to recognize that her story would likely not be effective in demonstrating how she handled change. The researcher asks her if there was a way to tell the story in a more positive way, or if she has a more positive story. The career specialist begins to tell a story that has more

positive elements than the first one; yet, it too devolves into negative content that likely would not have been effective in a job interview:

> *I think I'm in a sense a change agent for every student because I personally try to give one-on-one customer service. Like today I had a student who went and saw an adviser … and talked to her about careers, and then she came to me, and I spent a lot of time with her and … I could tell I ended up doing a lot more for her than her adviser, who's higher than me. … You know I can't rely on someone else down the hall making sure they tell them everything, so I try to really make sure I go over every base with them because they get overwhelmed with all the information. … The whole college process is not an easy one, so with each student I try to explain to them the stuff for getting admitted and doing financial aid, and really taking time with them and explaining it, and I try to identify that connection with them, and they always end up coming back to see me. As far as a change agent, … right now they're asking me to cover [an additional] campus as well, and I said, "Well, I'm only one person in this office, and if I'm not here, it's not staffed. If I'm in [the other campus's office] … I can only be so many places. Plus they want us to develop more of a partnership with businesses in the community. And then the other day, I wasn't there because I was out at another campus, and someone was calling for me, looking for me, and it was actually the president's secretary, and she ended up calling nine departments trying to find me…. I now forward my phone to another secretary, but I don't have a work-study. I don't have a secretary, and … I'm only one person, so I'm learning how to adapt with trying to do more work with just one of me, and they've even talked about [my]*

being an academic adviser and career specialist, and I was thinking, "Well, I don't know; how I can split that?" It's a little fragmented. We have a new boss now. Our old boss is stepping down. With all these things that happened with counseling and advising, she's stepping down, and one of the counselors is gonna take over, so that's a huge change from before because she was a peer before, and now she's gonna be a boss, and she's an idea person, and she's got all these ideas, and now we're kinda afraid of where she's gonna take us. ... Two people did that job before, and now she's doing it, and she's so overwhelmed – can you imagine? Plus she's got the VP on her: "Fix it, fix enrollment, fix it, change anything you gotta change," and he's running her big time, so she's trying to find every possible way ... system-wise to get things to where we could be more productive and without giving us more staff.

Lack of specificity. Particularly in behavioral interviewing, employers seek specific examples. Martin (2004, p. 128) exhorted: "One of the first rules regarding answering behavioral questions is that they require a *complete* and specific example or story." The following, from the job-seeking graduate student, can be classified as a general description of handling change rather than a specific story:

... My job responsibilities have changed. ... I've gotten more responsibilities as time has gone on and also the couple of extra things I do since this girl has left and ... I've had to train [undergraduates student researchers] and try to get them to do things on their own.

Lack of detail. Borrowing from one of Ralston's, Kirkwood's, and Burant's (2003, ¶ 12) criteria for a well-told interview story, this category refers to the degree to

which "a story provides telling details that, both with respect to their richness and selection, supports the claim being made." The senior project manager tells a story of rapidly changing leadership in her department but does not provide details about how she copes with these changes:

> *[In] the department I was with [the] average number of bosses within the year period could be anywhere from 4 to 10. In the two years … I've gone through one, two, three, four, five bosses. So if anything can be exemplified dealing with change and coping with change and rolling with the punches, I think that's as clearly as it comes.*

Less than fully articulate delivery. Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant (2003, ¶ 8) wrote, "If an applicant offers a confusing, disjointed account of when various events occur in a story, we are likely to judge the story as not well told." An interview story can also be confusing if it is filled with insider jargon that someone in the same organization can understand but outsiders perhaps cannot. The innovation manager's story conveys this confusing insider quality, which is not surprising since she has interviewed for several promotions within her telecommunications company:

> *[In the] senior campaign management job I had… When you're working in that role, you are the pinnacle person around all of your different project managers. You had, let's see, long distance, wireless, … DSL, you have all these different representatives for all the product bases constantly coming to you for customers. They want to know who can I market to and the questions… You always have to sit down and work with them. … What's the budget, how many pieces do they want to direct mail? … What's the medium they're going to use? So … more often*

than not, you get a big direct-mail piece going out for the DSL group, for example, and you're working with them to make sure you've got all the demographics that they want. Pull it into the data to find out, you know, household information or… like we have copper versus fiber, and so we have all these different components into the pool. As soon as I do the initial meeting, I have the product manager. I have their advertising manager for the firm. You have all the right players in the room; you have a meeting. We board it all. I say, "Okay, this is one. The one your initial data counts on. Find out how many we have in the pipe. Then we could start cutting as we need once we get the universe, or we could add to it. … And you'll be darned if you're like in to the data pool with the IT group – it took a week pull all the data … "[Name of interviewee] is there any way we could find out what the African-American count is on these? … 'Cause that means – I've already started pulling stuff from the IT group, and I've got to throw them all back in to the pond and re-fish. They would constantly send you pages of saying … "Hurricanes were going to [hit]. And [Name of interviewee], we cannot mail to Louisiana. We cannot mail to Mississippi. Can you find out how many we're going to lose?" Well, that means you've got to pull 'em all first and then find out the segment that [is] in those states and being affected. It's everything from like – it's just a lot of little changes they brought you. Sometimes you had to be firm enough to say no…. Three fourths of the way in the process, I can't turn around now. You're going to have to pay for a new pool to redo it, or you have to stop where you're at and go back. So dealing with change you can, but it's within reason to find out how far along you are …. But

those wouldn't just happen on the DSL group. It would happen with all of 'em at one time. So I mean I'm [in] dread of ... that pager at 7 a.m. on the way in because you knew [the] project manager was sleeping last night and had a thought, "Ooh, I would love to see how many had pink toenail polish on."

Table 4.2

Categories of Story Effectiveness

Effectiveness Criterion	Narrator
Generally effective	• Cost accountant
	• Contract manager
	• Speech pathologist
Failure to effectively articulate outcomes/results	• Labor analyst
	• Computer programmer analyst
	• Global project lead
Crediting the team without clarifying one's own role in a project or accomplishment	• Senior communications consultant
Disparagement of current or former employer.	• Career specialist
Lack of specificity	• Job-seeking graduate student
Lack of detail	• Senior project manager
Less than fully articulate delivery	• Innovation manager

Discussion of Narrative Interviews

Study participants begin their stories, in response to the researcher's questions, with narratives summarizing their full careers, thus offering Cochran's "careers as texts to be interpreted" (1990, ¶ 24). In this study, these texts are interpreted against the backdrop of organizational change, providing a glimpse into what Reissner (2002, ¶ 2) called the "narrative character of organizational life." In describing organizational change through the lens of participants' stories, the researcher acknowledges, as Bryant and Cox (2004, ¶ 47) wrote, that the narratives may be limited "in that they provide only one interpretation of change that is not necessarily representative of social reality as experienced by others;" and in fact, "there is no reason to restrict one's reading to one perspective" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 11).

Prompted by the researcher's questions, the respondents narrate their journeys through organizational change, telling stories of the most personally significant aspects, their learning, sensemaking, and skills acquisition as a result of change. Participants' lived experience of organizational change echoes many themes found in the literature and reinforces the ways that storytelling can ease the stress of organizational change for individual organization members and organizations, a premise suggested by the study's research question.

Participants also respond to a hypothetical job-interview question asking for an example of how they demonstrated their ability to handle change. Most participants have no difficulty in responding to this question, telling stories that are particularly suited job interviews – though some stories needed polishing – but also adaptable to other career-marketing communications (resumes, cover letters, career portfolios, and networking).

Addressing a portion of the study's research question, these responses suggest some of the ways that storytelling can facilitate individuals' entry into organizations, and the responses also provide an entryway into the next portion of this chapter, in which focus groups evaluate storytelling in career-marketing communications.

The study participants did not know in advance that they would be asked a "job-interview question," so they could not prepare for it. In a real job interview, of course, candidates similarly do not know what will be asked, but they can prepare using a set of frequently asked interview questions. For the purposes of this study, the significance of how readily the participants can express stories of organizational change far outweighs the researcher's interpretation of the "quality" of the stories. The categories into which this final set of stories is arranged simply represent one way of organizing and viewing the participants' narrative responses. This organizational scheme was chosen based on the fit between the respondents' stories and the literature about common problems with behavioral-interview responses. As Reissner noted (2002, p. 6), "Storytellers typically adapt their stories to the needs of their audiences." The audience for the addendum book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling to Propel Careers*, comprises job-seekers. While this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation addresses a scholarly audience, it may be helpful, in the researcher's quest to contextualize the book in a scholarly fashion, for its stories to be organized into categories that can benefit job-seekers.

Storytelling in Career-Marketing Communications: Focus Group Findings

In the focus-group portion of this study, the researcher sought participants' reactions to storytelling techniques in resumes, cover letters, and interview responses and

solicited those reactions though focus groups operated according to the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. While the focus groups did not demonstrate strong support for the concept of storytelling in career-marketing communications media, they do illuminate the concept of storytelling in the job search and suggest the potential to further develop and research the concept. Their responses address the portion of the research question that asks the extent to which individuals can use of storytelling to enter organizations. Combined with the literature, the focus-group findings lend support to the recommendations in the researcher's book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers.*

Resumes. Members of the resume focus group are asked to review two resumes (see Appendix F) for fictional candidates, Wesley Edwards and Martin Gale, who are both applying for the same hypothetical position as a director of customer service. The Wesley Edwards resume is designed as a storytelling resume, while the Martin Gale document is a traditional resume with no intended story elements. Asked to characterize the differences in the two resumes, the focus-group members do not identify storytelling as a characteristic of either resume. Participants offer extensive critiques of both resumes, tending to focus on micro, rather than macro, elements of the resume content. Focus-group members emphasize conciseness repeatedly, strongly cautioning against wordiness, overblown adjectives, too much information ("text-dense" in the words of one participant), and the "impact of accomplishments lost in a sea of text." A participant refers to "strong adjectival modifiers" that "dilute the impact" of Wesley's storytelling resume, while another finds the adjectives "quite distracting." One participant says, "If you could combine the brevity of [the non-storytelling resume] with the numerical details

of [the story-based resume], that would be the preferred ideal." Another observation is that Martin's non-story-based resume is "easier to read." Some participants are critical that Wesley's resume omits an education section, instead listing only certifications, and that his employment dates indicate a gap in his job history. A respondent expresses a desire to see "professional associations, clubs, organizations" listed on both resumes because such information, the focus-group member feels, would apply to the type of job the candidates seek. Both resumes also contain a typographical error, which some study participants state would have been a disqualifying factor.

While not citing the storytelling elements in Wesley's resume, some participants favor it. "Wesley's resume appears to be the stronger of the two," one respondent says. "On the 'pro' side he shows proven results." Another says, "He provides clear and descriptive detail in his subsequent job listings."

Despite their criticisms of Wesley's story-based resume, participants tend to find his more memorable than the Martin Gale document that does not contain stories, noting that the storytelling resume "leaves more of an impression" and that it "lists actual numbers, and it allows the reader to understand in dollars what he's accomplished."

Participants are asked to characterize the structure of the bullet points in both resumes' professional experience sections. The Wesley Edwards resume presents accomplishments that reveal the end of the story – the result or outcome – first. Describing the result of the job-seeker's action at the beginning of a bullet point is designed to catch the employer's attention. The next part of each experience bullet point in Wesley's resume is designed to describe the situation, problem, or challenge that the job-seeker's action addresses. The bullet points in the Martin Gale resume do not use this

Results-Action-Situation structure. Although focus-group participants do not identify this story-based structure, some members praise Wesley's experience section: "In the experience, Wesley's resume does a better job," one respondent says. "There is some 'soft' data to back up his assertions." Another says, "I think Wesley's experience section includes more hard details," while a third says, "Wesley's does a better job building credibility and backing it up with specifics that show proof of experience." In contrast, a participant notes that the "downfall" of Martin's non-story-based resume is its "lack of specifics. He really did a poor job highlighting his contributions to the businesses he's worked for."

The tactic of minimizing the story approach in the resume itself, but telling stories of accomplishments, results, and outcomes in a resume addendum wins favor from some focus-group members. Several participants express support for the addendum called a "Leadership Profile" (see Appendix G). One respondent favors the addendum called "Executive Resume Sample," noting that "the bullet points have enough detail, I understand more about the company situation, and it's pretty results-focused." Two focus-group members cite the addendum called "Project Highlights," which one participant says "would be perfect for an engineer, though in addition to a resume." Another remarks, "I get a lot of these from more senior people who want to delve into specific projects that are directly relevant to my open positions, and I often pass them onto my interviewers."

Some participants express the sentiment that although addenda are "optional reading," they can provide additional information if the recipient chooses to read them. "I like addendums [sic] because they don't get in my way, but if I choose to delve deeper

when presenting to a hiring manager, the info is there," a respondent says. Others indicate that the information found in the sample addenda would be more appropriate in a cover letter.

Cover letters. Given that qualitative-research experts (Reid & Reid, 2005; Patton, 2001) generally did not recommend fewer than three participants in a focus group, responses from the two-member focus group in the current study may be of limited value. They did, however, shed some light on using stories in cover letters.

Participants are asked to evaluate three sets of cover letters (see Appendix H). In each set, one letter contains a story while the other does not. Asked to characterize the differences in the letters in each set, participants do not articulate that they detect story elements; however, one respondent notes that the story-based examples "give concrete examples of their attribute and skill claims, instead of just throwing out the descriptors they think a prospective employer will want to hear."

