

Delta Stories  
A Proposed New Paradigm Advocating  
The Expanded Use of Stories for Growth and Healing  
Based on New Standards

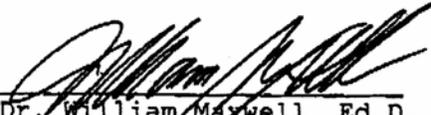
Steven Fletcher

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of  
the Master of Arts  
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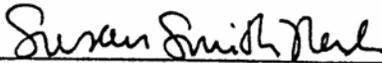
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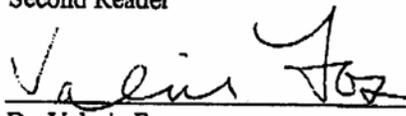
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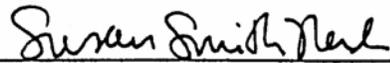
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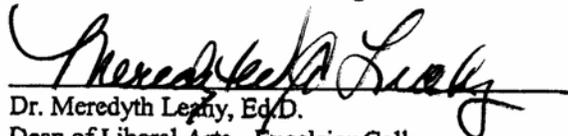
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Dr. Valerie Fox  
Third Reader

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Dr. Susan Smith Nash  
MLS Director - Excelsior College

April 19, 2007  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Meredyth Leahy, Ed.D.  
Dean of Liberal Arts - Excelsior College

April 23, 2007  
Date

## Curriculum Vitae

Steven Robert Fletcher was born in Healdsburg, California in 1946 and is an American Citizen. He graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1964 and attended Foothill College and San Jose State University. He attended Sonoma State University where he received his Bachelor of Arts in 1976. He was granted two California Teaching Credentials in 1976. One was granted under the Fisher Act and the other is a multiple subject credential under the Ryan act. He subsequently attended Eastern Tennessee State University and Excelsior College.

He has been employed as a Quality Control Inspector, a musical instrument maker, a secondary and high school teacher, a training officer, and a Chief Technical Officer for software development. He founded Hollow Reed Enterprises, Relief Services (a non-profit organization), A.V.I., Global eSoft and is the current owner of Gentle Place Publishing.

He has traveled in Africa, Europe, North America, the Pacific Islands and China. He traveled to China in response to an invitation from the Center for Process Studies in order to deliver a paper to an educational conference. He has lived in the United States, Canada, Chuuk, Swaziland, Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa. His migration to Canada was the culmination of a internal struggle with the Viet Nam war. This struggle was a major transformational journey that started with intent to

enlist in the Special Forces, drifted into apathy, turned into opposition which resulted in civil disobedience and jail time. He later turned in his draft card and was planning on prison as opposed to serving in the armed forces. Finally a friend convinced him he would be of more use to the world in Canada, than in prison.

While in Canada he discovered the transformative power of music and later found the Bahá'í Faith. As a result, he traveled to many countries and lived with many cultural groups as a demonstration of the oneness of mankind.

He has facilitated numerous institutes, programs and workshops for Bahá'í communities, early childhood teachers, the arts and for self-help. He is also a volunteer probation officer specializing in troubled young adults. He has written approximately 50 songs. He has created commercial software applications for banking, the travel industry, telecommunications, demographical mapping, wholesale and retail management and a medical management package.

He has invented two musical instruments, several electronic devices and holds five software patents.

His publications include a booklet entitled, *The Blue Comet* (1975)(short stories), *Story-Centric Education, Bridging the Gap Between Aesthetic, Intellectual and Moral Education* (A paper, China 2005), two anthologies of short stories entitled, *Still*

*Reflections: Stories of the Heart* (2004) and *In the Glow of Understanding* (2006). He has also published four CD's. These include *Ocean Dreams* (an oral presentation of short stories), *During Thy Days* (a meditation), *At the Gate of the Garden* (a documentary) and *Ancient Breeze* (instrumental music).

He currently lives with his wife Makhosazana near Yosemite, California.

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## **Abstract**

Some educators and psychotherapists recognize that stories are a powerful tool for healing and growth. Others are not yet aware of this potential. This thesis examines the use of stories for healing and growth and presents theories and methods currently in use. It concludes that some stories are more effective than others for this purpose. A set of criteria is created in order for those who use stories (for healing and growth) to easily locate material that is highly efficient. The stories that the criteria define are called Delta Stories. Methods are also examined in order to determine and propose the most effective methods for use with Delta Stories. Areas are identified where further research and action would be of value.

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## 1. An Underutilized Resource for Growth and Healing

### Introduction and History

Throughout history, human beings have created and used stories in many forms and for many purposes. Stories have been used to edify "nearly all of man's existence" (Bettelheim 53). Studies of history, religion, anthropology and linguistics, demonstrate that stories were used as far back as we have evidence of human culture. They have been the "center of community life" (Atkinson xi) and the primary method of education for many years. Stories were used to communicate and pass down cultural norms and religious principles. According to Thomas Lickona, stories have been among the "favorite teaching instruments" of many of the world's greatest moral educators (Northfolk 15). Stories, whether read or told, teach us "by attraction rather than compulsion" (Northfolk 15). Recently, we have witnessed a resurrection in the use of fairy tales, folk tales, myths and "true" stories such as those offered by the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series.

Stories have the potential to teach a number of necessary character strengths and have served to both encourage what was "right" and to warn against what was "wrong." Stories stimulate the various senses and this

stimulation creates "high involvement" ("Storytelling") and, therefore, effective learning. Neil Postman makes a number of claims about why stories work and about their critical importance to our survival as a human race. He says that personal, national, and religious stories are needed to maintain vitality in our identities (647). Postman goes on to say that, "without stories as organizing frameworks we are swamped by the volume of our own experience, adrift in a sea of facts" and that stories give "us direction by providing a kind of theory about how the world works—and how it needs to work if we are to survive" (647).

### **Some Challenges Facing Children**

All children are faced with the challenge of orienting themselves to an ever-more complex world. They ask themselves, "What is the world really like? How am I to live my life in it [and] how can I truly be myself?" (Bettelheim 45). Growing up presents numerous psychological problems (Bettelheim 6) and hurdles that children must overcome. Today, more than ever, children are threatened by "crime, violence, ignorance and poverty" (DeRoche 3). Still, children must ask themselves the eternal questions of "Who am I? How ought I deal with life's problems? What must I become?" (Bettelheim 47).

Bettelheim describes the most difficult challenge as finding meaning in our lives (3) and states that if we find the right ways to educate children we will no longer need therapy (4). As children struggle for psychological maturity they must gain a secure understanding of the "meaning of one's life" (Bettelheim 3). In the process of this they are faced with a steady stream of questions. Are my parents benevolent? Are there benevolent powers in addition to my parents? How should I form myself and why? Is there hope for me if I have done wrong? Why has all of this happened to me? What will it mean to my the future? (Bettelheim 47). Though the volume of worthwhile knowledge increases on a daily basis (Ryan 94) children are still faced with the largely unanswered questions of "Where did I come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?" (Bettelheim 47). These are the daunting questions and looming challenges of childhood and adolescence that, if not well answered, become the source of emotional problems in later life.

In 1987, the National School Boards Association claimed that today's adolescents "are more materialistic" and "less realistic" than in previous times. They attribute this in part to the fact that parents take a less

active role in raising their children. They say that youth look elsewhere for structure and that if they do not get it they will suffer (DeRoche 3). Neil Postman suggests that these structures can be found in stories (647).

At the same time that children struggle because parents are less involved in their lives, (DeRoche 3) so too have schools lost their "nurturing ingredient" that might otherwise assist children to grow into healthy and emotionally secure human beings (DeRoche x). Though we are in an "era of school reform" (DeRoche ix) these reforms for the most part are not working (DeRoche ix). DeRoche calls this a "moral crisis" (3) and says that it "benefits no one to have students leave school competent in the cognitive-academic aspects of their education but lacking in character" (xvi). The "moral mission" that has been lost in our schools (DeRoche x) can be restored, but it will take effort. The use of stories can help in this effort.

### **Some Challenges Facing Adults**

Like children, many adults suffer from emotional, psychological and educational handicaps as a result of their childhood experiences. They struggle to understand the eternal questions of "who we are at our core" (Atkinson xiii). They struggle with what to seek in life and with the application of what they have already found (Atkinson

34). Adults need to find security in their quest to follow "their right way" (Bettelheim 11). As the "number of dysfunctional families" continues to grow (DeRoche 3) it is common for people to "to live a life without experiencing it" (Remen xxx). According to Dr. Dean Ornish, "the real epidemic in our culture is ... emotional and spiritual heart disease [that is,] the sense of loneliness, isolation, and alienation that is so prevalent in our culture" (Remen xviii).

"Despite the awesome powers of technology many of us still do not live very well" (Remen xxvii). As life rushes along, few of us are strong enough to stop and find the necessary answers on our own (Remen xxvii). According to Dean Ornish, people who "feel lonely and isolated are more likely to smoke, to overeat [and] to abuse drugs." They also tend to overwork themselves. Studies have shown that these same people have a "three to five times" higher risk of "premature death" from heart disease and other causes "compared to those who have a sense of connection and community" (Remen xviii). "Victor Frankl, a leading psychologist who spent a number of years as a prisoner of war in Auschwitz" (Perkins 46) believes that when the need for "meaning and purpose" is "ignored or suppressed, a state of disease is created in individuals which manifests

itself in depression, addiction and aggression" (Perkins 46).