Participants offer additional observations that may be useful to job-seekers preparing story-based cover letters:

- *Cover letters should be concise*. One respondent feels that all the sample cover letters in the study are too long "for today's fast-paced work environment" and observes that the story-based examples tend to "ramble." These findings suggest that job-seekers should not belabor story elements in cover letters. They should get to the point quickly and keep the entire letter concise.
- *Cover letters should be "reader-friendly*." Aligning with participants' desire for concise letters, focus-group members respond well to a story-based sample

(the Yi Chan sample in Appendix H) that includes both a story and a bulleted section, thus breaking up blocks of text. This study's suggestion of a reader-friendly, storied cover-letter format also springs from the resume focus group, in which several participants remark that they would prefer to see some of the items that appeared in resume addendum samples used instead as bullet points in cover letters.

- *Stories that depict motivation, enthusiasm, and passion for the job sought may help draw the reader into the letter*. Words such as "passion" and "excited" – "pictorial words," in the respondent's terminology – jump out at a focus-group participant in two of the three story-based sample letters. "These are things an employer looks for in a candidate," the participant says. "You don't want to hire someone that is simply there to do a job. You want them to have a desire and motivation not only for the position, but to help the company grow as well – and using those words depict just that."
- *A story-based cover letter may entice the employer to get to know the candidate better by calling him or her in for an interview*. The wording of one of the focus-group questions acknowledges that hiring decision-makers would be unlikely to decide to advance a candidate to the next level of the selection process (such as a phone interview or face-to-face interview) based on the cover letter alone, but asks participants to make just such a hypothetical selection based just on the sample cover letters. Participants are asked which candidate in each of the three sets he or she would want to get to know better.

Two of the three of the story-based letters are favored by both participants, one of whom notes that the letters are "detailed where necessary."

- *Job-seekers should be cautious about presenting story-based information that conveys negative elements*. The concern about "negative" stories arose in two focus-group discussions. In one, participants are asked to comment on the advice of resume writer Linda Matias (2005) who recommended using engaging personal stories in cover letters to explain unusual circumstances, such as gaps in employment. Participants are asked to review an excerpt (which Matias wrote) from a letter that uses such a story (found at http://www.jobskills.info/career/cover-letters-personal.htm) to explain an employment gap during which the job-seeker had cared for a companion with Alzheimer's disease and subsequently earned a master's degree in health advocacy. Participants are asked if they found the explanation convincing and whether it mitigated the damage to this candidate given his or her employment gap. While one respondent appreciates the way the letter "lets the employer know there is a true motivation and reason as to why the candidate chose this career path," the other focus-group member cautions: "I view this as throwing out sales points without knowing whether they are actual benefits or concerns for a prospect. Why go into elaborate detail to 'defend' yourself about a gap, when it might or might not be of importance to the employer?"

  The second instance in which participants express caution about negativity arises when the focus-group members are asked to evaluate additional story-based passages that could be used in cover letters (see

Appendix I). Two passages deal with being inspired to enter the health-care profession based on the job-seeker's own or family members' experience with hospitalization. A third recalls the experience of ameliorating human suffering in Rwanda. Of these stories, one respondent says:

> I am not interested in the … letters because the associations they make are all "negative." Spending a lot of time in hospitals (obviously the person or someone close was very sick) and not wanting the experience to be "scary." The human suffering element. The long illness. None of these conveys a positive experience which would transfer to their employment and make them a better worker.

Both focus-group members, however, are attracted to a passage with only positive associations, as follows:

> *One of my most profound memories as a young child was the day I first flew on an airplane. I was traveling with my family to California, and I still remember the feeling of excitement as I held my mother's hand and climbed the stairs into the immense red, white, and blue plane. That was my first of many flights on Delta, and I have never forgotten it. I am interested in fostering that same excitement in others by working for Delta as a training instructor.*

One participant responds to this passage by saying, "The airplane one is definitely the most interesting, as it creates a vivid picture in your mind and leaves a memorable impression with the reader."

Interview Responses. Focus-group members are asked to compare the responses of two fictional job interviewees, both seeking the same position as a sales manager, to five commonly asked interview questions (see Appendix J) in which the responses of one candidate (April Alexis) are story-based, and the responses of the other (Daniel LeFevre) are not. As in the other focus groups, participants in the interview-response focus group, for the most part, do not identify the responses intended to be story-based as such. An exception is the brief comment from one respondent regarding April: "She is type of person that likes to answer questions with a story."

While participants do not pick up on the storytelling elements of April's responses, they do notice that she presents examples. A participant with no preference between the two types of responses cites April as providing "many more details along with personal examples," while a focus-group member who prefers the non-story-based responses nevertheless notes that April's story-based responses "provided an example of great customer service skills." Another respondent observes that a hiring decision-maker's desire to hear examples "depends on the position the candidate is applying for. If that person is going to be in marketing, public relations, recruiting, etc., the hiring manager will be observing how well that person communicates/interacts with others and would welcome examples and/or scenarios."

Participants are sharply divided in their overall preferences. Those who prefer the non-story-based responses tend to cite their conciseness. "Succinct, accurate, and cogent replies that 'got to the point quickly'" are typical comments in characterizing Daniel's non-story-based responses. A respondent points out the time constraints that hiring decision-makers experience, noting that they are "usually are short on time and have to

ask the same questions over and over again to a variety of candidates." Even those who prefer April's story-based responses notice that her responses are less concise than Daniel's. One focus-group member says, "April's ability to get to the bottom line does take longer, but she presents more information about herself and how she incorporates her personal style into handling business with each question asked, while another remarks of April that "although wordy, she was able to communicate/sell herself in a very positive light."

One limitation of the study, of course, is that participants read the interview responses in print rather than hearing them spoken as they normally would in an interview. Sinclair (2005; similarly Barry & Elmes, 1997) cited research in which the stories, all in written form, "did not provide as strong personal focus as verbal stories" (p. 60). Further, an interview response that seems wordy and lengthy in print may not seem so when delivered orally.

Supporting the literature (e.g., Ralston, Kirkwood, & Burant, 2003) about using stories in behavioral interviews, those who prefer the story-based responses compare the way the story-based responses enable the participant to predict how the storytelling candidate, April, might behave in a future work situation: a focus-group member speculates that April "would be able to adapt to any type of work environment (team player)." Another participant observes,

> Daniel's responses did not allow for the interviewer to have a better sense of his personal style and ways of handling the day-to-day situations that may arise. His response was solely based on his personal feelings of his abilities as they relate to the question. Daniel seems to separate himself from the daily task responsibilities,

> and thus presents himself as a fixer, not a doer. April's responses did allow the interviewer to see how she took on a task and handled it. Not only did she not rely on anyone else to fix the problem, she resolved the issue that was causing a problem and also maintained a relationship that was continuous, thus creating a win-win situation.

The same participant expresses that April's story-based responses paint a more vivid picture of how she can contribute to her next employer's organization than Daniel's more succinct responses:

> Daniel's responses, although concise, did not impress upon the interviewer "how" he could be a benefit to the organization who is looking to hire someone. He is very confident in himself, and I guess this is a plus, but who cares if his personal confidence is not what the interviewer is looking for. I feel it is important to stress both factors when being interviewed; although one does not want to go overboard when talking about themselves, it is important to incorporate the needs of the employer with the qualities of the person being interviewed. April's responses were quite the opposite of Daniel's in that she seems to express herself in a "colorful" manner. She is the type of person that likes to answer questions with a story, but the difference is she uses terms that employers like to hear during an interview (i.e., reliable, trustworthy, loyal, team player, creative, etc.). Her ability to express herself, using terms that the interviewer may interpret as being someone who can handle various tasks without intervention, may be just what the interviewer is looking for.

A participant who finds the story-based responses more memorable than the non-story-based replies attributes April's having made an impression to the notion that the interviewer would have had "more time to get to know her through her answers and the time I spent with her."

Given the research of Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant (2003) that suggested that storied interview responses should reflect the job-seeker's values, beliefs, sense of self/others, and emotional outlook, participants are asked which candidate's responses are more effective in conveying these characteristics. Focus-group members tend not to choose one candidate over the other in this area, noting that their preference depends on the specific requirements for the job, which are not provided. "It's hard to determine because I don't know what kind of sales manager is needed," a respondent says. "You might need someone emotional and empathetic, which would make April a better choice, or someone direct and to the point, which would make you think Daniel is the better choice."

Discussion of Focus-Group Findings. Storytelling elements were not readily identified in the career-marketing communications media presented to focus-group participants, and the storytelling media received moderate support at best. Many factors may account for the absence of stronger support for storytelling resumes, cover letters, and interview responses. In the resume focus group, all participants are corporate recruiters, while the other groups comprise a mix of recruiters and other hiring decision-makers such as human-resources officials and direct hiring managers. Recruiters tend to operate at an extremely fast pace, and say they do not have time to read documents that provide more than bare-bones information, as in the case of the cover-letter focus-group

participant who says the sample cover letters "were all too long for today's fast-paced work environment. People don't generally have time to read 'novels.'" Recruiter Darrell Gurney (2000) affirmed this contention in his book, *Headhunters Revealed*, writing that "time is precious, so recruiters can't hear every person's personal story until there exists a potential search that fits" (p. 91).

Participants in all focus groups were asked to evaluate situations that are somewhat unrealistic. Candidates are rarely selected for the next step in the recruiting process based on their resumes, cover letters, or interview responses alone. Resumes are usually accompanied by cover letters, cover letters are usually accompanied by resumes, and interviews are usually accompanied by both documents. In the interviewing focus group, not only is the oral-delivery factor missing, but participants also cannot view nonverbal communications, such as attire and body language, that would typically be evaluative factors in a job interview.

As has been noted in Chapters 2 and 3, storytelling in cover letters and interview responses enjoys more support in the scholarly and popular-press literature than resumes do. In the researcher's extensive investigation for this study, no conceptualization of a "storytelling resume" has emerged. Therefore, the storytelling resume may be a new, foreign, and uncomfortable concept.

Other variables in the content of the items evaluated may also diminish support for the storytelling documents. As noted, participants critique a number of aspects of the resumes in that focus group and cite disqualifying factors such as typographical errors and the lack of an education section. One respondent in the cover-letter focus group mentions "grammatical errors" in some of the letters but provides no specifics.

While the focus-group participants by no means express overwhelming support for the story-based job-search media presented, their responses are favorable enough, in concert with evidence found in the scholarly and popular-press literature, for the researcher to endorse – with caveats gleaned from the focus groups – story-based media in the addendum book manuscript *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*. The focus-group findings also address part of the research question and set the stage for further research on storytelling in career-marketing communication. The possibility exists, for example, that a large, quantitative study could provide additional information on the effectiveness of these media in the job search, especially a study that isolates more of the variables affecting hiring decision-makers' preferences. Future focus groups could evaluate samples with more refined content along with more contexts provided about the positions sought. Additional suggestions for future research appear in Chapter 5.

Also important to this study, the researcher garnered valuable information from the focus groups that has facilitated improvement of the samples for the book manuscript. For example, the researcher addresses the resume focus group's criticisms of typographical errors, wordiness, exaggerated adjectives, and text-density in which the impact of job-seeker accomplishments is lost. The resume samples for the book represent a compromise between the text-heavy previous story-based versions and versions with improved readability and content.

Story-based career-marketing communications media are an emerging concept. The growth of storytelling in organizational studies, career research, and applied

organizational uses, along with the findings of the current focus-group research, suggest that these storytelling job-search media hold great promise.

It is that promise that the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, presents.

Table 4.3

Summary of Findings

Narrative Interviews	Online Focus Groups

• Study participants summarized their full careers using narratives that were interpreted in the context of organizational change.
• Respondents narrated their journeys through organizational change, including:
  o most personally significant aspects
  o learning
  o sensemaking
  o skills acquisition
•
	• Focus group participants did not readily identify storytelling elements in the career-marketing communications media presented.
	• Focus group participants expressed moderate support for the story-based job-search media and offered caveats that were applied to improving the sample job-search media in the book manuscript *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*.

Narrative Interviews	Online Focus Groups
• Participants' lived experience of organizational change echoed many themes found in the literature. • Most participants easily responded to a hypothetical job-interview question about their ability to handle change. • The participants' stories (in response to the hypothetical job-interview question) were categorized based on the fit between the respondents' stories and the literature about common problems with behavioral-interview responses.	

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter integrates this study's findings with the relevant scholarly literature discussed in Chapter 2 and indicates how both the findings and the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation on organizational change, organizational storytelling, and organizational entry. The chapter summarizes the ways in which the study has addressed the research question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations? The chapter presents implications for both theory and practice as well as suggestions for future research. The study culminates in the four conclusions presented as follows:

Conclusions

1. Storytelling provides a way to understand the individual lived experience of organizational change. The literature detailed drivers of change and forms of change as well as its challenges and stresses, but stories brought to life these frequently inert facts on an individual and personal level. It was one thing to read, for example, in Hosmer (2001) about downsizing and quite another to read in Chapter 4 the story of the manager of construction services whose experience of being downsized in which he said, "[It] knocked the wind out of my sails." This particular set of stories provided a slice-of-life narrative glimpse at how the study's 16 storytellers individually experienced organizational change. They offered a variety of perspectives on change experienced at particular times in specific organizations by unique individuals – depictions, as Harre (1997, p. 278) wrote, of the "variable and fleeting nature of human reality." "To find out

how meaning seems to radiate in some lives is to understand how to cultivate meaning in one's own life and the lives of others," Cochran, (1990, ¶ 38) wrote, illustrating one aspect of the value of the stories presented here. The reader of the stories in this study is invited to ask the questions suggested by as Hurt and Metzger (2003, p. 4): What meaning do each of these stories hold for the reader; how have they influenced one's thinking and approach to work; what value could others gain from the stories; and "how can they help others to recall and gain meaning from their own relevant experiences?"