Children who grow up without direction, without answers to the eternal questions of life, become adults without meaning or purpose. They need psychological healing to become whole. Stories have the potential to help people find answers to the eternal questions of life.

Teachers and therapists (along with parents, other professionals and lay practitioners) are on the front lines of a battle to create, maintain and restore psychological health and well being.

#### **Can Stories Help?**

Neil Postman argues that we "require stories to give meaning to the facts of" existence(647). He explains that stories work by providing "structure for our perceptions." He says that facts only assume meaning through stories. He states that "without air, our cells die" and that without a story, we die (647). Consider this statement in light of the condition of the world today. The world appears to be spiraling ever more downward, as the old world order collapses around our shoulders. Postman posits that only stories can stabilize our collective and individual dysfunctionalities by giving us a direction and providing us with a "theory about how the world works" (Postman 647).

Stories have "a power that can pull blinders off our eyes" (Atkinson 5) and make "the implicit explicit [and] the hidden seen." They can make what is confusing, clear (Atkinson xiii). They "convey the heart and soul of what life is about and what it can be" (Atkinson 135).

Our Western logic rarely leads "us out of our problems" but stories can offer us a place to begin (Peseschkian 12). Stories refresh and renew us by offering the hope that things can and will improve (Atkinson 135). They help us find "the universal in the unique and the sacred in the personal" (Atkinson 47). Joseph Campbell says that stories and myths bring us more into accord with ourselves and with others and with the mysteries of life, and the universe that surrounds us (Atkinson 6).

Stories have the power to inform and inspire us, to teach us, to maintain moral codes, to establish family ties, to preserve customs, to guide us, to show us possibilities, to open our hearts, to make us laugh [and to cry], to clarify all aspects of our lives and to heal and transform us (Atkinson 3). They have a subtle and soft method of healing us by "letting us know that it is honorable to accept" the past (Atkinson 135) and to move on. They instruct us in subtle ways and help lead us from our "past to our future" (Atkinson 135).

Stories have been helping those with the inner conflicts "long before psychotherapy became a scientific discipline" (Peseschkian 8). They were the original form in which a community passed on its values and spiritual lessons (Atkinson 136) and yet in our fast moving world we have forgotten what a powerful positive force they can be. According to Jacobi, stories brought us sacred patterns and a "message of protection, of guidance, and of salvation" (Atkinson 46). Stories have been and still are the "human journey to wholeness" (Atkinson 35). The transformative power of stories" (Atkinson 47) creates a pedagogical and psychological alchemy by making us "consciously aware of the sacred operating in our lives" (Atkinson 47).

Where does all this lead us to today? As adults we still seek answers to the eternal questions of: "What is the meaning of life? Will being good make me happy? "What does it mean to be human?" (Ryan 97). Stories have "long served as [our] profound teachers" (Ryan 97) providing individual answers to these eternal questions. Stories, in the capable hands of educators and therapists, can make the work of healing and growth more effective. They are a "powerful tool for educating young people about ethics and values" (Northfolk 8), they lead to changes in perspective and behavior (Peseschkian xvi) and they both stabilize and

revitalize existing norms (Peseschkian 27). The key to satisfaction in life "lies in the inner world, the world of stories and memories" (Remen xxxii).

### **Thesis**

Stories are one of the most underutilized resources for healing and growth. They are a powerful tool for both children and adults. This thesis will explore current and past use of stories in the fields of education and psychotherapy. The thesis will also seek to determine the most efficient stories for this purpose and develop a standard that, when applied, may lead to the compilation of a body of stories that are more appropriate for healing and growth. Using the criteria developed, the thesis will propose and define a new class of stories, explore how such stories can be used most effectively and suggest what is necessary for their wider acceptance. The creative part of this thesis will offer samples of such stories in an audio format.

### **Definition of Terms Specific to This Thesis**

Though categorization is often used to facilitate the understanding of knowledge, it can also result in conflicting meanings. In order to facilitate understanding some words will be used with a broader than normal (or narrower than normal) meaning.

"Story" as used in this thesis (except where stated otherwise) will include both true and fictional narratives. Though the "patient narrative" is used by many therapists effectively for healing and growth, it is outside the scope of this thesis and will not be intended as part of the meaning of "story" as used in this thesis.

In a similar manner, though the common meaning of "storyteller" as someone who conveys real or fictitious events in words, images, and sounds ("Wiki - Storytelling") is sufficiently broad in meaning to encompass most of the necessary references to such practitioners in this thesis, it is often used with a more restricted meaning. Because of some might limit its meaning to a narrower range of practitioners, the phrase "story worker" will be used in this thesis to refer to those teachers, therapists and others who, with varying degrees of intention, use stories for healing and growth.

The words "therapy," and "psychotherapy" will be used interchangeably and with a broader meaning than their normal professional use. The use will include any form of counseling, therapy, psychotherapy and mind-body medicine as applied by lay or professional practitioners.

The word "recipient" is often used to describe those who might read or listen to a story. They may be students,

patients, children at home or any other percipient who receive a story in one form or another from a story worker.

Throughout this thesis the word "efficient" is used and its meaning grows as the thesis develops. With respect to short stories in general, they are efficient because they pack more into a short space of time. Therefore, more short stories can be used in education and therapy, because they take less time to experience. Later in the thesis, after the concept of Delta Stories is introduced, the word efficient is used with an additional meaning. At that point Delta Stories are described as more efficient (than other stories) when used for healing and growth because the secondary messages are also intended to contribute to healing and growth. Their internal integrity is stronger, therefore they are more efficient.

## 2. Man, Education and Therapy

### The Role of Education

"Education presupposes [that] improvement" will take place (Ryan 95). In its essence and "at [its] heart, education is a moral enterprise" (DeRoche x) designed to gently guide the children of the world towards stewardship. We should "regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value" and understand that education alone can "cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom" (Bahá'u'lláh 260). Delattre and Russell concluded that "the development of good character cannot be separated from the basic purposes of education—to lead persons out of ignorance and helplessness so that they have the chance to lead positive, purposeful [and] productive lives for themselves" (DeRoche 28).

There are numerous metaphorical descriptions of education that range from filling an empty vessel to drawing forth the potentialities that lie hidden within. Though in today's schools both views are accommodated, there are important distinctions. Much of the learning that takes place in schools informs "without enriching" (Bettelheim 54). Where information alone is needed it is best learned with motivation and this motivation springs

from enthusiasm. For example, learning to read, as commonly taught, is an "empty promise" (Bettelheim 4). Reading is taught as a magic key through which floodgates of knowledge will open, but at the time it is taught the word "knowledge" has little worth to most children. However, when inspirational stories are read to children the desire to learn to read is developed inside the child. There are three methods by which we learn that are important to this thesis. These are repetition, imitation and play. These three ways of learning are interrelated. For example, if a teacher repeats a poem with enthusiasm the students will be attracted and will often spontaneously imitate the teacher. When the students play they may continue the repetition of the poem.

### **Habits and Character Formation**

The understanding of the effect of repetition and play, should be a factor in the choices of materials that parents and teachers place in front of their children as repetition will lead to habit. "What becomes habit and does not become habit will have great consequences for the student" (DeRoche x). When the stories we choose to share with children "show over and over again how positive character traits" are rewarded we are encouraging "children to embrace" those traits (Northfolk 15). On the negative

side, it is well known that "people with emotional disorders indoctrinate themselves with negative 'self talk'" (Lange). Most psychological problems are caused by minor incidents that are repeated (Peseschkian 13). It is known that children acquire habits and moral values from their peers, from TV and from their school experiences (DeRoche x), yet this still seems to remain a debatable issue among lawmakers, curriculum builders, teachers and parents.

#### **Habit, Repetition and Play - An Anecdote**

An anecdote, given in a speech, illustrates how important play and repetition are in the educational process. Eddie Moore gave a talk during a Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in Sonora, California on January 14, 2007. In his talk he told a story that makes clear the power of repetition and retention. First, he brought to our memory a children's rhyme that we would all like to forget. It starts with "Eney meany miney mo!" It continues and eventually uses a term we now refer to as the "N word." This rhyme was so pervasive in the past, that most of those present hung their heads in shame.

Against this backdrop, he proceeded to tell a story, he had heard, of a White woman in the South. This woman was principled enough to make her father choose between his

continued membership in the KKK and having his daughter at home. Much later in life, she contracted Alzheimer's disease. As the dementia moved to an advance stage, she was hospitalized near her home in Georgia. Most of the nurses there were Black. Language was failing her. She could not remember the names of the nurses and could not remember the word for nurse. She reverted to something on a deeper level. As a result, when she wanted to call one of the nurses, she used the only word she could remember and she began to use the "N" word. This story illustrates how easily children can absorb and retain the contents of stories, repetition and play. An acceptance of these pedagogical principles is fundamental to this thesis.