Still, echoing Chia's assertion (1996, p. 68) that "organisational accounts … are now to be understood as interesting 'stories' rather than privileged truth claims," the stories did not represent a single, generalizable state of reality.

Understanding organizational change is instrumental for both organizational members and leaders. Ford and Ford (1995) contended that "change is created, sustained, and managed in and by communications." In line with the portion of the research question that asks the extent to which and ways in which individuals can use storytelling to ease the stress of change, storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, can both enrich organizational and individual knowledge about change and increase communicative effectiveness (Ford & Ford, 1995) in implementing change.

Using storytelling to understand organizational change is not a new idea. Other researchers (e.g., Reissner, 2002; Stuart, 1995; Van Buskirk & McGrath, 1992) conducted similar studies. Part of this study's original contribution lies in the individual meaning of the specific stories presented. It also offers a novel approach by linking organizational change, organizational storytelling, and organizational entry.

2. Storytelling can provide parallel communicative paths through which an individual can make sense of both organizational change and his or her own career. Just as storytelling contributes to sensemaking and learning in the face of organizational change, the stories individuals tell about their experience of organizational change can facilitate their self-knowledge and self-concept. Some of the same stories that organization members tell to make sense of organizational change can help them build their careers. "A coherent self-narrative is integral to developing and maintaining a sense of identity though personal and social change," Cohen and Mallon (2001, p. 56) wrote. Each story the participants told in the study could be considered a "work in progress in their own understanding" (Walker, 2003, p. 145) of organizational change and the respondent's own career self/career future. In telling the story of chaos and constant change in a community college department on which she worked, for example, the study's career specialist seemed to realize for the first time, "I didn't cope with change very well."

3. Storytelling provides a way to communicate skills acquired as a result of organizational change and thus can be an effective medium for organizational entry and advancement. As the literature and the participant stories in this study have illustrated, change is a pivotal constant in organizations, and individuals passing through organizations and experiencing change possess the capacity to then exit organizations better equipped with change skills to begin the cycle of organizational entrance and exit anew. The effectiveness with which they communicate newly gained change skills can be a key factor in their success in entering new organizations. This study, comprising the combined Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and book manuscript, proposed

how storytelling can enhance job-seekers' communication effectiveness in describing change skills, thus addressing the portion of the research question that asks this question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations?

The literature, as outlined in Chapter 2, acknowledged organizations as dynamic and undergoing constant flux and change. In response to the research question, the sensemaking stories presented in Chapter 4, bolstered by the literature, demonstrated that individuals within organizations can facilitate change, ease the stress of change, and help achieve organizational goals by improving the way they stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals within the organization.

The literature further supported the notion that change is both a cause and effect of employee turnover. The exodus of employees from changing organizations creates the need for new individuals to enter. Before their departure, however, these employees may have gained skills to enable themselves and the organization to cope with and communicate about change. They then have the opportunity to communicate the applicability of their change skills to new employers. The book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, buttressed by the scholarly underpinnings that this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation provides, proposes that individuals employ storytelling as a way of communicating these change skills as they attempt to enter new organizations.

4. Bolstered by moderate initial support by participants in this study and additional support in the literature, the concept of using storytelling in career-marketing communications merits earnest consideration from those who wish to advance their

careers. This research represents a first step in exploring the effectiveness of using stories in resumes, cover letters, job-interview responses, career portfolios, networking, and personal branding. The stories collected from narrative-interview study participants also provided content in most cases that could form the basis of effective job-interview responses, according to the criteria set forth in the literature on storied interview responses. A story, for example, is appealing to a listener because it is "consistent with one's lived experience in the real world" (Jameson, 2001, ¶ 132); and in the same way, a job-seeker's story can be influential to a hiring decision-maker because he or she can relate to the lived experience described in the story. The job candidate who can build stories that "transform experience and knowledge into influence" (Jameson, 2002, ¶ 140) may indeed have an edge over candidates without that skill. Stories also grab the listener who is short on time (Lee, Simmons, and Drueen, 2005), and some of the study's focus-group members affirmed time-starvation as a common affliction among hiring decision-makers. "The fact that most people are attracted to stories is crucial," Lee, Simmons, and Drueen wrote (2005, p. 173), "especially in situations where the prospective learner suffers from lack of time… only those learning media that can successfully compete for the practitioner's limited free time will be actually utilised." Considering the constrained time in which job interviews often must fit, Shawn Callahan's advice was apt: "If you don't have much time, and you want to get a message across to your audience, then tell a story" (personal communication, Aug. 29, 2006).

In *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, the researcher argues for an organizational world that is already beginning to embrace storytelling for a number of uses (as discussed in Chapter 2), and to look to narrative as a way to improve

hiring practices by encouraging applicants to tell their stories. Particularly in resumes and curriculum vitae (CVs), the trend has been toward more standardized documents stripped of information and, the researcher argues, their humanity. The researcher's argument mirrors Cohen's lament (n.d., ¶ 37) that "the bureaucratic routines which construct our official CVs … simply provide us with an abstract legal identity from which every vestige of lived experience has been drained." Thus, this researcher argues in the book manuscript:

> It's … just possible that the current business trend toward storytelling will move the resume to a more rather than less narrative form. As businesspeople recognize the power of storytelling and eschew emotionless data, PowerPoint presentations, dry analytical facts, and terse bullet points, they will be drawn to story-based resumes. As *A Whole New Mind* author Daniel Pink warns, "Minimizing the importance of story places you in professional and personal peril."
>
> Employers and recruiters express a constant concern about finding candidates who are a good fit with their organizations, who will perform, and get results. Given that they fret about the ability to predict candidate performance before hiring, they should welcome information in the resume that helps them to get to know more about the candidate rather than less. In fact, it is not decision-makers' distaste for rich information that is driving the current trend toward standardized profile forms that enable employers to compare apples to apples; instead, it is the revolution in Internet recruiting and job-hunting, which has inundated employers with too many resumes to deal with. But as Pink pointed

out, we have a "hunger for what stories can provide – context enriched by emotion, a deeper understanding of how we fit in and why that matters." (p. 95)

Implications for Theory

Scholars in all three of this study's foundational fields – organizational change, organizational storytelling, and organizational entry (particularly career theory and research) – have deployed constructivist theory as a framework. This study broadened this theoretical perspective and created constructivist links among the three fields.

Constructivism denies the existence of a single, objective reality, asserting instead that people construct reality through social interaction – language, conversation, story. Humans are natural storytellers; Fisher (1985, p. 74) called the species "homo narrans" – who can construct new stories to create new realities. "Whenever a situation changes," Reissner (2002, ¶ 8) wrote, "people tend to change the story behind the situation to make sense of the new circumstances."

This theoretical stance is applicable to both organization members who want to effect change in the organization and job-seekers who seek to create new realities in their careers. Storytelling provides a means to create these new realities. Ford's assertion (1999, p. 480) that "the job of change agents … would be to create new realities in which people and organizations are more effective in achieving the outcomes to which they are committed" applies to both organization members and those who seek to enter organizations. An individual – a change agent in his or her own life – seeking an outcome in the form of a new job or career can create a new story that in turn becomes the desired new reality.

This study extends the notion of "narrative construction" (Cochran, 1990, ¶ 25) to suggest that individuals can construct and reconstruct stories:

- To make sense of and cope with change in their organizations. The stories collected for this study illustrated Taylor's premise that the stories people tell about organizational change reflect the way they make sense of the change. They embodied Polkinghorne's (1988, p. 160) contention:

  > We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the outcomes of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed. We explain our actions in terms of plots, and often no other form of explanation can produce sensible statements.

- To craft their career selves and future careers. Employing stories that enable individuals to construct their careers and narrate an imagined future is an emerging trend in career counseling (Brott, 2001; Campbell & Ungar 2004a, 2004b; Chen, 1997; Christensen & Johnston, 2003; Hansen, 2003; Harris-Bowlsbey, 2003; Niles, 2003; Parmer & Rush, 2003; Peavy, 1995). Acknowledging that, like organizational change, "career and work are socially constructed processes" (Parmer & Rush, 2003, p. 29) career theorists, counselors, and researchers observed that "if narratives shape the environment which is experienced as real, they also shape the self" (Van Buskirk, McGrath, & Dennis, 1992, ¶ 13). The stories in this study provided glimpses of how slivers of self-construction and self-actualization emerged from participants' organizational change stories as "rounded, deep, and

multifaceted exploration[s] of career that recognize its dynamic, evolving, and often ambiguous, even contradictory, character" (Cohen & Mallon, 2001, p. 56). The corporate secretary interviewed for the study provided an example of such self-actualization when she commented, while recounting her career, "I tend to do better in management and organization. That's why I like teaching. I may not be good in the classroom, but I'd be real good as a principal."

- To market themselves to employers: This notion draws from Richmond's and McCroskey's (2001, p. 20) definition of organizational communication: "The process by which individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals by means of verbal or nonverbal messages" and propels the idea of creating a career self/career future one step further. By committing their stories to the employment communications they use to approach prospective employers, individuals seeking organizational entry potentially construct their future careers on paper or in spoken "text" while also stimulating meaning in the minds of hiring decision-makers.

Implications for Practice

Because this study resides at an intersection among organizational change, organizational storytelling, and organizational entry, the term "practice" as applied to the research may lack clarity. Three types of "practice" that may particularly benefit from the research are those engaged in by job-seekers, career practitioners (such as counselors, job-search coaches, educators, and resume writers), and organizational practitioners (such as managers, leaders, consultants, researchers, educators).

Job-seekers. Individuals seeking to gain entry into new organizations are the primary, intended audience for *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*. Through the book, backed by the research in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation, job-seekers are exposed to a promising and innovative way to communicate to employers the skills they have acquired while undergoing organizational change.

Career practitioners. This study supports the emerging narrative approach in career counseling and the concept that storied selves can narrate their future careers. Noting that "career theory and research is supposed to inform the practice of career counseling, and career counseling is intended to improve the careers or lives of people," Cochran (1990, ¶ 38-38) considered fundamental questions to be these: "What is the nature of a good life, a good career?" Phrased practically, "How should one live?" Through encouraging clients to construct and tell their stories, career practitioners may help answer those questions in a way that, in fact, improves lives and careers. In addition, career practitioners may find the concept of using storytelling in career-marketing communications to be a valuable tool.

Organizational practitioners. While this study provides little that has not already been explicated in many other studies of storytelling and organizational life, the research proffers the study participants' lived experiences and then invites the organizational practitioner to derive meaning from them that is relevant to their particular areas of practice. The study also links organizational change with organizational storytelling and organizational entry, providing a new perspective on using storytelling in a communications continuum of change.

Contribution

This study is intended to broaden and connect the literature on organizational change, organizational storytelling, and organizational entry while addressing the research question: To what extent and in what ways can the use of storytelling, as a form of organizational communication, enable individuals to enter organizations and ease the stress of organizational change for both themselves and the organization as a whole?

Given Reissner's contention (2002, ¶ 2) that a lack of comprehension exists in management literature about "how people construct a meaningful world through stories," this research plays a role in addressing that deficiency by providing a small "reading of organizational life," as Rhodes (2000, p. 11) called it, while illustrating the "narrative character of organizational life" (Reissner, 2002, ¶ 2) and enriching the understanding of the lived experience of organizational change. It is also intended to advance the promising concept of crafting stories during the job search and for organizational advancement.

A significant contribution, of course, is the book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*. As a popular-press book, it may be greeted with the same skepticism that Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens, and Weir (2006, p. 133) expressed concerning popular-press books about communicating during organizational change, referring to them as "based on self-referential logic (e.g., 'trust me')." It is the researcher's observation that books about career development and career-marketing communication tend to be the same way – full of subjective advice that is not necessarily well-researched. The researcher's previous three career books were backed by research but not submitted for an academic review process the way the current manuscript is. The

researcher's intent also, of course, is that this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation provide the appropriate scholarly underpinnings for the book while also telling the story of the research that provides the book's foundation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research could collect change stories in a specific organization, among a specific demographic, or among individuals in a particular organizational role and more closely scrutinize how these populations differ in the way they view and make sense of organizational change.

Future research might ask the question: "How would research subjects modify their change stories if they knew in advance they would be asked a job-interview-type question as part of the research?" Given the evaluative aspects of the researcher's analysis of participants' responses to this job-interview question, an important contribution to research would be to subject the change stories of these study participants (or others) to the scrutiny of hiring managers and other career experts and conduct additional research on hiring decision-makers' responses to the concept of job-seekers' using storytelling in the job search.

Given that storytelling has already gained a modicum of acceptance in cover letters and job-interview responses, the concept of a storytelling resume needs additional development and research.