Psychology has its own history and impact on the underpinnings of this thesis. "Psychology, in its oldest sense, means the study of the soul". (Estés 514) "Story is far older than the art and science of psychology, and will always be the elder in the equation no matter how much time passes" (Estés 19-20). Therapists use stories in what is often called metaphor therapy. In the following chapter, various theories of how and why therapists and educators use stories will be elaborated.

### **Similarity of Storytelling, Education and Therapy**

The overlapping nature of storytelling, education and therapy supports the thesis being presented. Nancy Mellon states that, "from time immemorial the paths of storytellers and healers have [been] tangled together" (Cox, Allison xiii). Bettelheim describes himself as both an "educator and therapist" (4). Peseschkian joins the view of psychotherapy and self-education (xiii-xiv) and of education and psychotherapy (xvi). Estés speaks of "generations" of "healer-tellers" (15).

Remen uses the example of the theory of karma [to] suggest that "life itself is in its essential nature both educational and healing" (325). Therefore the work of the teacher, the therapist and the doctor, are the same. "*Educare*, the root word of 'education,' means to lead forth the innate wholeness in a person. So, in the deepest sense, that which truly educates us also heals us" (Remen 325).

By the examination of the similarities of these three disciplines, a conclusion can be drawn that storytelling, education and psychotherapy have much in common. Education and therapy are the same process separated only by the definition and degree of the problem that is being addressed. Education primarily deals with growth (or more

accurately natural growth) whereas therapy restores meaning to broken lives (Bettelheim 4).

“Although therapy and teaching are different in some important ways, they share the common challenge of being fundamentally relational endeavors. Both are profoundly ‘enabling’ activities” (“Program Philosophy”).

It is with this similarity in mind, that we move forward towards an understanding of how stories work and are currently being used, while remaining aware of “what is most worth knowing?” (Ryan 91).

### 3. Stories and Their Current Use

The use of stories to heal is "anchored in the Western world as a constructive-narrative approach" and its "roots go back to Kant, Wundt, Adler, Piaget, Frankl, and Watzlawick" (Ahmad 113). This line of thinking takes the perspective that the emotional suffering of people is not just from trauma and other similar events they experience, but from the way that individuals interpret such events.

Stories are currently used for healing and growth in a variety of ways. Stories are also commonly used for pure entertainment. This chapter will examine the use of stories when used with the intention of healing and growth in any environment and by any practitioner.

Fourteen notable story workers were studied for this thesis. Many of their theories, methods and ideas will be presented in this chapter. In their written works, each has expressed his or her ideas about which stories are best and what methods of delivery they prefer. For some it is myth; for others folktales or fairytales. Some feel that only personal "true" stories have deep meaning, while others advocate fiction. Others believe that psychotherapists must open themselves to the inspiration of the moment and spontaneously create stories for their

clients. Some feel that the magic of the story when told by a storyteller can never be matched by reading aloud, let alone by reading silently. Yet, all of these story workers speak of the miracle, the magic or the transformational experience, through the use of stories.

#### **An Overview of Methods and Theories in Current Use**

There are a number of theories held by story workers, leading each to his or her own unique methods. Each story worker has their own preferences and their own rationale.

Clarissa Estés, a psychotherapist and author of *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, views stories as a "healing phenomena" (15) and uses them in what she calls "interactive trancing" (14). She says that "story is a medicine which strengthens and arights the individual and the community" (19). She refers to stories as "soul vitamins" and "map fragments" (20) and says that they, "set the inner life into motion," and they work especially well when the "inner life is freighted, wedged, or cornered" (20). She describes their action as greasing "the hoists and pulleys" and writes that they "lead us back to our own real lives" (20). In her therapy she works with the patient to find a "guiding myth or fairy tale that contains all the instruction" a person's needs for their "current psychic development" (14). She says stories provide "the

remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive" and that they work by engendering the required "excitement, sadness, questions, longings, and understandings" for the reclamation process and that they "spontaneously bring the [forgotten] archetype" "back to the surface" (15).

Dr. Nossrat Peseschkian is a psychiatrist, author of numerous books and a founder of "Positive Psychotherapy." He uses "Oriental Stories" as a significant part of his therapy. He states that stories are a way to "transmit creativity" (31) and to open doors to fantasy and metaphoric thinking" (31). He says that using stories in psychotherapy creates an environment which allows for a "fearless and unfettered" reaction to the stories and to their contents, and creates a "sense of awe and wonder" (31). He views stories as "bridges to wishes and goals of [the] future" and writes that they help to present alternative realities (31). Peseschkian sees stories as "guidelines which each person can accept according to his needs" (36). He states that stories "help develop the ability to empathize" and offer "possible solutions" and that they do this because they do "not trigger resistance." He says that they assist patients to develop new attitudes (9).

Robert Coles, the biographer of Erik Erikson, has pioneered the use of stories in higher education. In his book, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*, he discusses how stories directly impact our lives. Cole says stories have the power to create a moral compass that will serve us for a long time. At Harvard, Coles has used stories in the social sciences (xvi), in the law school (xviii), in premed and medical school (xvii), at the graduate level in education (xvii), in the school of government (xvii), in the business school (xviii) and at the Harvard Divinity School (xviii).

Allison Cox, a public health nurse, author and professional storyteller, uses a mix of original fiction, modified folk tales and true stories in her work in public health. She says, there is "mounting evidence" suggesting that "stories and the storytelling process" can "promote recovery, inspire hope, trigger insight and personal growth" (15). She writes that the healing power of storytelling "resides in the ability of stories to get past the barriers we erect consciously or unconsciously" (27).

At one point in her career Cox analyzed 115 stories in order to examine "the role storytelling served in promoting health among women." She found storytelling provided the following functions: "contextual grounding," bonding with

others, validating and affirming experiences, catharsis, assistance in resisting oppression [and provide a] "vehicle for educating" others (27). Cox concluded that "our stories act as a road map and lamp, guiding us through the dark, sacred night" and remind us that "we are not traveling alone" (31). Quoting Siegel, she explains her belief that stories "have the power to transform without resistance because they do not threaten as statistics and beliefs do" (Cox, Allison i).

Joseph Campbell, author of *The Power of Myth* and many other books, believes that stories can teach us how to live and act "under any circumstances" (39).

Kevin Ryan, the founder of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, co-authored a book entitled *Building Character in Schools*. In it he states that, stories can "nurture the moral imagination and plant the seeds of aspiration" in young people (Ryan 97). Ryan says that stories should "provide us with a guide to what it means to lead a good life and possess strong moral character" (95).

Bobby Northfolk, a professional storyteller and author of *The Moral of the Story*, uses stories for character development. He states that "the power of stories to teach is most fully realized when stories are told, because

tellers reveal in" "subtle ways their own approval or disapproval of the actions and events they are narrating" (15).

There are a number of other story workers with their own theories and methods. A few others with significant ideas will be presented here.

Christiane Brems, a Professor and clinical psychologist at the University of Alaska, writes that stories are not only used in "psychotherapy to help clients grow and heal" but that "they are also easily used for the same purposes outside of a therapy context, at home, alone or in a group" (Brems). She clearly sees value in using stories for self-help and other non-professional settings. Sande Hart, the founder of the Spiritual And Religious Alliance for Hope (SARAH), uses an anthology of stories as a self-help tool by using it as a daily reader.

Short stories have been found to work very well in the teaching of ESL and EFL and are used around the world (Cecilia). They have been used to teach chemistry (Thomas), public health education and have been used to tackle many other challenges such as racism, sexism, violence and substance abuse (Cox, Allen). They have been used in the field of nursing to "revisit and review" nursing practices (Fenwick) and have been used to

"introduce readers to different cultures and their customs" (Lesesne). It is not possible to list all the current uses of stories for healing and growth, nor the theories and methods that support these uses.

### **How Stories Influence People**

History is replete with famous people who have been deeply affected by a particular book or story. Steve Wozniak, the cofounder of Apple Computers, was inspired by a series of stories about Tom Swift ("Steve Wozniak"). Einstein, in order to develop his theory of relativity, first visualized running alongside a beam of light and this was inspired by a children's book (Kaku 13). Dr. Stephen Jay Gould, said the first book that influenced him was the *Little Engine That Could* ("Recommended Books"). Dr. Rachel Remen writes that she chose to become a medical doctor because of a novel she read four times (xxii). Again a listing of all the people who have been deeply affected and inspired by a book or story is not possible here.

### **Why They Work**

How is it that stories work so well across such a wide variety of domains and disciplines? Why is it that stories have been the "vehicle for teaching since earliest history"? (Wallas 4). Atkinson implies that there are conditions as to how and when stories work. He says "they

can transform our lives" if "we are open to their power" and "if the time is right" and if the person "hearing the story is ready" (136).

Ahmad writes how stories "help patients find consolation, hope, meaning, and solutions" and help "stubborn fixations" to "gradually become more fluid." They also help the patient to find "alternative perspectives on life" (113). The "mind has a preference for stories" because "knowledge is contextualized" and enmeshed in meaning (Berliner).

Stories are an experiential process whereby a reader, teller, or listener walks through a metaphorical garden. The value of the experience is conditional on the extent that one exercises the powers of observation and is open to the sights and smell and the concepts the garden provides. No two people walking through a story will have the same experience.