The stories presented by research subjects in response to a hypothetical job-interview question about handling change illustrated that as effective as stories may be as career-marketing communications, they are likely more effective if told well. Both this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation and the addendum book manuscript touch

on telling stories well, as does the research of researchers as Ralston, Kirkwood, and Burant (2003), but much more research is needed in this area.

Epilogue: NASA Consultant Returns

Chapter 1 relates a visit by consultant Annette Simmons to NASA Masters' Forum, a semi-annual program produced for NASA and other project managers. Simmons spoke to the Masters' Forum just a few weeks after the January 30, 2002, release of a report, *NASA: Better Mechanisms for Sharing Lessons Learned*, by the United States Government Accounting Office (GAO). At that gathering, Simmons reinforced a recommendation in the GAO report that the space agency find "ways to broaden and implement mentoring and 'storytelling' as additional mechanisms for lessons learning" (p. 7).

Simmons returned to speak to the same group about a year later – just 10 days after the space shuttle Columbia had disintegrated on reentering the Earth's atmosphere killing the seven astronauts aboard. Simmons came prepared with a story to help the project managers cope with the loss of the shuttle crew. She recalled that she was asked not to talk about the tragedy:

> I … vividly remember speaking to the Master Forum … group on Feb 11, 2003. … What I remember is that I was strongly advised to NOT discuss the disaster. I had arrived with an in-depth story about the Indian woman (Dr. Kalpana Chawla) who died – I had just visited India – and was ready to help them assimilate personal feelings with professional implications – everything that storytelling can do. (personal communication, August 14, 2006)

Simmons' intention to tell a story aligns with a contemporary challenge that Silverman (2006) described, "connecting people at all levels of organizational life into a comprehensive tapestry" (p. xix). In *Wake Me When the Data Is Over*, Silverman's guidebook to using storytelling in numerous organizational situations, the author exhorted that connecting organization members "is not just a fanciful notion. It is a fundamental element for survival" (p. xix).

Silverman elaborated by citing a 2005 study by management-consulting firm Accenture in which the top concern of CEOs was to "attract and retain talented and skilled staff" while their second priority was "shifting organizational culture and bolstering attitudes following a spate of downsizing and cost cutting that had made life difficult for employees" (p. xx). The premise of *Wake Me When the Data Is Over* – and of the current study – is that storytelling is key to these endeavors as well as to the imperative of connecting people in organizations.

That Annette Simmons was rebuffed in her effort – through story – to create such a connection and to help shift NASA's organizational culture in the face of severe trauma and looming change illustrates the challenging road that the current study begins to pave. Inherent in the drive among the corporate leaders of the Accenture study to change organizational culture is the notion that they will need to "attract and retain talented and skilled staff" (Silverman, 2006, p. xx) to bring about that change. This study offers a communication vehicle – storytelling – through which prospective organization members can describe their ability to lead and execute change. Story has the potential to then propel organizational change, enable organization members to make sense of the change, and weave individuals together into the organizational fabric. The human connection

made possible by harnessing the narrative way in which people think holds the promise of improving both organizations and careers.

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Appendix A: Tables to Accompany Chapter 2

Appendix A: Tables to Accompany Chapter 2

Table A1: Summary of Scholars' Characterizations of "Change Skills"

Author(s)	Change Skills
Brightman & Moran (2001)	• Ability to frame change in terms of results for the organization as a whole as well as the effect on the individual. • Ability to foster and create an atmosphere that enables people to test the new situation, generate recommendations, experiment with new ways of operating, and exhibit some dysfunctional behavior while the new equilibrium is taking root in the culture • Ability to lead change effort with their every word and deed. And serve as a role model for the organization. • Constant dedication to making change a reality • Ability to interact with individuals and groups in the organization to explain the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the change

Author(s)	Change Skills
Kanter (1999)	• Imagination to innovate • Self-confidence • Professionalism • Openness to collaboration • Ability to work without management sanction • Ability to develop trust • Respect for the process and content of change • Ability to work across functions • Ability to stake rewards on results • Passion, conviction, and confidence in others • Serving as idea scouts, attentive to early signs of discontinuity, disruption, threat, or opportunity
Schein (1996)	• Self-reliance • Responsibility • Self-monitoring • Capacity to learn from own experience and the experience of others
Nickols (2004)	• Analytical skills, especially in analyzing workflow, systems, and finance • Interpersonal communication skills • Ability to speak the languages (“organizational dialects”) of socio-technical systems, marketing, manufacturing, finance, human resources, and legal

Author(s)	Change Skills
Frohman (1997)	• Focused more on results than teamwork • Action oriented • Driven internally to make a difference • Inclined to focus learning on meeting organizational needs • Directed by organization needs to go beyond one's job • Good corporate citizens who do not feel constrained by current practices and procedures • Inclined to question organizational assumptions • Clearly focused on desired achievement balanced against an understanding of where the organization is going
Clarke & Meldrum (1999)	• Vision • Ambition and personal risk • Subversion • Political astuteness
Francis, Bessant & Hobday (2003)	• Recognition of the challenge of change • Ability to determine a transformational strategy • Recognition of the need for extensive innovation • Ability to manage systemic change • Ability to install leadership processes

Author(s)	Change Skills
Howell & Higgins (1990)	• Transformational leadership behaviors • Higher levels of risk-taking • Innovativeness • Influence and the ability to use a variety of influence tactics
Beatty & Gordon (1991) and Beatty & Lee (1992)	• Path-finding • Problem-solving • Vision • Determination • Technical expertise • Interpersonal skills • Political skills

Buchanan & Boddy (1992)	• Competence concerning:
	  o Goals
	  o Roles
	  o Communication
	  o "Managing up"

Author(s)	Change Skills
Buchanan (2003)	• Exceptional combinations of: o Leadership o Managerial skills o Technical skills o Interpersonal skills o Political skills • Being a: o Flexible driver o Determined contributor o Pain absorber o Political manipulator o Career enhancer
Katzenbach et al (1997)	• Ability to: o Create o Innovate o Experiment o Take risks

Author(s)	Change Skills
Moran and Brightman (2000)	• Leadership • Creativity • Problem-solving • Continuous improvement • Team effectiveness • Customer service
O'Daniell (1999)	• Interpersonal skills that foster the ability to influence, lead, and manage • High tolerance for ambiguity and personal risk
Hiatt (2004)	• Business knowledge • Enthusiasm for change • Excellent communication skills • Willingness to listen and share • Total commitment • Ability to remain open-minded and visionary • A passion for the vision • Resilience

Author(s)	Change Skills
Stuart (1995)	• Positive viewpoint • Future orientation • Political/situational awareness • Focus • Groundedness • Salient goals • Readiness to move on • Aversion to standing still • Opportunistic • Competitiveness • Understanding change • Skills fit • Learning skills • Financial security • Resilience • Empowerment • Self-knowledge • Self-worth

Table A2: Organizational Uses of Storytelling

Author(s)	Organizational Uses of Storytelling
Boje (2002) Brown & Humphreys (2003), Boyce (1995), Czarniawska (1998), Rhodes (1997), Callahan (2006), Morgan & Dennehy (1997), (Beech, 2000), (McKenna, 1999), Gabriel (2000)	• Storytelling to research organizations
Boyce (1995), Gargiulo (2002), Gargiulo (2006), Cripe (1993), Breuer (1998), Creekmore (2003), Zachry (1999), Seitjs & O'Farrell (2003), Richards (2004), Kolb (2002), Kolb (2003), Clampitt & Williams (2004), Collison & Mackenzie (1999), Callahan (2004), Brittain, Swain, and Simpson (2005) Ford & Ford (1995), Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven, & Kroupa (2006), Breuer (1998) Ready (2002), Dunford & Jones (2000), Stone (2003), Callahan, Rixon, & Schenk, 2005, Carder & Silverman (2004), Richards (2004), Ford (1999), Gray & Castles (2006), Durrance (1997), Rhodes (1997), Joensuu & Ilmola (2005), Boje (1991), Allen (2005), Simmons (2001), Olson & Eoyang (2001) Shanahan & Maira (1998)	• Storytelling to address change and communicate visions of the future
Goman (2005), Seitjts & O'Farrell, Dietz (2004), Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven, & Kroupa (2006), Kaufman (2003), Stone (2003), Godin (2005)	• Storytelling to address resistance to change
Klein (2003), Collins and Rainwater (2005), Birchard (2002), Callahan, Rixon, & Schenk (2005), Brown & Humphreys (2003), O'Hara (1996), Gargiuluo (2006), Balogun & Johnson (2005), Taylor (1999), Fleming (2001), Gabriel (2000)	• Storytelling for organizational learning and for sensemaking to ease the stress of change
Dickman (2003), Ramzy, (2006), Dunford & Jones (2000), Denning (2001), Rhodes (1997)	• Storytelling to catalyze change

Author(s)	Organizational Uses of Storytelling
Boyce (1995, 1996), Smith & Keyton (2001), Sole & Wilson (2002) Brownell (2003), Carder & Silverman (2004) Ryan Group, Inc. (2005)	• *Additional uses of storytelling*: o problem solving/action o organizational renewal o socialization of new employees o innovation o new product development o affirmation/expression of shared experiences/meaning/ norms/values o communication of organizational messages o depiction of organizational culture and values o organizational member bonding o therapeutic interventions o training and development o knowledge sharing o conflict resolution

- unlearning
- trust/commitment development
- emotional connection
- branding

Appendix B: Consulting Firms with Storytelling Focus

Appendix B: Consulting Firms with Storytelling Focus

Firm	Web Address (URL)
Narrativity	• http://www.narrativity.net
StoryQuest	• http://www.storyquest.us
StoryWork Institute	• http://www.storywork.com/index.html
Loren Niemi	• http://www.storytelling.org/Niemi/
Joel ben Izzy	• http://www.storypage.com/html/consult.html
Conkling Fiskum & McCormick	• http://www.cfm-online.com
Envisioning + Storytelling	• http://www.e-and-s.com/
Corporate Storyteller	• http://www.thecorporatestoryteller.com
Polaris Associates	• http://www.polaris-associates.com/
Stories That Work	• http://storiesthatwork.com/
Wisdom Tools	• http://www.wisdomtools.com

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Take me briefly through your career.

Describe your position within your current organization.

Describe the change(s) your organization has undergone.

What has been most significant for you personally in undergoing your organization's change(s)?

What have you learned from undergoing change with your organization?

Would you say that you have acquired or sharpened any skills as a result of going through change?

Have you participated in any interviews for new employment or internal promotion?

Did you discuss skills related to change? Tell any stories of dealing with change?

If you were interviewing for a new job in an organization that similarly anticipated major changes, can you envision yourself telling stories of how you handled the change?

If I were an employer interviewing you for a new job or promotion right now, what story would you tell if I asked to you give me an example that demonstrates your flexibility, adaptability, and ability to handle change?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Forms

Appendix D: Informed Consent Forms

***Prospective Research Subject**: Read this consent form carefully. Ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.*

Project Title: Career Stories and Organizational Change	
Principal Investigator: Katharine Hansen	**Organization**: Union Institute & University, where the principal investigator is a doctoral learner
Location of Study: TBD	**Phone**: 386-740-8872
Other Investigator(s): None	**Organization**: n/a

Purpose of This Research Study
To collect career stories from research participants and ask them to describe how they've experienced organizational change, as part of researcher's doctoral degree program at Union Institute & University.

Procedures
- I will interview you, as a research participant, face-to-face.
- The interview will last an estimated 30 to 90 minutes.
- I will audio-record the interviews.
- I will also take notes.
- I will transmit transcripts of the interviews to you, as a participant, by postal mail or a password-protected Web link and provide an opportunity for you to correct any inaccuracies and to make comments and changes.
- In addition to providing raw transcripts, I will also share the overall research findings with you by postal mail or a password-protected Web link and invite comment.
- In audio-recording interviews and in transcribing them, I will handle audio files and transcripts with discretion and confidentially.
- To protect the identities of participants, no real names will be used in any of my resultant research.

Risks
I am not aware of any risks involved in participating in this research. I will communicate to you any new information developed during the study that may affect your willingness to continue participation.

Possible Benefits
The research study is not expected to provide any direct benefits to you as the participant.

Financial Considerations
There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research except local transportation costs up to $15.

Informed Consent Form, continued

Confidentiality
Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. The results of the study, including all data, may be published but will not give your name or include any identifiable references to you. I will provide security to those who e-mail me to express interest in participating through deletion of all e-mails for potential participants who decide not to participate. I will ensure that no one else has access to my e-mail. No names or other identifying information, including e-mail addresses, will be shared with anyone else, and e-mails will be deleted when no longer needed for the study. However, any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the persons conducting this study and/or Union Institute & University's Institutional Review Board, provided that such inspectors are legally obligated to protect any identifiable information from public disclosure, except where disclosure is otherwise required by law or a court of competent jurisdiction. These records will be kept private in so far as permitted by law.

Termination of Study
You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. You will be provided with any significant new findings developed during the course of this study that may relate or influence your willingness to continue participation. In the event you decide to discontinue your participation in the study, please notify Katharine Hansen, 386-740-8872, of your decision so that your participation can be terminated in an orderly fashion.

Resources

Any questions you have about this study will be answered by: Katharine Hansen, 1250 Valley View Lane, DeLand, FL 32720-2364, 386/740-8872, e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu

Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject will be answered by: Katharine Hansen, 1250 Valley View Lane, DeLand, FL 32720-2364, 386/740-8872, e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu

In case of a research-related emergency, call Katharine Hansen, Daytime: 386/740-8872, Nighttime: e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu.