"Stories allow us to see something familiar through new eyes. We become in that moment a guest in someone else's life, and together with them sit at the feet of their teacher [and yet] the meaning we may draw from someone's story may be different from the meaning they themselves have drawn" (Remen xxx).

Strong and well crafted stories have the potential to put recipients into an altered state of consciousness. In such a state the patient's unconscious mind searches for answers and outcomes. "This mini-trance renders the conscious and unconscious mind accessible for relatively unresisted therapeutic gain" ("Land").

Another way stories work is by becoming a mediator where the therapist can confront the patient (Peseschkian 28) and "allow adults to cast off" the "cloak of acquired behavior and to experiment with [other] ideas and attitudes" (31). Stories provide a place where "conflict situations" can be examined and "reveal possible solutions" (Peseschkian 28).

Stories allow each of us to take what we need most. In this way they work by creating a variable experience for each recipient. Robert Atkinson says "the same story may touch one person very deeply while for another it might not mean a thing" (136). According to Peseschkian, when experiencing stories each person interprets them "for himself and his situation" (36). He says stories work by allowing a patient to make personal associations with a story and then being willing to talk about "himself, his conflicts [and] his wishes" (27).

As story workers, it is not possible to know precisely which story is needed for healing and growth at any given moment (Bettelheim 15). However, as recipients of a story we will shape "what we hear" and "make over" "stories into something of our own" (Coles 19) creating a self-tayloring process for healing and growth. Estés believes, that stories by themselves; "have such power [and] they do not require that we do, be, [or] act anything" that we only need to listen to them for the power to be released and to take effect (15). Viewed in this light, stories are a magic capsule that, once swallowed, act individually to strengthen what is weak and heal what is broken.

Dan McAdams writes that stories "create influence" in the minds of the listener or reader and that this influence creates still other stories. This brings about a consciousness of "meaning and connection" and results in a "web of story making and story living"(Alger). This view is very similar to Jung's suggestion of the emotional gains brought about when the unconscious is made conscious (Fordham). Stories do this for individuals much like a vibrating tuning fork that creates sound waves which induce resonance in a second tuning fork. In this way the author of a story, fashions a "tuning fork" after his or her own experiences which reach down into the collective

unconscious. The reader or listener, if tuned to a similar psychological need will resonate and connect with the universal collective consciousness inducing healing and growth by making conscious what was previously hidden or repressed.

Among these varied concepts and ideas about using stories for healing and growth, three fundamental concepts that stand out. Stories work well because: they do not trigger resistance, they provide a variable experience for the recipient and this leads to a self-tailored path of healing and growth. An inference could be drawn that the recipient processes a story in an abstract manner that parallels their own current challenges. This inference is important for the primary and secondary messages a story should contain and the implications that it is not significant if the story is fiction or "fact."

#### **Current Opinions on Best Content and Qualities**

Just as there are numerous preferences and theories about how and why stories should be used, so too, there are numerous opinions about what stories should and should not contain. "The best stories have many meanings" and their meanings change "as our capacity to understand and appreciate [them] grows." (Remen xxx)

Stories should "imprint morality" (Bettelheim 9) and open "limitless possibilities" (Wallas 3). They should never make a child "feel inferior" (Bettelheim 26) and should reassure us "about a happy outcome" in life (Bettelheim 39). Stories should not create psychological dilemmas that lead to frustration and backward development and should be optimistic and not pessimistic (Bettelheim 41). Alison Cox, by the way she modified the folktale "The Three Little Pigs" clearly believes that content and secondary messages are important (22). Stories should develop the mind and personalities of children (Bettelheim 4), convey the "advantages of moral behavior" (Bettelheim 5) and should not discourage a child (Bettelheim 39). Stories should leave much to the imagination of the reader or listener (Bettelheim 60). For example, Bettelheim feels that stories should not be illustrated as it takes away the opportunity for a child's own imagination to create elements of the story. He feels that stories should not avoid the subjects of death and dying, nor should they avoid themes about eternal life (8). Bettelheim asserts that stories "must" "stimulate imagination, enrich life, develop intellect, clarify emotions, help [us] attune to anxieties and aspirations, help recognize difficulties [and] suggest solutions" (5).

### **Are All Stories of Equal Value**

The opinions presented in this chapter raise the question, are all stories of equal value? Can the goals presented here be met by all folktales, by all myths or by all true stories? There is some degree of inconsistency in the theories, goals, objectives and practices presented by many story workers in this chapter.

For example, Bettelheim implies that stories should not discourage a child and that stories should be optimistic (41). While he praised a fairytale called "Our Lady's Child" (13) because it shows the moral advantage of honesty (14) he seems unaware of his own ethnocentric bias by not looking deeper. In the story a little girl who has told a lie is turned mute (14). Would a mute child not be discouraged by this? After much agreement on what stories should do, we must be prepared to examine the secondary messages that they contain and the potential risks that such messages carry.

Northfolk seems to agree with the necessity of coherency saying that stories must bring out the "objective goodness of virtues," "affirm our human dignity" and "promote the well-being and happiness of the individual" and that they should "serve the common good" "define our

rights and obligations" and meet the "ethical test of reversibility" and "universalizability" (11).

The fields of radio and audio communications provide an effective metaphor to understand the need for the use of coherent and universal messages in stories. In both of these fields the term "signal to noise ratio" is used as a metric of purity. If there is a low signal strength and significant noise then the communication is poor. In the same manner, a story with a powerful central theme may have many secondary messages that make it less effective for use in education and psychotherapy. If we wish to become more effective educators and healers we must consider the purity of the signal to noise ratio in the stories we present.

Brian Swimme says that today we are in a "chasm between a story that used to function and a new story that has yet to function effectively." He states that we "pay a lot of respect" to "stories of the past" and "regard [them] as important" while "we know that they do not actually give us a careful, accurate depiction of the Universe. We've surpassed the level of knowledge that those stories gave us and that we needed at that time." The world has grown and some stories, which may have been acceptable in the past, are no longer appropriate for healing and growth.

As story workers we must ask ourselves some fundamental questions. Which stories have a conscious and universal motive? Which have the power to transform? Is the direction implied in a story coherent? Does the story have a universal theme and outlook? Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to judge the motive of any artist, the intent is to subject all stories submitted for this classification to a higher order of scrutiny than is commonly applied.

#### **A Way Forward**

This thesis has demonstrated the significant power of stories to effect healing and growth. It has proposed that a factor in their effectiveness is the coherency of their content. This raises the practical question: how can we assist more people to benefit from stories? Towards this end, Delta Stories are offered.

#### **4. Towards More Efficient Stories - Delta Stories**

##### **The Function**

This thesis has demonstrated the needs of children and adults for healing and growth. It has shown the effectiveness of stories as a tool for this healing and growth and it has evidenced the need for a reliable standard for stories used to promote these aims. In order to address this need, it now proposes a new classification of stories. Because such stories are created with the intention of healing and growth and are oriented towards change, this new class of stories will be called Delta Stories. This thesis is not intended to create a standard for censorship; rather it is intended that this be a standard, by which, those who share its goals and objectives - can rely on.

Delta Stories are deliberately crafted to change thinking patterns and emotions. Tolstoy and other great writers have been writing with such intention for many years.

##### **The Standard**

The criteria for classifying a story as a Delta Story includes the content and messages that they contain. Delta Stories also differentiate themselves by specifying a

length that maximizes the opportunity of engaging the listener while minimizing the risk of exceeding the attention span. The following criteria define the Delta Story standard:

1) The length of stories is five to fifteen minutes when read aloud (850 to 2250 words).

2) The content is suitable for listening to by all ages. It has no "adult content" such as passionate anger and (or) sexual sentiments.

3) The messages contained in the story must pass the "law of universality" test with respect to cultures, gender and religious preferences (or lack thereof).

4) The content excludes violence, politics, sarcasm and mixed archetypes.

5) The "moral of the story" is not presented directly, but is left for discovery by the listener.

6) The stories are rich in metaphors but scant on non-essential detail.

7) Pontificating is held to a minimum and if done is delivered by a second or third person speaker.

Were it possible to objectively measure intention, it would be included in the above criteria. Delta Stories should spring from both the wonder and awe of creativity and from intention. In other words Delta Stories should be

inspired by the same creative force which animates all true artistic endeavors, but that these same endeavors should be modulated with intention and driven by wisdom. The function of Delta Stories should be to help create a better world. Therefore, such stories "should be written only after the author has decided ... which emotional response, or "effect," he wishes to create and that the intent must be to create a better world. Allison Cox uses the word "designed" with respect to some of her work creating stories. However, it is beyond reason to attempt to create a criterion to measure creativity, wisdom or intention and therefore these will remain as goals to strive for, without a metric for measurement.

Beyond this goal, there are other measurable qualitative and quantitative criteria that are included in the standard.

#### **Quantitative Criteria of Delta Stories**

The quantitative aspects of Delta Stories springs from pragmatism and effect. As stated above, the length of Delta Stories will be from five to fifteen minutes when read aloud. This equates roughly to between 850 and 2250 words when read at a moderate rate of 170 words per minute. There are three reasons for this aspect of the standard. First, the story is long enough to potentially engage the

listener deeply and create a trance-like effect. Second, it is short enough to not interrupt the unitary whole of the story and to meet the pragmatic realities of the time we are living in.