Subject and Researcher Authorization
I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws.

Signatures:

Participant Name (printed):
Participant Signature:
Date:
Principal Researcher's Name (printed):
Principal Researcher's Signature:
Date:

This Informed Consent Form for online focus groups can be found at http://www.quintcareers.com/hansen_informed_consent.html

Informed Consent Form

Prospective Research Subject: Read this consent form carefully. Ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Title: Focus Groups on Story-based Resumes, Cover Letters, Portfolios, and Interviews

Principal Investigator: Katharine Hansen

Organization: Union Institute & University, where the principal investigator is a doctoral learner

Location of Study: Online

Phone: 386-740-8872

Purpose of This Research Study: To observe reactions in focus groups by hiring managers and human-resources managers to story-based resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interviews, as part of researcher's doctoral degree program at Union Institute & University.

Procedures

- I will interview you, as a research participant, in an online group setting.
- You will be asked up to 10 questions focusing on your reaction to one or more forms of story-based job-search correspondence (resumes, cover letters, portfolios, and interviews).
- You are not obligated to answer any of the questions.
- Your focus group participation will consist of an estimated 1 to 2 hours, which may be spread over a few days.
- The comments that participants submit to the online interface on which the focus group takes place will serve as the written record of the focus group.
- I will transmit transcripts of the focus group to you, as a participant, by password-protected Web link and provide an opportunity for you to correct any inaccuracies and to make comments and changes.
- In addition to providing raw transcripts, I will also share the overall research findings with you by password-protected Web link and invite comment.
- In transcribing the focus-group proceedings, I will handle transcripts with discretion and confidentially.
- To protect the identities of participants, no real names will be used in any of my resultant research.

Risks: I am not aware of any risks involved in participating in this research. I will communicate to you any new information developed during the study that may affect your willingness to continue participation.

Possible Benefits: The research study is not expected to provide any direct benefits to you as the participant.

Financial Considerations: There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research.

Confidentiality: Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. The results of the study, including all data, may be published but will not give your name or include any identifiable references to you. I will provide security to those who e-mail me to express interest in participating through deletion of all e-mails for potential participants who decide not to participate. I will ensure that no one else has access to my e-mail. No names or other identifying information, including e-mail addresses, will be shared with anyone else, and e-mails will be deleted when no longer needed for the study. However, any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the persons conducting this study and/or Union Institute & University's Institutional Review Board, provided that such inspectors are legally obligated to protect any identifiable information from public disclosure, except where disclosure is otherwise required by law or a court of competent jurisdiction. These records will be kept private in so far as permitted by law. To ensure participant confidentiality in the online focus group, I will use a discussion-board interface called "ezboard" (http://ezboard.com/) that includes a "Membership by Approval" option. Anyone who has not been approved by me as the administrator of my discussion board (http://p094.ezboard.com/bonlinelearning) cannot enter the discussion board and read participant responses. ezboard also enables participants to use a screen name to protect their identities, so only the researcher will know which screen name matches which participant. No responses to focus-group questions will be transmitted via e-mail, so there is no concern about breaches in e-mail confidentiality.

Termination of Study: You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. You will be provided with any significant new findings developed during the course of this study that may relate or influence your willingness to continue participation. In the event you decide to discontinue your participation in the study, please notify Katharine Hansen, 386-740-8872, e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu, of your decision so that your participation can be terminated in an orderly fashion.

Resources: Any questions you have about this study will be answered by: Katharine Hansen, 1250 Valley View Lane, DeLand, FL 32720-2364, 386/740-8872, e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu.

Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject will be answered by: Katharine Hansen, 1250 Valley View Lane, DeLand, FL 32720-2364, 386/740-8872, e-mail: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu.

In case of a research-related emergency, call Katharine Hansen, Daytime: 386/740-

8872, Nighttime: kathy@quintcareers.com, khansen@stetson.edu, katharine.hansen@tui.edu.

Subject Authorization: I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws.

I Agree I Do Not Agree

Appendix E: The Researcher's Perspective

Appendix E: The Researcher's Perspective

Because qualitative research experts suggest that researchers include a section in their written product that identifies the "personal values, assumptions, and biases" that the researcher brings into the work and that could contribute to the researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2003, p. 200), I am describing here how I came to conduct this research.

Organizational change and organizational entry, and especially the intersection of the two, fascinated me before I ever wanted to enter a doctoral program.

I did not know how to connect these two fields until some of my earliest learning at Union Institute & University introduced me to organizational storytelling. I realized that I had always felt a strong affinity for story and storytelling. As a child, I would devour contributors' personal anecdotes in *Reader's Digest*. All the knowledge I have learned best and retained the longest has come to me through story. My own experience put me solidly in agreement with scholars (e.g., Kahan, 2004; Taylor, 1999) who cite the narrative nature of human thinking and brain function as well as the human tendency to make sense of the world though story. Stories teach us, touch our deepest emotions, and help us remember. "As individuals we all relate to stories because our lives are stories," Fleming (2001, ¶ 8) wrote. As I look back at the members of the cohort with whom I entered Union Institute & University and how they presented their doctoral programs, I remember little of the impressive PowerPoint presentations (including my own) with their striking graphics and bullet points. The truly memorable presentations were those told in story. Imprinted upon my heart is the story of the Chilean woman who had found her soulmate as a young teenager only to experience his disappearance while he was

traveling before they could be married. Years later his body was found, evidently murdered. Also ingrained in my psyche is the story of the political refugee from Guatemala who escaped to the US and worked in menial jobs for many years under an assumed name before finally emerging to rightfully reclaim his education. My own life/career story of encountering organizational change has not been as dramatic or heart-wrenching. But the power of story has inspired me to frame my research as a story of stories.

When I encountered organizational storytelling, I instantly knew that the discipline would become a centerpiece of my program and that I would use story not only as the methodology for my doctoral research, but also as the linchpin of what I wanted to understand and communicate about the intersection of organizational change and organizational entry. I am passionate about empowering people with the communication tools they need to enrich their careers and providing organizations with the tools they need to effectively communicate change. Drawing on more than a dozen years spent helping people communicate in ways that help them enter organizations, I realized that storytelling could provide an innovative pathway by which people can gain entry into organizations, and it could be the means to ease the trauma of organizational change once they have entered. This realization represents my bias. Because of my passion for both storytelling and the communication tools of organizational entry, I hoped my research would demonstrate the effectiveness of storytelling in the job search and career advancement. Still, since even before I enrolled in my Ph.D. program, Jody Nyquist's words about "Core Competencies of Successful PhDs" (2000, p. 19) have guided me, especially the competency that refers to "creative and adventurous ways of discovering

new knowledge." Despite the inevitable bias that any researcher brings into the work, my research design was a far cry from the "safe" concept I initially envisioned – an idea about which I basically already knew all the answers. While I held a glimmer of self-indulgent anticipation about what I would find in the current study, I was prepared to take the plunge into uncertainty, unanswered questions, unsolved problems, wondering, and speculation. I was also prepared to accept and report results that contradicted my biases.

Gabriel (2000, p. 151) exhorted researchers to scrutinize their biases by asking:

- What evidence stands or would stand in the way of my interpretation?
- What would be the most unwelcome finding that would undermine my analysis?
- What feature of my data makes me the most uncomfortable?

Even as I commit my research to this document, I continue to consider evidence that may be contrary to my interpretation. I acknowledge that my interviewees' stories can be interpreted in myriad ways. That is why I wanted the narratives to stand in a natural state so the reader could also form his or her own interpretations. My most unwelcome finding would have been an inability for my participants to readily tell change stories. As they revealed their stories to me, my narrators constructed a reality: their own interpretation of the change they had undergone in their organizational lives. The aspect of my data that makes me the most uncomfortable is the moderation of support for storytelling in career-marketing communication expressed by focus group participants.

I also admit to slight discomfort with my tendency to fall in the love with the words and ideas of other scholars. Mensinga (n.d., ¶ 19) wrote of the challenges in her

research "of learning to trust my own voice and the choices I had made." A critic of her work suggested that she had depended too heavily on other scholars to help her think. I face the same challenges. My trust in my own voice, I believe, comes across more clearly in the addendum book manuscript, *Tell Me About Yourself: Storytelling that Propels Careers*, than in this Project Demonstrating Excellence/dissertation. If I have depended on other scholars too heavily, I can only plead that I experienced profound excitement in having developed an original thesis and then discovered innumerable threads of scholarly discourse that supported my thinking. I have perhaps been seduced by well-expressed ideas and have woven scholar's well-chosen words into a delightful conversation in which I am proud to now engage.

Appendix F: Resume Samples

Appendix F: Resume Samples

WESLEY EDWARDS

24152 Santa Teresa Avenue, Mission Viejo, CA 92692
Phone: 949-555-5555, Cell Phone: 702-555-5555, Email: Wes702@yahoo.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE ~ ORGANIZATION ~ COMMUNICATION ~ LEADERSHIP

CUSTOMER RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Translating organizational goals into precisely crafted customer and human-relations practices through innovative process improvement and multi-dimensional communication strategies.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Accomplished 5 Star-certified customer-development professional with significant record of unqualified success in auto dealership customer relations achieved through process organization and improvement, executing training programs, establishing high performance standards, and strengthening supportive administrative practices.
- Phenomenal communicator with exceptional organizational skills and ability to manage multiple situations and projects simultaneously with focus, direction, and enthusiasm.
- Motivated achiever with unparalleled problem-solving skills and ability to synthesize and apply information quickly while adapting to new situations seamlessly to make immediate contribution.
- Human-relations pro who excels in team-building and leadership roles, managing, training, and directing multi-departmental staff initiatives, as well as developing, coordinating, organizing, and executing public-relations campaigns and large group events.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

→ Customer Development	→ Internal/External Customer Service	→ Revenue Recovery
→ Human Relations	→ Communication	→ Problem-Solving
→ Research and Planning	→ Public Relations and Event Planning	→ Training/Coaching/Mentoring
→ Interdepartmental Liaison	→ Administration and Management	→ Problem Identification/Resolution
→ Elevate Standards of Service	→ Administrative Decision-Making	→ Scheduling/Planning/Organization
→ Process Improvement	→ Hiring and Workforce Supervision	→ Sales and Marketing

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Customer Relations Director and 5-Star Coordinator, DodgeLand USA – Dodge Automotive Dealer, Las Vegas, NV, 2003 to 2005

- Transformed dealership's failing reputation from prior ownership into thriving automotive sales and service entity by implementing 5 Star evaluative and strategic methodology.
- Achieved 5 Star Dealer Certification through increased sales satisfaction score (SSI), customer-service satisfaction (CSI) ratings, and vehicles fixed during first visit into dealer service department (FFV).
- More than doubled Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores from 40 percent to 88 percent in four months by initiating phone campaign to proactively resolve issues.
- Ensured customer satisfaction by conducting 100 percent customer follow-up on sales and service, completing detailed trend analysis, addressing customer issues, and reviewing customer feedback in management meetings.
- Played instrumental role in igniting dramatic growth in sales and customer satisfaction for dealership by establishing and managing Business Development Center (BDC) from the ground up.
- Attained nearly 100-percent paperless environment by streamlining processes and improving efficiency.
- Propelled dealership into top third of Dodge dealers nationwide by implementing personnel procedures and training to achieve certified BDC status in just four months, compared to one-year norm.
- Broadened dealership exposure by overseeing creation and maintenance of dealership Web site as well as establishing a presence on corporate site, showing strong, steady increase in site traffic since launch.
- Tracked $450,000 in rebate/incentive capital each month and recovered lost revenue by resolving data errors and maintaining contact with corporate offices/customers to settle outstanding debts.
- Ensured repeat business by performing all new and certified vehicle deliveries and boosted customer satisfaction throughout revitalized sales process.

Sales Associate/General Motors Buypower Manager, *Pontiac-Cadillac of Sioux Falls,* Sioux Falls, SD, 2002 to 2003

- Generated increasing volume of walk-in and Internet-driven automobile sales for sister store of by actively cultivating leads, referrals, and sales opportunities.
- Surpassed company quota of nine car sales monthly throughout tenure by selling an average of 15 vehicles, and as many as 20 in one month, while maintaining extraordinary 90 percent CSI rating.
- Excelled as top performer and leader among sales consultants through mentoring sales associates.
- Played key role in dealership's dramatic rise in ranking for Pontiac car sales, from 32nd to 2nd in zone, top 100 in the US, and 6th in zone for all GM lines, including trucks, by responding effectively to customer inquiries with information and incentives to visit dealership.
- Achieved GM Certification as Sales Consultant, Finance and Insurance Manager, Used Car Sales Manager, and New Car Sales Manager by completing intensive training in all major sales-related areas.

Manager, *Enterprise Rent-A-Car,* San Antonio, TX, 1996 to April 2002

- Rose quickly through several management levels – trainee to the third level of management in just seven months – within nation's largest car-rental company, culminating in playing key role on team that managed customer-service lot and shuttle operations for San Antonio Airport branch.
- Satisfied customers by providing them with prompt, efficient service and regularly oversaw vehicle returns, cleaning, fueling and placement of 500-car fleet.
- Earned two Marketing Excellence awards and two White Shirt awards through generating new business and performing acts of excellence in customer service acknowledged by specific customers.
- Streamlined shuttle rotation and customer flow by instituting shuttle-fleet management system.
- Halted loss of fuel cards at a cost of $80 each by initiating employee accountability system.

Certifications and Professional Development

Certifications:	**5 Star Coordinator,** Las Vegas, NV, 2004, 2005 **Sales Manager Certification,** Las Vegas, NV 2004, 2005 **Certificate in Supervisory Skills,** Las Vegas, NV, 2001

Martin Gale

941 Bougainvillea Lane • Hibiscus, CA 95321 • Phone: 408-555-5555 • E-mail: marty_gale@bell.net

OBJECTIVE

To contribute strong interpersonal communication skills
to your organization in a customer-service capacity.

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Highly energetic, self-motivated, customer-focused, results-driven professional with more than 20 years experience and proven track record in customer service and sales in both retail and wholesale environments, as well as inside and outside.
- Equally adept as team player or independent worker; required minimal direction/instruction while working from home office for four years.
- Flexible and adaptable with positive attitude and ability to see opportunity in challenging situations; possess keen desire to learn and apply new skills.
- Enthusiastic and productive; possess "get it done" attitude.
- Unsurpassed interpersonal/listening skills and ability to sell and provide service by listening to customers' needs, then exceeding them.
- Hard-working, punctual, and honest.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

***Account Development Manager**, Horner Millwork Corporation, Southboro, MA,* 1996-2000

- Established home office and developed new-account program for manufacturer and distributor of millwork, kitchens, baths, and building supplies covering most of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.
- Increased annual revenue by 10 percent ($5 million).
- Developed new accounts by phone.
- Conducted outside sales, taking ownership when appropriate.
- Provided strong follow-up to exceed customer expectations and ensure customer loyalty.

***Inside Sales Representative**, Horner Millwork Corporation, Southboro, MA*, 1993-1996

- Anticipated, identified, and assessed customer needs; provided positive, supportive feedback and facilitated transactions that resulted in customer satisfaction.
- Solved problems and took appropriate action to remedy issues swiftly, professionally, and in a manner consistent with customer agreement.
- Employed cool head and multitasking expertise in response to rush orders, coordinating change elements and managing groups effectively to finesse last-minute challenges.
- Presented friendly. positive attitude toward clientele and maintained excellent collaborative rapport.

***Customer Service Representative/Inside Sales**, Mor-Lite Distributors, Inc., Walpole, MA,* 1992-1993

- Managed customer orders and inquiries for manufacturer and distributor of windows and doors covering Southern New England.
- Employed active listening strategies to assist customers in decision-making and purchase processes in a manner attuned to customer needs and preferences, resulting in highly personalized, satisfying shopping experience for customers.
- Took initiative to build rapport with customers.
- Maintained client registry and individual purchase logs and used them to market specific events to targeted customers based on purchase history and to contact customers to inform them of sales and special in-store opportunities.

Sales/Design Consultant, *Eastern Door & Window, East Douglas, MA,* 1985-1991

- Designed detailed kitchen layouts for new and existing construction.
- Serviced all accounts with technical and administrative support.
- Conducted field measurements for kitchens, doors, and windows.
- Performed material take-offs (reading blueprints), developed costs, negotiated final prices, and arranged payment terms.

EDUCATION

Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts with honors, Quinsigamond Community College, city, state, 1992

Appendix G: Resume Addendum Samples

Appendix G: Resume Addendum Samples

Leadership Profile

SYED RAMJEET **CFO ▪ SENIOR FINANCE EXECUTIVE**

Addendum to Resume

CAREER SUCCESSES & DISTINCTIONS

Made "the impossible, possible" for a number of Wall Street's leading financial firms.

STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP, FINANCIAL MODELING & IT

W. J. Klein Companies, Inc.
Managing Director – Derivatives

Situation
W. J. Klein made startup of a global derivatives business among its top priorities. To ensure success, the company hired me to provide necessary mathematical models, develop related technology solutions, and contribute insight on business strategies.

Action
To accelerate go-to-market cycle and avoid years it would take to write pricing, hedging, and derivatives portfolio management software, I purchased a solution (one I previously built at Smythe Byrd) and added new models for multi-currency derivatives analytics. This temporary solution enabled W. J. Klein to launch global derivatives business within 90 days. Later I researched third-party sources for IT building blocks, rolled out a new, highly scalable system less than seven months later, and transitioned system's custody from the vendor to my in-house IT team.

Impact & Analysis
Revenues of W. J. Klein's global derivatives business soared from $0 to $150+ million over three years, and turned a profit within the first full fiscal year. My principal and secondary mandates were huge, and I took them very seriously. During this period of time, I was literally working day and night to make sure all challenges were met and I was able to influence members of my team to do the same.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Ramjeet Capital, Inc
President

Situation
To gain maximum returns on personal investments and create a future philanthropy, I formed a private company.

Action
Originated and executed investment strategies, established finance and accounting structures (including proprietary software development), and applied my talents in technology, research, advanced analytics (qualitative and quantitative), and financial modeling to make informed, well-timed investment decisions.

Impact & Analysis
Grew my original $1 million investment into $9+ million within four years and protected the majority of assets during the downturn. I have always been a self-starter, and I leveraged my experience working with Wall Street firms. The vigor and intellectual stimulation of this pursuit keeps my knowledge and skills honed as I maintain knowledge of the marketplace, and thrive on the challenge of analyzing key factors.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & RISK MANAGEMENT

Smythe Byrd Hickman
Vice President – Interest Rate Products Group

Situation
The firm's interest rate derivatives portfolio was suffering from lack of competent attention (key portfolio management personnel had suddenly left the company).

Action
Designed, developed, and implemented a complete portfolio management system based on proprietary pricing formulas with capabilities for daily P&L computation and breakdown for heterogeneous portfolio of over-the-counter derivatives and hedge instruments (swaps, caps, floors, swaptions, treasury bills, treasury notes, Eurodollar futures, etc.) and for exposition of risk.

Impact & Analysis
Delivered $30 million in new business and improved portfolio's manageability by upgrading risk analytics and stopgaps. Addressed operational performance issues by reengineering business processes, formulating policies, and creating controls that would mitigate future business risks related to knowledge management and employee attrition. I was, and continue to be, quick to assess, quantify, and control and/or mitigate financial and operational risks.

111 Winding Road, Burntfork, WY 22222 ▪ Home: 333-333-3333 ▪ Office: 333-444-9999 ▪ sRamjeet@email.com

SYED RAMJEET

CAREER SUCCESSES & DISTINCTIONS / Addendum to Resume / page two of two

OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

W. J. Klein Companies, Inc.
Managing Director – Derivatives

Situation
W. J. Klein was suffering competitively because it was only rated "A" as a derivatives dealer.

Action
Rallied a few other senior executives to create a special purpose derivatives subsidiary. Led the development of software solutions and implementation of operational procedures, as well as presentations and negotiations with rating agencies.

Impact & Analysis
Leveled competitive playing field by gaining "AAA" rating for W. J. Klein's derivatives subsidiaries—paving the way for growth and proving my ability to identify and act on significant strategic and competitive factors affecting a business.

CRISIS & TURNAROUND MANAGEMENT

Smythe Byrd Hickman
Vice President – Interest Rate Products Group

Situation
Smythe Byrd Hickman had suddenly filed for bankruptcy, placing the firm's bottom-line, its interest rate derivatives portfolio, and its customers, creditors and shareholders at risk of huge losses.

Action
Focused on maintaining positive cash flow and market neutrality while systematically unwinding derivatives book without benefit of access to treasury and futures markets—an extremely complex challenge as collections and buy-outs had to be synchronized so as not to cause huge imbalance in portfolio market risk.

Impact & Analysis
Succeed in unwinding virtually entire $1+ trillion derivatives book while delivering returns to customers and generating $15+ million in profits to the firm. Composure rather than panic was my approach to this extremely complex, high-risk situation, where Wall Street was watching, concerned about a potential domino affect.

BUSINESS & FINANCE STRATEGY

Smythe Byrd Hickman
Vice President – Interest Rate Products Group

Situation
The firm was driven to capture revenue and optimize profitability from trading interest rate caps and floors.

Action
I designed and developed a new system that used advanced mathematical equations to price caps and floors, and compute hedges in the treasury and futures markets.

Impact & Analysis
Profits grew from $0 to $10 million annually over eighteen months. My strong entrepreneurial orientation was an excellent foundation for this initiative.

OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL TURNAROUND

Banque du Monde
Vice President – Derivatives Department

Situation
Bank needed to accelerate growth, improve operational performance, and raise financial health to remain competitive and strong.

Action
Interconnected, consolidated, and leveraged combined resources (human capital, technology, "virtual" derivatives book) of offices in New York, Tokyo, and Paris. Replaced existing trading system with high-performance solution (based on one I designed and proved at Smythe Byrd Hickman), upgraded internal business process, executed cross-border business development initiatives (supported by new marketing tools), and championed globalization business culture.

Impact & Analysis
Converted a break-even business into a growth-focused, global business organization that generated $30+ million in revenue within one year, proving my ability to recognize and suggest business model changes that significantly affect top and bottom lines.

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Resume Accompanying Leadership Profile

SYED RAMJEET

CFO ▪ SENIOR FINANCE EXECUTIVE

Made "the impossible, possible" for a number of Wall Street's leading financial firms.

Eighteen+ years' experience in finance management.

Consistently deliver mission-critical results in finance, and in the technologies and teams that support finance. Supported hundreds-of-millions of dollars in revenue and income for world-class companies including W. J. Klein, Banque du Monde, and Smythe Byrd Hickman.

Deliver the "big wins" in corporate finance.

Multi-multimillion-dollar contributor, driven by a visceral "hard-wired" need to strategize, to innovate, and to disprove the words "It can't be done!" Gifted with the vision, determination, and skills needed for high-level, revenue-building strategies and tactics.

Supported $150+ million in accelerated growth.

Recognized as key to development of an eventual $800 million revenue stream for W. J. Klein, by strategizing and building foundation for firm's entire derivatives business, allowing comfortable yet aggressive growth from $0 to $150 million in annual revenues within first three years.

Created IT solutions for $70+ million business.

Delivered and / or supported the creation of over $70 million in revenue for Banque du Monde through conception and development of an array of sophisticated strategies and tools for financial management.

Managed growth of multimillions in investments.

Built $9 million personal portfolio in four years and protected it from major loss during market downturn. Grew and managed holdings using personally developed proprietary computerized analysis and decision-making system.

EXPERTISE

- Corporate Finance Management
- Strategic / Tactical Planning & Execution
- Budget Planning, Development & Control
- Domestic & International Tax Planning
- Operational & Financial Risk Management
- Operational & Financial Turnaround
- Investment Strategy & Transactions
- Treasury & Cash Management
- Equity & Debt Financing
- Investor & Banking Relations
- Financial Forecasting & Planning
- Financial Modeling & Analysis
- IT Strategies, Solutions & Projects
- Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis
- Risk Analytics & Policy Formation

EXECUTIVE QUALIFICATIONS

Conceive and execute financial strategies—drive corporate growth, profitability, and value.

Provide "no surprises" decision support by implementing and enforcing financial accountabilities, controls, processes, and systems. Drive corporate development through sound investment strategies and transactions. Dissected thousands of companies' financials for investment purposes, identifying underlying risks, deficiencies, and opportunities that others missed.

Link business objectives with powerful enterprise-level IT strategies—business and technology translator and accelerator.

Adept at translating abstract mathematical concepts, theories, and methodologies into user-friendly finance and IT solutions that clearly support business need and enhance revenue generation. Conceived, developed, implemented, and managed technologically sophisticated systems and interactive, feature-rich software.

Innately wired for strategic and tactical thinking—formulate and execute corporate strategic plans.

Contribute true global perspective, intimate knowledge of global business (speak English, Igbo, and French), and acute insight in potential business impact of geopolitical, economic, industry, and cultural factors and events. Develop and execute high-level strategies, make high-stakes decisions, and combat mission-critical business challenges.

Respect and leverage human capital—motivate, mentor, and lead talented professionals.

Live the culture and lead by example. Direct productive cross-functional teams using interactive and motivational leadership that spurs people to willingly give 110% effort and loyalty. A trusted advisor, completely forthcoming, yet diplomatic and apolitical. Extremely high-energy and driven to make a difference, yet levelheaded with a calm demeanor and low-key ego.

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SYED RAMJEET page two of three

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

PRESIDENT **BEKELE CAPITAL, INC., Burntfork, WY**
1998 to Present

Executive Overview

Shell company, created as an organizational framework for managing personal investments in stocks, options, futures, commodities, FX, and other capital market offerings. Personally create and execute investment strategies, perform research and analysis, and manage the portfolio. Make investment decisions based on extensive knowledge of the market, and a proprietary IT-based trading model.

Personal Challenge

Take sabbatical, grow portfolio for personal and philanthropic wealth, and then reenter corporate space in CFO role.

Financial & Strategic Successes

- Grew $1 million investment into $9+ million, retaining 68+% value compared to NASDAQ's 78+% aggregate loss.
- Developed and built highly effective computerized proprietary trading model with automated decision-making component.

MANAGING DIRECTOR **W. J. KLEIN COMPANIES, INC., New York, NY**
Global Derivatives Department
1992 to 1998

Executive Overview

Teamed with Senior Managing Director of Global Derivatives in department-level strategic planning, growth, and decision-making. Held direct accountability for providing IT-based analytics for this dynamic global business unit operating 24/7 in three continents (profit centers in North America, Europe, and Asia).