In terms of the effect, Poe contends that the short story is superior in its ability to create a desired effect when compared to longer literary works because such affects are best achieved by works that can be read in a "single sitting" (Poe). Once the concentration has been broken and the mind wandered, any trance-like effect will be diffused. Thus for best effect the maximum length of a Delta Story should be fifteen minutes. Others, such as Heather Cardin, believe that "most people don't have attention spans more than about twenty minutes" (Cardin) and most research shows an average attention span of this same length (Sigelman 159).

While opinions vary, this writer's experience shows that a twelve minute story can hold most people's attention. Since this aspect of the standard is somewhat arbitrary, a fifteen minute upper limit seems a reasonable compromise.

Limiting the overall length of stories, has a profound effect on the number of such stories that might be used in any environment. The benefit of this upper limit will be

important to parents in busy homes, to teachers in overburdened classrooms and to trained psychotherapists with heavy case-loads. In schools, surely we can make time for at least one such story each day. Reading one story per day from kindergarten to the twelfth grade would mean that every graduate of high school would experience almost 3000 such stories. A daily story, followed by a brief discussion, will have a profound effect on both the behavior and the emotional well being of an entire nation - in just one generation.

Psychotherapists are also facing "increasing demands for quick results" in part because of the "constraints of managed care" and "average treatment duration[s]" of between six and eight sessions ("What Is Storytelling Therapy"). Using stories that are long enough to be fully engaging, yet short enough to meet the current realities is an efficient use of resources. In this way psychotherapy "can provide quick results" ("What Is Storytelling Therapy") and still remain effective. For example, one therapist reported "telling a story to a cancer patient" and helping the patient "accept the incremental nature of his medical treatment and recovery in just one session" ("What Is Storytelling Therapy").

Thus the value of keeping such stories short becomes apparent. The obvious question is then why not limit such stories to a minute or two. Peseschkian's stories are about this length and he has had great success with his therapy utilizing such stories. It is important to remember, however, that Peseschkian uses his stories in the context of his therapy, the rapport he builds and the use of other associated tools. Where Delta Stories can be used as "stand alone" tools, it is unlikely that Peseschkian's oriental stories would be that effective if used out of the context of his therapy.

Thus the criterion to restrict Delta Stories to a length that is long enough to be engaging on a deep level yet short enough to not disrupt the "unity of impression" by requiring more than one sitting to experience the work (Poe).

### **Qualitative Criteria of Delta Stories**

The qualitative criteria of Delta Stories are designed to insure that both the primary and secondary messages (whether intentional or not) are such that the resulting stories have a high probability of success when used for healing and growth, without regressive results.

In order to accomplish this, the content of Delta Stories will be suitable for all ages. It is not intended

that every listener or reader will gain value from each metaphor or subtle message that such stories contain, but that they be free of "adult content" such as passionate anger or sexual sentiments. Allison Cox, though unaware of the Delta Standard, implies that she would agree with the necessity of controlling the content for stories used for growth and healing. Among a checklist for using stories in healing work, she states that story workers should "assess materials carefully." She says "while storytellers cannot know how a story will be heard, they will want to attempt in advance to evaluate possible harmful affects a story might produce" (16). In this way the standard contains no internal age ranking such as "PG13."

In a similar manner Delta Stories must pass the "law of universality" test with respect to cultures, gender and religious preferences (or lack thereof). Northfolk, as mentioned earlier, calls this the "reversibility" and "universalizability" test (11). Ryan says, that the "golden rule" is close to "being culturally universal" (193).

The most direct way to attain this is to use "consensus values" (DeRoche 5). Some feel that discovering such values is an impossible task while others believe there is, in fact, consensus around certain core moral

values (DeRoche 4) and that "core values are common among diverse populations" (DeRoche 5). Northfolk agrees and feels that we can determine common values across cultures (10) and that these common values "are affirmed by [peoples] around the world and transcend religious and cultural differences (10). He views these values as "rooted in our human nature" and a result of our desire to "express our common humanity" (10).

In accord with this, Ryan states that "one of the most dangerous fancies floating around the world today is that everyone has different moral standards and principles"(48). He explains that there is a growing and incorrect belief "that everyone is entitled to define his or her own moral standards." Explaining why such thinking is flawed he says, "this may be fine if people's racism or dishonesty stays locked up in their own hearts, but once it 'goes public' and individuals act on those moral 'values,' then we have a problem" (48). He explains that if the popular expression "different strokes for different folks" is applied to "moral values [then] social harmony is threatened" (48).

It is important to note that these "consensus values" shift over time as humanity becomes more sensitized to each other. An example of this growing awareness is the

textbook which utilized Dick and Jane to teach millions of children to read. Garcia feels that this text is "no longer applicable to today's literacy education" because of the stereotypes it contains (Garcia). Referring to fairy tales, Northfolk states that many stories do contain "negative stereotypes" and "too much violence" (16).

Looking at the aspect of gender equality presents a slightly more difficult problem. With respect to her own stories, Wallas suggests that the "gender can be changed at will" (18). While this may be true for many orally presented stories, it may not be true for all. For evaluation purposes, the following should apply: if an anthology or other collection of stories is published it should have approximately the same number of male centered stories as female centered stories. Additionally there should not be a higher proportion of female teachers or other similar stereotypes. In fact, where possible such stereotypes should be the subject of the subtle lessons that are presented by such stories.

In terms of violence, politics and sarcasm a close examination will show that these are not part of the shared values that we collectively hold. Bettelheim says that some things should not be used for education or therapy because they create a "gruesome reality" (39).

### **Specimen Analysis: The Three Little Pigs**

The classic folktale called "The Three Little Pigs" has survived the test of time. There are two basic opinions on the effectiveness of this story for healing and growth. However, the analysis here will be limited to the degree it conforms or does not conform to the Delta Story standard.

In an over-simplified summary the story of the "Three Little Pigs" starts with a mother sending her children off to seek their fortune in the wider world. Each pig, in turn, asks a passing stranger for materials with which to build a house. The first asks for straw, the second for twigs and the last for bricks. Each builds a house with the materials he has been given. Later, each of the pigs encounters a wolf who in the first two cases destroys their houses and makes a meal of the particular pig. In the third case the wolf ends up the meal.

Bettelheim, in his book, the *Uses of Enchantment*, devotes several pages to an analysis of the story and argues that it "makes a much greater impression on children" than Aesop's "The Ant and the Grasshopper" (42) which has a similar theme. He points out that in the fable there is no hidden meaning (43). Bettelheim, in his analysis assigns meanings to objects and metaphors that

seem on par with the various interpretations that divide the Christians of the world. Never-the-less Bettelheim makes his point that he feels fairy tales leave all decisions up to the reader or listener where fables do not. (This will be addressed in more detail in the next section).

There are many ways to look at this folktale and one can draw out many meanings from it. One might be that the mother creates for her three children a rite of passage which ends in death for two and the survival of the third. One could also argue that the story teaches the truth of evolution that only the strong survive or that the story teaches the importance of listening to the lessons one's parents teach. The most obvious message is that we should do things with quality as opposed to seeking short term gratification. While there is great social value in teaching this principle, there may be other unintended lessons that are taught by the story.

A person who has chosen to live without eating meat would not likely wish to repeat this story to his or her children. This is a rather obvious choice that parents can make, but there are other subtle messages that may have negative cultural and environmental lessons embedded in them. The story, whether by intention or not, shows a

strong ethnocentric bias against houses made of straw or sticks. While to most Westerners this may be a trivial issue, the story may contain values that the parents would not otherwise teach their children. From this standpoint it fails the "law of universality" test and could not be considered a Delta Story.

Similarly, there is a secondary message that is taught about ethics and motivation, in that all three pigs did not work for the building materials. Instead of working, they simply asked to be given the materials from a passing stranger, who had grass, sticks or bricks. Further, as Bettelheim points it is likely that the wolf may have stolen the turnips (43). Such unintended messages may be absorbed without thought by the listeners or readers.

Allison Cox, in a story she created for the American Lung Association, has rewritten the Three Little Pig story and eliminates all of the objections mentioned above (22-25). Her story, which is about asthma would qualify as a Delta Story.

Another aspect of Delta Stories is that they do not explicitly state the "moral of the story." Bettelheim express strong agreement with this criterion (43). He states that stories should suggest "ever so softly how conflicts" might be resolved (26). Part of Bettelheim's

objection to myths is that they "explicitly state" the "moral truth" (42-43). This thinking is reflected in the Delta Story standard. By placing messages in metaphors and not explicitly stating them, the finding of the messages is left to the listener or reader (43). Northfolk implies similar thinking by saying, "If we want children to hear and understand and practice the truth about the moral way to behave, then we need to tell stories, not preach truth!" (14). Coles says stories "can stir and provoke the moral imagination. Didactic or theoretical arguments don't work well; narratives, images, observed behavior all do" (Northfolk 14). Wallas speaks of using "suggestions [instead of] commands" (16) while Peseschkian states stories should be didactic without being prescriptive (36).

Related to this "soft-pedaling" of the message, is the Delta Story criterion of using many metaphors and elimination of unnecessary details (Bettelheim 8). The use of "metaphor defuses resistance as it is 'once removed'" (Wallas 16). A well made story will contain subtle "instructions which guide us [with respect to] the complexities of life" (Estés 15) and allows the student or client to create their own images. "The images a client

summons from within" "are the most powerful" (Wallas 15) and therefore should not be created for them.

Cynthia Hallett, in a 2006 article refers to short stories as governed by a principle of the "aesthetic of exclusion" whereby "distraction and clutter are stripped" "until the reader encounters the whole of society reflected in slivers of individual experience" (Hallett). In such cases the unstated is present as a cognitive force. This unstated cognitive force is not only an important pedagogical tool, it is one of the reasons why Delta Stories work as well as they do.

Related to the above is the requirement to keep pontificating to a minimum and if used, it should be uttered by a second or third person speaker. This makes the message easier to accept. The student or client "finds his own solutions through contemplating what the story seems to imply about him and his inner conflicts at this moment in his life" (Bettelheim 25).

The last criterion is that there should be no mixed archetypes, that each figure is "clearly drawn" (Bettelheim 8). In other words each character in a Delta Story should not be ambivalent or good and bad at the same time. Where mixed archetypes are used, heroes can be created in the

minds of the readers that can later help justify immoral behavior.

It is hoped that the concept embodied in the definition of Delta Stories will be adopted and become a reliable standard which can be used by teachers, counselors, curriculum developers, governments, religious leaders and parents. It is also hoped that the requirements are defined clearly enough that there will be no ambiguity as to the qualification of any given story.

## **5. Theories and Methods for Using Delta Stories**

In the previous chapters it has been shown how effective stories can be when used for healing and growth. This healing and growth can help lead to an "ever advancing civilization" (Bahá'u'lláh 215) which may assist to create a more carrying world. Some historical perspectives have been offered into the use of stories, and into the disciplines of education and psychotherapy. Some current thinking behind how and why stories work has been presented. The Delta Story standard has been offered as an assistance to parents, educators, psychotherapists and others. This chapter will delve into methods and techniques that can be used in conjunction with these stories. Of necessity this will bring to the fore, some pedagogical and psychological theories and ideas. Some of these ideas will be from the work of well known thinkers and other aspects will be original work built on the work of those who have gone before.

### **Building Rapport, Creating a Conducive Environment**

The importance of establishing rapport in psychotherapy is well established. The same is true of story work (Wallas 16). Story workers, be they teachers or therapists, should prepare the environment and themselves

before undertaking work with stories. Students and patients need to slow down and become receptive in order to absorb a story. The sound, sights and smells of the environment will impact the ability of a story to reach the heart of the person concerned. There are many ways to build this rapport such as music, meditation and other well known techniques. The important thing for story workers is to be conscious of this need and to create space and time to address it before attempting to undertake healing or growth using stories.

### **Delivery Methods**

Stories can be presented in a number of ways such as: silent reading, reading aloud, telling, movies, songs and video games. Just as there are many "confused [and] incomprehensible theories of art" that reach "contradictory judgments" (Tolstoy 55), so too, there are conflicting ideas about the differences in effect based on the delivery method of stories. Among story workers there are three primary methods that are used. These are: reading silently, reading aloud (oral presentation) and "telling." In spite of the conflicting ideas, given genuine enthusiasm for a method, all these delivery methods work!

Bettelheim makes distinction between reading a story alone or having someone read it to you or tell you the

story. He implies that there is a stamp of approval on the story when it is read or told to a person (28).

Though there may be a generalizable hierarchy of effect based on the delivery method, there is no reason to believe that such generalization will always be true. Though it might be true that telling a story in a dramatic fashion from memory, may (in many cases) more easily induce a trance-like state, it is not always the case. There are a number of aspects of telling, compared to oral presentation and reading alone that could be studied.

Many would have you believe that all teachers, parents and psychotherapists should become story tellers and memorize a number of stories to tell to their children or clients. If one is advocating that stories be used more widely (as stated earlier) then one can not reasonably expect all story workers to become "tellers."

In schools for example, many "good" stories read aloud to students will likely have a greater impact than fewer stories presented in a more dramatic way. It is only reasonable to expect that if the Delta Story standard is propagated, that more "good" stories will be written and used. At the same time, it is doubtful that a large number of story workers will become tellers.

Because the purpose in defining Delta Stories is to encourage their widespread use, any reference to a "better delivery method" should be avoided. The fact is that some people will be moved to become "story tellers" in the oral tradition and some will see an advantage of locating many written stories that meet the needs of their particular profession, without becoming "tellers." Thus Delta Stories may be read silently, may be read aloud and may be told or recorded for later listening.

However, this is not to say that work cannot be done to improve the oral presentation of story workers who read aloud. Though this is beyond the scope of this thesis, the exploration of what is necessary to improve oral reading skills should be pursued by other researchers.

The most logical inference is that story workers across all disciplines should consider that when they present a story they are tactilely saying they approve the messages it contains. If they do not agree, then the materials and environment that surround that presentation must clearly demonstrate that.

### **Individualized Healing and Growth**

Though stories can be used alone and still have great impact on the lives of those who read or listen to them,

most story workers believe that other activities coupled with a story create a powerful synergistic effect.

As presented earlier, stories can be seen as medicine or vitamins and can have significant transformative effects. According to Estés, "anytime we feed [the] soul, it guarantees increase" (14). Since every person has a unique personality, the process of growth and healing of individuals is "customized in the extreme" (Estés 14). It was shown earlier that each person will take from a story what they need for growth or healing. This is the self-tailoring aspect of story work that was presented earlier.

Long after the initial encounter with a story, individuals may still carry it. As the individual grows, new elements of the story may present themselves and create options for further growth and healing. For this reason (and for others) it is best that story workers "not insist on a given interpretation" (Cox, Allison 16) of ideas within a story.

Humans reflect multi-cultural values and because of this, each may take his or her own individualized meanings from a story. Stories make room for "fantasy and intuition" and become "aids in self-discovery and resolution of conflicts" (Peseschkian xvi). The "lessons of the story" (Peseschkian 27) depend on how the readers or

listeners reflect on them (Peseschkian 27) and for this reason discussion is recommended as part of the process of healing and growth.

One of the great benefits of using stories for healing and growth is that they can create a strong individualized effect without the necessity for individualized planning. The combination of a story, the skills of the story worker, and the individual reactions of the listener, creates a powerful pedagogical opportunity. This opportunity can work with both individuals and in groups.

Northfolk advocates using the "Socratic approach" to leading a group, stating that it is important to ask the question: "why?" (21). A combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions works well, as long as the story worker provides "a nonjudgmental space for discussion and exploration" and that they guide "rather than" force people "onto the safe path" (Northfolk 23). Robert Coles advocates an "open-ended interview" (14). Ryan, in reference to moral education, states that we should "engage students in the lessons of human character and ethics contained" in a story "without resorting to empty preaching and crude didacticism." He says this "is the great skill of teaching" (Northfolk 7). He uses open ended questions in the sample units he presents (Ryan 249-261).

As evidence that learning takes place in unintended ways, Northfolk found that while using stories in a character education program, students not only learned "social skills" but their reading abilities also improved (8).

### **Other Methods**

One of the most effective and easiest methods for the exploration of stories is through open ended questions. But there are other activities which are simple to use and can be effective for both healing and growth. Using Delta Stories as a source of guided meditation can be highly effective. A relaxation exercise can be used, followed by a story. After the story, suggestions can be made to meditate on the story and to extract any messages that may have meaning for the listener. Stories can be used in a number of ways to create segments or complete stories. This can be done by setting a marker in the story and asking students or patients to complete the story with a different ending. Stories can be a jumping off point for a number of personalized directions when used as part of metaphor therapy and can be the starting point for patient narratives. Formally through a class (or as part of therapy) and informally in a self-help mode, stories can be the stimulus for journal entries, where the individual is

asked to read or listen to a story and then to write whatever comes into their mind. This is but a small sampling of activities that can be used in conjunction with stories for healing and growth.

### **Separation of Stories from Methods and Labels**

The mystery of why and how stories work is not fully understood. Art has a different meaning for every person (Bettelheim 12) and as previously shown, people take from stories what they need most. Since one of the goals of stories is to help individuals to learn to trust their inner understandings (Bettelheim 48) and to do so without resorting to preaching (Northfolk 7) it is important that whatever opinions we have about this remain in the mind of the teacher, therapist or parent (Bettelheim 18). For example, announcing to students that it is time for a moral lesson, instead of saying it is time for a story, will likely be counterproductive. The rush to make goals transparent may have unintended and negative consequences. Learning materials that openly state "students will learn the importance of being honest" not only go against what has been developed in this thesis, but are not likely to create effective learning.