Led team of 25 finance and IT professionals. Provided front- and back-office operational support, and consulted and served internal customers — traders, marketing personnel, accounting (GAAP and statutory financial reporting), risk management, IT, networking, fixed income technology — worldwide.

Corporate Challenge

Support startup of global derivatives business—a W. J. Klein top priority. Hired to provide necessary mathematical models, develop related technology solutions, and contribute insight on business strategies.

Financial & Strategic Successes

- Credited with personal contributions to growing business from $0 to $150+ million in sales within three years (subsequently mushroomed to $800+ million by 1999).
- Conceived, designed and managed development / rollout of specialized modeling software and decision support tools directly tied to firm's ability to deliver accelerated growth to $150 million in three years and support further growth to $800 million.
- Software development delivered calculations, analytics, valuation, hedging, and risk management (cash flow, reset, interest rate, counterparty, volatility, basis, correlations, time value, convexity, etc.) for customized over-the-counter derivatives, deals, and portfolios.
- Led W. J. Klein to become an AAA-rated derivatives dealer (again supporting the ability for $150 million+ in accelerated growth) by showcasing the specialized technology and business practices to win confidence of the rating agencies.
- Formed and provided strong leadership to talented, robust team of professionals capable of meeting firm's short- and long-term technology needs.

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SYED RAMJEET page three of three

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, continued

VICE PRESIDENT **BANQUE DU MONDE, New York, NY**
Derivatives Department 1988 to 1992

Executive Overview

Developed and executed technology strategies, and managed related R&D projects, budgets, and teams for a $70 million profit center of the US branch of the second largest (assets) French bank. Managed operating systems, hardware, software, and interconnectivity for three offices operating 24/7 in global time zones. Led a team of five personnel involved in the development and implementation of derivatives software solutions.

Corporate Challenge

Convert a break-even business into a growth-focused, global business organization

Financial & Strategic Successes

- Created sophisticated interactive currency swap pricing / hedging system enabling generation of $15 million in annual business.
- Developed risk analysis / control solution, interest rate swap pricing and hedging system, and seamless portfolio management capability for $70 million multi-currency derivatives portfolio.

VICE PRESIDENT **SMYTHE BYRD HICKMAN, New York, NY**
Interest Rate Products Group 1983 to 1988

Executive Overview

Managed R&D activities, forecasted IT investment requirements, managed project lifecycles, and designed, developed, and implemented software solutions. Provided sophisticated, timely quantitative and analytical support to traders, marketing professionals, sales representatives, and operations personnel.

Promotional Track

Promoted to Vice President within three years. Originally joined major investment bank as Analyst in the Fixed Income Research department (1982 to 1986), providing decision support to institutional fixed income sales and trading business. Covered mortgage backed securities, corporate bonds, and government securities. Mentored and supervised Junior Analyst, and educated sales representatives and traders on fixed income business products, practices, and theories.

Corporate Challenge

Challenged to conceive, plan and deliver the technological and decision support requirements of the $30 million Interest Rate Products Group.

Financial & Strategic Successes

- Succeeded in maintaining positive cash flow and neutral market position in unwinding the derivatives portfolio — without availability of treasury bill futures, government securities and Eurodollar futures markets — as Smythe declared bankruptcy.
- Designed, developed, and implemented P&L calculation and analysis system, and risk analysis and control solutions for $30 million interest rate derivatives business.
- Facilitated $10+ million in annual revenue by creating interactive interest rate cap and floor pricing and hedging solution.
- Improved comprehensiveness, meaningfulness, and timeliness of analytics and decision support by assuming ownership of a portfolio of interactive, feature-rich proprietary technologies produced by the Fixed Income Research Department.

EDUCATION & LANGUAGES

MS, Computer Science, Cooper University, Linden, NY 1982 **Note:** Coursework completed for PhD in Math
BA, Mathematics, University of Missouri, Knox, MO 1980 **Note:** Also satisfied requirements for degree in Statistics

Fluent in written and spoken **English**. Fluent in native Nigerian language of **Igbo**. Competent speaker of **French**.

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Project Highlights

MATHIAS CARROLL

91110 Forest Dr. Apt 126, Houston, TX 77096 ◆ Phone: 713-555-5555 ◆ E-Mail: carroll_m@hotmail.com

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Projects/Deliverables	Challenge	Action and Results
As Product Manager, Norwich Community Bank		
Tax Payments and Data Import Enhancements on Internet	Tax payment and import functionality on the Automated Clearing House (ACH) module of Internet.	Oversaw product delivery and all marketing. Achieved successful, first-in-market implementation.
Conversion of clients to new Internet system	Changes to Internet system warranted customer system changes	Successful implementation with minimal customer issues.
Transmission System Enhancements	Antiquated transmission hardware system; $2+ million capital request had been consistently denied previous years.	Successfully collaborated with team to bridge past failings and placed product spin on a business case, which was approved.
Enhancements to External Communication to Clients	Customer correspondence was inconsistent with established brand image and noncompliance risk existed.	First to visualize and implement new use for established internal customer set-up system. Designed/implemented automated customer letter trigger to ensure consistent brand image and that important correspondence is sent to client while contributing to operational efficiency; became the standard for all departmental products.
Automated Pay/Draw mechanism via Internet	Product enhancement needed for Business Credit Line customers to initiate requests via Internet	Developed System Specifications for product; first to establish cross-functional teams needed to implement properly and effectively.
Tax Payment Option on VRU Menu	Tax Payment via telephone was not part of long-established and marketed 800 number.	Oversaw idea and implementation, resulting in crossing business segments, which in turn reduced another customer channel and increased exposure of product to customers and sales.
Next-generation Internet product	Vendor selection of next-generation Internet solution	Played key role on core team that oversaw acquisition of a new vendor, which exceeded $2 million purchase.
ACH Risk Initiative	Risk initiative designed to automate funding of ACH files and broaden credit policies to enable more customer penetration while managing risk.	First in market. Developed strategies to address gap in training and simplify a complicated process. Exceeded expectations and goals of project, garnering executive leadership praise on implementation success. Market studies showed lead in positioning and also exposed larger customer segment to product traditionally targeted for large corporate clients.
Banking Bundles	Initiative to create new product that included offering of products not traditionally offered to small-business clients; attempt to curb attrition rates	First in market, exposing 200+ sales force to new products. Simplified product offering and backroom set-up for seamless implementation; sales steadily increased, growing by 10 percent monthly.
Policies and Procedures for Non-standard pricing	Policies and procedures for non-standard pricing and other exceptions to profitability	Discovered implementation forms were inconsistent with policies; revamped to close gap and remain compliant with auditing requirements.
Marketing redesign of Earnings Credit Rate	Part of checking account initiative to revamp old business checking-account products.	Created market analysis and documentation using data mining techniques
Various Repricing	Yearly pricing reviews and recommendation based on cost and market analysis; implementation experience	Ensured diplomatic approach to perceived negative customer impact
Various Bank Conversions/ Deconversions	Conversions as business expanded; deconversions when corporate decision was made to withdraw from specific markets	Applied essential organizational and team-building skills to successful implementation with minimal negative customer impact.
As Assistant Product Manager, Norwich Community Bank		
Check ACH Product Launch	Conversion of personal check to ACH debit at Point of Sale	Oversaw marketing and training of sales personnel to become first in market for this specialized product.
Internet Cash Management Product	Implementation of first Internet Cash Management solution	Played instrumental role on core team. Oversaw brochures, demos, training, and testing to become first in market.
Internal Catalog Redesign	Internal documents for set-up and product-specific agreements, etc., were disorganized and hard to find.	Created new database to manage this redesign internally. Well-received and successful redesign for sales force became departmental standard.
Market Research of Special Pricing Customers	Unknown number of reduced pricing affecting profitability	Used data mining and analysis and presented documentation and profit loss statements to management.

Career Biography

Career Biography

GEORGIA LUTZ

Senior Scientist/Country Liaison Officer/AGRINET Coordinator
International Agriculture Improvement Center

I am a management and agriculture professional with more than 14 years of research, capacity building, and supervisory experience in international agriculture. I currently execute my mission to empower national research institutions to meet needs of smallholder farmers by excelling in multiple functions at the International Agriculture Improvement Center, based in the Philippines. These functions include Senior Scientist and the Center's Country Liaison Officer for the Philippines, managing the Center and representing it in the host country. Since 1998, I have also engaged in extensive networking and outreach as Coordinator of the Agricultural Biotechnology Network (AGRINET), overseeing administration of a training, research, and information network involving the Center and nine national research institutes/universities in six Asian countries.

Currently, I also serve as interim Coordinator of a new applied Center project in Asia linking science with farmers, using participatory approaches that involve many stakeholders in the community. The Asian Development Bank funded this project based on a grant proposal that I wrote with input from Center colleagues.

In my multiple roles, I contribute to project planning and budgeting, as well as guide the implementation of network and country work plans, analyzing problems that prevent achieving those plans, ensuring accountability, monitoring results, and proposing solutions to keep projects on track, on time, and on budget.

As a vital component in building an enabling environment for scientists in national programs, I collaborate in bringing visibility to and encouraging national support for the AGRINET project by interacting effectively with senior-level government and university officials (including members of the AGRINET Steering Committee), donors, and various stakeholders. Through my leadership, AGRINET now enjoys a reputation as a credible, active network for crop improvement in Asia, as documented in an impact-assessment study of the network, which is available upon request.

Previously, I served as a long-term Consultant at the International Agriculture Research Institute, overseeing technology development/transfer in the Agriculture Biotechnology Network. I adapted molecular marker applications to developing country conditions and supported their integration into rice breeding programs.

Productive interactions with various stakeholders in a culturally sensitive manner have been a hallmark of my positions in the Center, and my success has been measured in the "collaborative advantage" that I created through these inter-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder, and multi-country partnerships. I possess first-hand knowledge and understanding of the workings of international agricultural research centers, the environment in which they operate, and their interactions with donors, and various stakeholders. My strengths are my on-the-ground experience in partnership building, along with effective interpersonal and negotiation skills.

My research in the use of biotechnologies as research tools has spanned a variety of areas, including plant-microbe interactions, as well as rice and maize molecular genetics. As a scientist at the Center, my experience has continued to expand, and I have enhanced my skills set, from project management to increasingly responsible leadership roles. During the recent Center strategic-planning exercise, I played a key role on the Task Force on Partners/Networks/Systems.

I earned my PhD and MS in Microbiology from the University of Hawaii and also hold a master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) and a bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of the Philippines. I continue my professional growth through numerous leadership and management courses.

Appendix H: Cover Letter Samples

Appendix H: Cover Letter Samples

Sherman Douglas Story-based Cover Letter Compared to Van O'Donnell Non-Story-Based Cover Letter

Dear [specific named individual]:

I'm excited by the possibility of joining your firm as an Analytical Consultant. I offer the statistical analysis background you require, along with a solid understanding of the many facets of US government economics.

More than 10 years in analytical consulting have equipped me with the skills to apply statistical techniques to developing solutions to real-world problems, as well as to mentor junior-level team members. My master's degree bolsters my qualifications.

My analytical skills have contributed to my ability to solve challenging problems. At ConAgra, for example, sales quotas were not tied to financial objectives. I applied my creativity to devising a sales-forecasting system in which order files could be integrated with shipments and invoicing files, and SAS reports could be prepared t each morning. I arranged for SAS reports to be e-mailed to each sales unit so all parties could see the sales status daily, ensured that the system tied sales quotas to financial objectives, and added a trend projection expert system to forecast which products would not make their objectives. This report contributed significantly to the successful startup of the Healthy Choice product line.

I am adept at analyzing data, performing equally well independently or as a team contributor, troubleshooting problems, and deploying my skills with multiple statistical and decision technologies, and an extensive variety of computer applications/analytical tools. I possess strong project-management and innovative thinking skills that would enable me to prepare specific analytical deliverables with a deadline-driven sense of urgency.

I am confident that my qualifications and your needs are an excellent fit, and it would be in both our best interests to meet. I can make myself available for an appointment at your earliest convenience. I'll contact you soon to arrange a meeting. Should you wish to reach me before then, please feel free to call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Sherman Douglas

Dear [specific named individual]:

As I read your ad for a Statistical Analyst, I knew immediately that I could offer exactly the solid statistical analysis background, economic knowledge, extensive experience with SAS programming, and analytical skills you describe.

Nearly four years in statistical analysis have provided me with exceptional experiences and the opportunity to conduct time series modeling/forecasting and seasonal adjustment, as well as design and analyze surveys. In me, you'll find someone who is unusually dedicated, self-motivated, and who possesses the detail-orientation and technical skills necessary to excel in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment.

In my current position as an economist for the National Association of Homebuilders, I have gained excellent insights into the world of economics and strengthened my analytical and quantitative skills. My analytical skills have contributed to my ability to solve and prevent problems both in my current capacity and in previous positions. I have also performed original research and written articles for a large-circulation monthly publication. I am highly adept at analyzing the US economy and am familiar with virtually every major economic indicator, particularly government surveys.

I am the complete package. With great efficiency and productivity, I can analyze data, work equally well independently or as a team contributor, troubleshoot problems, deploy my skills with SAS, SQL, Excel, Access, and HTML, and much more. I would also bring to your Statistical Analyst position the finely honed oral/written communication and data-presentation skills that enable me to translate complex research data into comprehensible language and then effectively present actionable results.