In the same manner, naming stories with names of the virtues they will teach, or naming books as character

education stands in opposition to this thesis and to Bettelheim's idea that suggestions in stories should be in a symbolic form (8). In the effort to use stories to effectively teach character education, editors and curriculum builders may forget this principle and try to make the mysterious, obvious. Northfolk states that if we want children to follow a moral path "we need to tell stories, not preach truth!" (14). Yet he, or his editors, seems to have forgotten this in the creation of the book *The Moral of the Story*. In this book, in front of each folktale presented, there is a message explaining which virtue will be taught by the story. Though done out of a genuine attempt to make learning more effective, the result is likely to lead to less effective learning.

Peseschkian argues that stories told in a moralizing manner can be "dangerous" (xvi). Bettelheim goes so far as to say that stories "serve children well making unbearable life seem worth living, as long as the child doesn't know" what the stories mean psychologically (57). We must have faith that Delta Stories will have an ample number of messages and meanings embedded in them, so that everyone reading or hearing such a story will take away something related to their current needs.

### **Experiences and Rites of Intensification**

Many modern societies have abandoned their rituals. Specifically the rites of passage and rites of intensification. Many cultures had (and some still have) adult initiation schools. In these "schools" boys enter as boys and leave as men, and girls enter as girls and leave as women. In such cases they are transformed by the total experience, including the formal ceremony. An archetypical example of a rite of passage in literature is where a young man rushes into a burning house and pulls out his grandmother still alive. After the experience he acts and is treated like a man. Similarly, a rite of intensification is a struggle that one undertakes willingly in order to intensify their faith, their beliefs or their connection to a group. In a religious context fasting does this. Some climb mountains to achieve the same feeling of challenge, victory and incremental transformation. Fulani boys in West Africa undergo a ritualistic beating that transforms them from boys to men. These rites often consist of experiences of "order, trauma, beauty, and exhilaration" (Atkinson 6). Stories can "show us how it is humanly possible to create heaven within us and around us" (Atkinson 11). "In societies where traditional rites are no longer maintained, the individual still has ritual-like

experiences, but on his or her own" (Atkinson 6). "Stories enable us to understand the need for and the ways to raise a submerged archetype" (Estés 15) and to intensify our faith. Stories have the potential to release some of the energy that traditional rites released in the past. Stories can also be part of programs that use challenge education and other tools for participants to experience rites of passage or intensification.

In this way stories can give us "profound insights or gems of wisdom beyond our years or experience" (Atkinson 11-12). Campbell speaks of this "transformational pattern" (Atkinson 35) or "universal formula" of "separation, initiation and return" (Atkinson 43). It exists "in all cultures because it is the externalization of an imprint we carry within us as members of the human race" (Atkinson 35).

Based on the above we should look to Delta Stories to provide much of the experience that children need to grow and develop into healthy humans ready to tackle the challenges of their generation.

### **Stories and Education - The "TOE" Model**

DeRoche speaks of teachers in exalted terms defining them as "someone who helps a child mold himself or herself into something better" (xi). In order to be worthy of such

a description teaching must be our passion, not just our occupation. Using stories is one tool teachers can use to demonstrate that passion. How best to utilize stories for healing and growth is determined by our understanding of the pedagogy of education. Towards this end, a simplified model of education called TOE, follows.

Learning can be described in many ways. From Piaget to Montessori, from Aristotle to Lao Tzu, great men and women have sought to understand learning and how it works. Others like Bloom, Gardner and Erikson have proposed theories and models that imply how we should approach learning. Their theories and models of education and learning differ somewhat and yet there is enough common ground among their ideas to see their insights as facets of the same underlying truth.

The TOE model presents a perspective of common ground that is inclusive of the discoveries of all of these great thinkers. It includes formal and informal learning of all types. It acknowledges the important role of the teacher / educator while it validates the ability of individuals to learn without a formal classroom environment. Further it assumes that psychotherapy, education, religious and spiritual growth, training, advertisement, marketing, and even propaganda can be described by a single unified model

of learning. While there may be a great deal of difference in the quality, value or intent of these different types of learning, they are all - learning.

The TOE model describes learning simply as the convergence of a tendency with an opportunity. The result is described as an encounter. Thus the acronym TOE for: tendency, opportunity and encounter.

Learning, at times, seems to take place almost randomly. There are many learning environments. Some are in classrooms, others, are in schools and colleges but occur outside of the classroom. Historically, some environments consist of an elder and her stories. Other learning environments are in religious centers, while others are on the therapist's couch. Beyond this, individuals through reading, contemplation, worship, journaling and a plethora of other conscious and unconscious methods, create their own learning environments. Though they may differ in many ways, these are all learning environments that can be described by the TOE model.

In the TOE model, Gardner's "intelligences" are called tendencies. But in the TOE model these tendencies are not limited to Gardner's eight "intelligences." TOE sees tendencies as a wide range of discovered and yet to be

discovered abilities. The TOE model makes no distinction between genetic tendencies, natural human tendencies and tendencies that are developed by previous learning.

The TOE model holds that these tendencies can spread much like synaptic transmission. These tendencies can be created and destroyed by an encounter. For example, a child who has a relatively low tendency towards mathematics may find this situation changes through an interest in science that requires the use of numbers for its investigation. In another example, we might find that a child loved to read but had no tendency toward science until he or she reads a story that creates that interest. Then, through further encounters in science, the interest may spread from one area to another or to a general love or tendency towards science or towards learning in general.

Thus, life long learning is perpetuated in a chain-like fashion - where one tendency-opportunity-encounter set - leads to another.

Though some encounters may take place in serendipitous ways and others may seem almost random, never-the-less the TOE model acknowledges the role of the teacher or educator. In this sense, a teacher is a person who has an understanding of learning, can perceive tendencies in other people and is prepared to take

advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

The teacher also creates opportunities for tendencies to be strengthened and developed through lessons.

In formal and informal environments when a teacher's tendencies align with those of the student, there is a higher probability of some intensive encounter. The implications for student-centered or teacher-centered learning are many.

As educators have grown in their collective understandings of education, much has been written about student centered learning. While the TOE model acknowledges that learning is centered in the student, there are practical problems in the belief that lessons should be planned and centered on individual students.

Understanding that teachers (like students) also have tendencies, it follows that most intensive encounters are likely to take place when the tendencies of a teacher and those of a student are aligned. Thus a teacher, teaching what he or she has passion for, will more likely assist in the creation of intense encounters. In this way the classroom might be better viewed as teacher-centric instead of student-centric. The learning takes place in the student, but many of the opportunities are created by the teacher.

Learning takes place when tendencies in a student are given opportunities to grow and develop through encounters. Teachers, both in and out of the classrooms still have a major role to play. In formal education, an effective learning environment is created by a teacher. Learning take place when the tendencies of a student are nurtured by an opportunity created by the teacher which results in an encounter.

The model (coupled with other knowledge explored previously in this thesis) has many implications for how we use stories. Lessons ranging from 20 minutes to a complete month can be planned around a single Delta Story. Complex curricula can be based on sets of Delta Stories. The focus and title of such lessons are best approached and titled in a holistic way that reflects their multi-disciplined nature. For example, many character education lesson plans call for exploration of one character trait at a time. This is not recommended (Northfolk 17). Rather than creating a lesson with a character trait at its center, it is preferable to make the story the heart of the lesson.

#### **A Fundamental Attitude**

This thesis has demonstrated, that stories can be used with a variety of methods, most of which are not new. However, there is a distinct nuance that runs through both

Delta Stories and the methods suggested above. There is a common principle that underlies both. As stated earlier, man can be viewed as "a mine rich in gems of inestimable value" and that it is the purpose of education to help reveal those treasures (Bahá'u'lláh 260). Towards this end, both Delta Stories and the proposed methods for use with Delta Stories, assume substantial faith in the student or patient. This definitely reflects the approach of "drawing forth" rather than "filling up."

For a teacher or therapist to "explain" metaphors, that both Jung and Plato imply even the artist does not fully understand, (Belton) is not only in opposition to this thesis, but can be destructive (Peseschkian xvi).

Though there are many methods that can be used with Delta Stories, there is a fundamental attitude that must be held by the teacher or therapist in order to achieve lasting gains in healing and growth. This attitude of seeing education as a process of drawing forth, binds Delta Stories to the methods presented above.

## 6. Specimen Psychological Problems and Solutions

This chapter will present examples to demonstrate efficacy of stories as applied to some specimen psychological problems. In order to maintain the privacy of individuals, any names used have been changed.

Ho Biwa, a graduate student in China, reported in an email that "during the past year, whenever I feel blue, or meet difficulty in my study [or] in my life, I ... read several short stories to refresh myself, to bring me out of the feeling of anxiety and melancholy." (Biwa) The stories referred to are from a collection of stories that meet the Delta Stories standard called *Still Reflections: Stories of the Heart*. Eddie Ludwig reported using a recorded collection of Delta Stories (*Ocean Dreams*) to help with the anxiety he suffered from. He wrote, "I got the most relaxation and relief from" them compared to "anything else I have tried so far." "I have listened to it now [three] times and each time I have new experiences with it" (Ludwig).