I am eager to meet with you. I will contact you in a week to arrange for an interview at your convenience. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Van O'Donnell

Oscar St. James Story-based Cover Letter Compared to Gary Williams Non-Story-Based Cover Letter

Dear [specific named individual]:

I am a salesperson, and a consistent top producer for my region. I would like to do the same for you in the senior sales associate position you currently have open. I offer a proven record of meeting every customer with a smile, and a solution – whatever it takes.

I once fitted a new customer (who erupted in anger, insisting he wore a size 42-long) by presenting his suit without a size label. He happily pronounced it "a perfect fit," mentioned he'd "told me so," and told anyone who would listen that I "was the only man with the brains to fit him properly." He came to me for all his needs for many years.

Relocating our men's furnishings store, we came across a suit, altered for pickup. I phoned Mr. X and told him his suit was ready." He replied, "I didn't buy a suit." His wife overheard and asked, "What about the suit you ordered last year?" He realized the suit was purchased the year before – but hadn't been picked up. They came right down. He'd gained a little weight – but I altered the suit again, right on the spot, rather than have the customer wait another year!

Customers come first. They expect, no, they demand personal attention, and I always exceed their expectations. People bring their business where they are well treated ... and many of my clients have followed me for years.

I offer proven strengths, playing a leadership role in team-building staff training and development focused on personalized customer care. I have demonstrated expertise in fitting and accessorizing tailored suits, as well as in-store merchandising. I keep score, with bottom-line results.

Every manager I've worked for will readily confirm the value I contribute. I'll match that performance on your team. I look forward to meeting you and will follow up this letter soon to schedule an appointment.

Thank you for considering me.

Sincerely,

Oscar St. James

Dear [specific named individual]:

My extensive experience in the retail sector and my commitment to driving up profits while satisfying customers aligns extremely well with a senior sales associate position within your organization.

I offer the unique combination of sales-oriented management that enhances profitability, operations-oriented leadership that ensures efficiency, and people-oriented guidance that yields productivity. For more than 20 years, I've done all that and much more at prestigious retail venues, where I have been recruited for my sales abilities and quickly promoted to positions of greater responsibility.

My track record in overseeing large staffs, P&L, and major fashion and merchandising operations speaks for itself, and my accomplishments range from exceeding sales goals to implementing innovative marketing.

My team-building experience and communications/interpersonal skills are unsurpassed and would be an asset to any organization looking to get the most out of its human resources while controlling costs.

I would like to be considered for a position in which someone of my background could make a contribution. I will contact you soon to arrange for an interview. Should you require any additional information, I can be contacted at the phone number listed above.

Very truly yours,

Gary Williams

Yi Chan Story-based Cover Letter Compared to Marika Tamiki Non-Story-Based Cover Letter

Dear [specific named individual]:

My deep-rooted passion for travel abroad would enable me to serve your company well as an international consultant based in Japan. I must confess that I have always had a passion for international travel and a curiosity for investigating other cultures. As a child, my grandparents filled my stamp collection with brightly colored stamps, souvenirs from their travels. I remember being so captivated by my treasure chest of stamps that I vowed to visit these places one day. I was nearly 13 during my first overseas adventure, and since then I have pursued several adventures abroad, including extended trips to Japan, the United Kingdom, and Europe, and a three-month internship with a consulting company in Portugal.

As a new graduate educated in international trade and consulting, I can offer your company expertise that will meet or even exceed your needs in export/import. My background has prepared me for multiple, diverse challenges in communicating with international clients, paying strong attention to detail, and in producing essential documentation.

My hard work, professionalism, and dedication to employer success have resulted in significant accolades and increased responsibilities. My superb organizational skills, firm understanding of global trade regulations, and awareness of the bottom line proved highly beneficial in my recent internship. Additionally, I can bring the following experiences and skills to this position:

- Ability to manage post-trade follow-up on delivery, quality specification, regulatory issues, reorders and changes in orders.
- Experience in traveling and living internationally and collaborating with individuals from many cultures with varied communication skills, work habits, and expectations.
- Strong work ethic combined with the ability to perform in high-pressure, fast-paced environments with long hours.
- Fluency in Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, and English.
- Excellent computer skills.

My education in management and foreign trade, as well as my strong decision-making, problem-solving, and action-driven leadership skills, combined with my overseas experiences, make me an excellent choice for the consulting position you are advertising. I plan to contact you to set up a personal interview at your convenience. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yi Chan

Dear [specific name of hiring manager]:

My practical and collaborative experience in an international company would make me a genuine asset to your firm in a consulting capacity.

I am bilingual in English and Japanese and have gained considerable knowledge of international business through four years of experience in the Los Angeles branch of Japan's largest financial institution while completing my bachelor's degree in international business. I have acquired skills in many aspects, such as trade issues, management, finance, research, communication, negotiation, and analysis, which can contribute to your organization.

I am also familiar with the business environment in both the United States and Japan, knowledge that will be extremely valuable in your endeavors.

I am confident that my professional knowledge, working experience, motivation, and ability to plan, research, organize, and complete projects will help me to perform the job effectively. I would be very interested in meeting with you and discussing how I can contribute to your corporation. I would like to contact you to schedule a meeting.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Marika Tamiki

Appendix I: Story-based Cover Letter Passages

Appendix I: Story-based Cover Letter Passages

I can make a valuable contribution to the Baptist Medical Center, especially the Fox Children's Hospital, based on my past experiences. As a child I spent a lot of time in hospitals, and I vividly remember my feelings in response to the environment I was in. I would like to be involved in making sure that children feel as comfortable as possible in an otherwise scary situation.

One of my most profound memories as a young child was the day I first flew on an airplane. I was traveling with my family to California, and I still remember the feeling of excitement as I held my mother's hand and climbed the stairs into the immense red, white, and blue plane. That was my first of many flights on Delta, and I have never forgotten it. I am interested in fostering that same excitement in others by working for Delta as a training instructor.

While working on a summer internship with the Red Cross in Rwanda, I was exposed to human suffering far worse than anything I ever could have imagined. It is out of the sensitivity I acquired toward the misery of oppressed people that I decided to dedicate my career toward trying to ease suffering. That is why I am writing to you about the social work position you currently have available.

In the recent past, I have spent many long hours at the bedsides of my two brothers, who were both hospitalized for lengthy periods for separate traumas. I thus have personal experience with both short- and long-term patients and the problems that they endure while in the hospital.

Appendix J: Interview Responses

Appendix J: Interview Responses

Focus Group Interview Samples

Below are excerpts (five questions) from interviews with two candidates for the same job as a sales manager. Assume that the two candidates are roughly equally qualified for the position. Please read their responses and react to them in the online focus group at: http://p207.ezboard.com/bonlinelearning

Interview A: April Alexis, Interviewee	**Interview B: Daniel LeFevre, Interviewee**
Question 1: What do you think it takes to be successful in a sales career? A: It takes the ability to meet every customer with a smile, and a solution – whatever it takes. Though I've worked in a number of industries, I have always been a salesperson, and a consistent top producer. Let me elaborate. Early in my career, I sold memberships at a family fitness center. An angry man once came to me demanding a refund. He began yelling at the membership workers and complaining about the swimming program, saying that it was a rip-off. Though the other workers were flustered, I calmly asked the man what was wrong. He that his son had been in swimming lessons for four weeks and was still afraid of the water. Instead of instantly giving him the refund, I offered to personally arrange for private swim lessons for his son for a week, explaining to him that sometimes children react differently to each instructor's teaching techniques. He finally agreed to accept without the refund. After a week of private lessons, his son was no longer afraid of the water, and he could swim nearly a lap of the pool. At the end of the lessons, not only did the father sign his child up	*Question 1: What do you think it takes to be successful in a sales career?* A: I believe successful salespeople put forth that extra effort that turns potential clients into first-time customers. Salespeople who attend to the details by doing whatever it takes to win over a prospective customer distinguish themselves from the countless others who don't go to any extra effort. Second, I think that if you label success as an attainable goal, you will never consistently remain successful. You can only succeed if you learn all there is to learn about your product, your competitors, and personal selling. Since this learning process is continuous, it's an unattainable goal. With good reason, salespeople should not consider success an attainable ending point but an objective that will always linger slightly beyond their reach. I've learned that to be a true sales manager, you have understand your customer by talking to your sales team then creating and communicating a product that meets the customer's needs. This can be done by closing the existing communication gaps.

for another paid session of private lessons, but he also bought a family membership and apologized to me for his behavior the week before. Customers come first. They expect, no, they demand personal attention, and I always exceed their expectations. People bring their business where they are well treated ... and many of my clients have followed me for years.	
Question 2: Why should we hire you? A: My abilities in so many areas as far as sales, marketing, promotions, and management will be invaluable for your company in the long run. My experience working with people with diverse backgrounds and at different levels, my background working with various clients, my work overseeing sales teams, my eye for detail, the fact that I strive to do the best job possible at all times. I'm also reliable, loyal, and trustworthy ... and if you hire me, you will have a team player who will add to the integrity and quality of your sales force for years to come. As an example of the kind of results I get that would justify your hiring me: Sales were down in the electronics department of the retail store at which I worked as an assistant manager. The perception was that our products were inferior to a competitor. I took the initiative to create excitement at the store level to increase sales. I attained buy-in from my manager so that I could run a contest. I collected sales data from the store on our products and used that information to back the need for this contest. My manager loved the idea. He thought it was exciting and	*Question 2: Why should we hire you?* A: I sincerely believe that I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are many other candidates who have the ability to do this job. I also have that ability. But I also bring an additional quality that makes me the very best person for the job – my attitude for excellence. Not just giving lip service to excellence, but putting every part of myself into achieving it. In my previous jobs, I have consistently reached for becoming the very best I can become. I think my sales awards and my management positions are the result of possessing the qualities you're looking for in an employee.

loved the fact that I provided him with details on how I planned to track the sales process. In the end, I increased sales for that month by 100%, which was phenomenal.	
Question 3: Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your organization was facing. A: The trucks at the retail store at which I worked as an assistant manager came loaded by personnel at a distribution center, box-by-box. After receiving a few trucks, I noticed that my employees were unloading broken merchandise that took a lot of time to clean up before the rest of the truck could be finished. The broken glass, paint, or whatever material it was prevented the employees from proceeding farther into the truck, causing more person-hours than normal. I noticed that the merchandise was broken because heavier boxes were on top of lighter boxes. After a couple of days of this situation, with productivity decreasing, I learned that the rest of the stores in my district faced the same problem. As a result, I asked each store to take pictures of the mess so the distribution centers could see exactly what was happening. I also asked each one to write down how many additional person-hours it took to clean up the mess. After we gathered this information for a four-week period, we had a pretty a good estimate of how much the company was losing – approximately $9.50 per person-hour... an average of $125 per store times 15 stores times 30 nights a month – amounting to a substantial sum. I took the information to my district manager. Once he realized how much money his	*Question 3: Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your organization was facing.* A: In a past job, I convinced my employer to adopt a perks program to increase sales-team productivity. I proposed the idea to him, and he liked it and adopted it. The end result was an 11% increase in sales.

district was losing each month because of broken merchandise in the trucks, he contacted his regional manager, and the trucks after that were loaded more carefully. The district made our Profit and Loss the next month by a 9 percent increase.	
Question 4: Describe the characteristics of a successful manager. A: A successful manager offers guidance but allows his or her subordinates the autonomy to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. The manager should also provide constructive criticism and feedback so the team members can improve themselves and the organization. One example is my boss in my current position at a Web marketing firm. He hired me as a sales manager because of my sales and motivational skills. He knew that I had many new ideas and allowed me the opportunity to implement many new programs. Of course, I kept him constantly informed and sought advice when needed. I improved communications in the department by implementing a departmental Web page. I also streamlined a number of processes. I improved team morale by implementing a salesperson-of-the-month award, which led to lower turnover. These are just a few examples. I earned the President's Award for my efforts and unique ideas. I gained not only my boss's confidence and support but his respect as well.	*Question 4: Describe the characteristics of a successful manager.* A: A successful manager should have the vision and capabilities to formulate strategies to reach his or her objectives and communicate these ideas to his or her team members. In addition to serving as a positive role model for co-workers, successful managers must also be capable of inspiring others to recognize, develop, and apply their talents to their utmost potential to reach a common goal. These are the traits I hope to demonstrate as sales manager for your organization.

Question 5: Are you goal-oriented? A. Absolutely. One of my recent goals as sales manager was to get an underperforming account executive who had been with the company for 6 months to start performing better and start nearing or exceeding goals. During his 6-month performance evaluation, we confronted the numbers head-on and discussed ways to increase sales. I encouraged the employee's feedback and had him participate in generating ideas on how to boost sales, such as maximizing calls, territory management, and any training issues. As a result, this salesperson hit his goals two of the last three months of the year and was close the third month. I think this was a big accomplishment as a manager because developing team members so they are successful is probably one of the most important goals a manager can have.	*Question 5: Are you goal-oriented?* A. Yes, I am extremely goal-oriented. I like to set goals for myself and be organized in the work I do. If I don't have goals, I find it hard to strive for anything in my job and even in my life. At my current employer, goals are even more important than ever. I have set goals to find innovative ways to have a positive impact on our sales-team productivity. I plan on doing this by going to the team members and working with them and provide them with training while they work.