Northfolk writes of a story demonstrating a transformational moment (22) through the use of stories in the classroom. Both the teacher and principal used the word "miracle" to describe the lasting transformation of a

child through the use of a story (22). Wallas, writes of a spontaneous story being used successfully in the case of a paranoid personality. She describes the moment of the story as a "definite turning point" (26). In her book she reports using stories to successfully treat about 20 disorders including phobia, schizophrenic with obsessive-compulsive disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality, passive-aggressive personality and separation anxiety (xiii-xiv).

After an exploration of several aspects of using stories in education a model has been proposed that explains both healing and growth. This thesis has demonstrated the need for increased use of stories in education and offered examples of stories used in healing. In conclusion, the use of stories is "effective not only in getting a message across, but also in keeping the message in the minds of the listeners" (Cox, Allison 6). Stories are "population based" (Cox, Allison 6) meaning that many people can be reached simultaneously-making them very efficient. It is also "prevention oriented" (Cox, Allison 6) meaning that the more stories are used in education, the less they will be needed in psychotherapy. This should be remembered and acted upon lest we let "the press of the

school calendar" make us "fall prey to expediency" (Ryan 96) and overlook this very powerful tool.

## 7. An Anthology of Delta Stories In Audio Format

For the creative portion of this thesis, six stories were selected to record in an audio format for use by practitioners of healing and growth. It is hoped that this will contribute to the expanded use of Delta Stories by making more reliable materials available in an easy to use format. The criteria for the selection of stories was: they must meet the Delta Story standard, permission to record them was obtained and that the stories were currently unavailable in an audio format. The stories chosen, came from the following two anthologies: *Still Reflections: Stories of the Heart* and *In the Glow of Understanding*. The six stories are:

- (a) Lemon Dreams
- (b) Lucky Charm
- (c) The Mandolin
- (d) Trying Too Hard
- (e) Tying Shoe Laces
- (f) Shadow

Each of these stories reaches down into what Jung refers to as the collective unconscious. In some cases the inspiration for a story was a snippet of a conversation or

a psychological construct or concept. Others are based on universal religious themes.

The story "Lemon Dreams" is a marriage between a strong metaphor and the author's personal experiences traveling in second hand cars in southern Africa. The author has on numerous occasions had one of these "mature cars" breakdown on a remote mountain road and needed to make repairs with what was in the toolbox.

"Lucky Charm" comes from a growing understanding of the psychological problems and lifestyle choices that are the root cause of many illnesses. It is also inspired by indirect exposure to traditional healers and second hand information from studies of traditional healers in Swaziland.

"The Mandolin" is inspired by a love of music and a belief that music can transform lives. The author has himself gone from "unbelief" to faith in an All-Loving Creator through the power of music on a beach in Canada. The author also has observed both in his own life and in the lives of others the difficulty in letting go of what Jung calls the mask of persona (Fordham) and allowing one's self to be drawn towards a spiritual reality that has universal and lasting meaning.

The inspiration for "Trying Too Hard" comes from several sources. First, there was a camp near Ukiah, California and a maternal grandfather who taught the author how to tie his shoes in a manner which is very near to the reality expressed in the story. Second, the author was inspired 30 years ago by Professor Gerald Haslam who theorized that all literature could be represented by three themes. These themes are: rite of passage, rite of intensification and a struggle for a rite of intensification. In this particular story the journey of the narrator is a rite of passage. Third, the author believes that his grandfather was one of those direct or indirect products of the trail of tears that left Oklahoma and his native American heritage behind in order to survive.

The inspiration for "Shadow" comes from a long family history of clinging to things. On both sides of the authors family there was a history of arguments over politics and over which date a particular family event took place. The author personally clung to illness (especially migraines) until he was inspired by a concept presented in the novel, *The Celestine Prophecy*. It is also predicated on a growing understanding of the ways that stories enable

healing and growth by taking us out of ourselves to examine our on needs.

It is intended that this collection of stories will assist both story workers and individuals practicing self-help. In Appendix "A." there are tables that contain summaries, a keyword index of the selected stories, and questions that can be used with each. These tables typify materials that should be made available (separately) for use with Delta Stories.

Each track on the CD is preceded by a short music clip and followed by a long pause. The pause is to encourage the listener to stop the CD from playing at that point in time and to allow the story the requisite time for processing by the listeners. This will be explained in the liner notes of the commercial version of the CD.

## 8. Conclusion and Needs

This thesis has demonstrated the efficacy of stories as a tool for healing and growth. It has shown that although history has provided us with countless wonderful stories, some of these "time tested" stories (along with many current stories) are less effective for healing and growth and sometimes can inadvertently be harmful. A new class of stories has been suggested named "Delta Stories." The standard proposed can act as a "sorting mechanism" for story workers, be they parents, educators, psychotherapists or other practitioners. This thesis acknowledges the role of pedagogy in determining how learning takes place and how this affects the use of stories for healing and growth. The TOE model has been offered as a unified theory to describe how both negative and positive learning takes place and proposes that though learning is "student centric" - formal education is "teacher centric."

This thesis has raised many questions and highlighted many needs. Among these is a need for research to persuade those who influence the course of public and private education to incorporate Delta Stories into curricula at all levels. Research is also needed to put to rest the controversies over story delivery methods. An examination

of the effect of secondary messages would also be of value. The implications for the training of practitioners, based on the TOE model and the necessary attitudes implied, are also worthy of exploration.

A public database of Delta Stories would be of great value to story workers. In order for this to happen an organization needs to be created to maintain and improve the standard and to host the database.

The bank of Delta Stories must be augmented. Scholars should search from the over 6000 human cultures and publish stories that meet this standard. New authors should also arise to fill this need. Once the value of Delta Stories is recognized there will be an increased demand for stories. Inspired authors who are willing to write Delta Stories will create more stories covering a broader spectrum of concepts and ideas.

Lastly, unity is needed among story workers. The goals that they claim are the same. The time has come for them all to put aside their disputes over minor matters and unitedly search for solutions to assist in the healing and growth of a troubled world.

## Appendix A - Summary of Delta Stories Used in Creative

### Thesis

Name	Summary
Lemon Dreams	A woman inherits a lemon farm and turns it into a place of inspiration and healing. It explores the concept of attainment of dreams.
Lucky Charm	A writer who thinks of himself as healthy learns valuable life lessons and is healed by an African healer. It explores the link between the mind and the body as it relates to illness and health.
Shadow	A kitten learns about human behavior. It examines modern day living through the eyes of a cat who seeks to understand human behavior and growth.
Shoe Laces	A young boy learns to tie his shoes and more. Explores the nature of human growth and the value of rites that we can create.
The Mandolin	Four young boys learn about tolerance and the love of music from a woman who is blind. It explores the nature of transformation and how it takes place.
Trying Too Hard	A woman who has problems in her life is helped to actively seek solutions to her problems by an uncle who had been estranged from her family. It explores the nature of healing, counseling techniques and the value of active listening.

## Appendix B - Keyword Index

The following table represents Delta Stories (sorted by keywords or concepts found within the story) that are presented in the creative portion of this thesis.

Keyword	Title
Africa	Lucky Charm
animals	Shadow
aspirations	Lemon Dreams
blindness	The Mandolin
car repair	Lemon Dreams
cats	Shadow
change	Lemon Dreams
Chile	Lemon Dreams
counseling	Lemon Dreams
counseling	Lucky Charm
counseling	Trying Too Hard
domination	The Mandolin
dreams, following	Lemon Dreams
education nature of	Shoe Laces
estrangement	Trying Too Hard
family	Shoe Laces
following blindly	The Mandolin
generations	Shoe Laces
generations	Trying Too Hard
happiness	Shadow
headaches	Lucky Charm
healing	Lucky Charm
health	Lemon Dreams
health	Lucky Charm
hope	Lemon Dreams
institutions, founding	Lemon Dreams
joy	Shadow
lemonade	Lemon Dreams
lemons	Lemon Dreams
lifestyle	Lucky Charm
loneliness	Shoe Laces
maintenance	Lemon Dreams
meditation	Trying Too Hard
messages	Trying Too Hard

music	The Mandolin
native Americans	Shoe Laces
nature	Shoe Laces
negative thinking	Shadow
over extended life	Lucky Charm
patience	Lemon Dreams
peer pressure	The Mandolin
problem solving	Trying Too Hard
rite of passage	Shoe Laces
self-help	Trying Too Hard
special populations	The Mandolin
struggle	Shoe Laces
sunglasses	Trying Too Hard
tension	Lucky Charm
walking meditation	Trying Too Hard

**Appendix C - Questions for Use With The Creative Thesis**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Questions for Discussions</b>
Lemon Dreams	Where does the story take place? What does Julia mean by a mature car? When Julia and Ana first met, why was Ana there? Why didn't Julia give Ana a recommendation when she asked for it? Why do you think Ana's grandfather left her the farm? Why did Julia recommend patience with the things we want to do in life? What is the sound that takes place throughout Julia's talk at Lemon Grove?
Lucky Charm	Why did the narrator of the story go to meet Nogutula? What were the questions that Nogutula asked the first patient? Why do you think the patient was healed? What did the narrator think? What did the narrator receive besides his story? What was the cause of the healing (The discipline, the lucky charm, or the results of the "do's" and "don'ts")?
The Mandolin	At the beginning of the story, who was the leader of the group of boys? What was the original reaction of the boys to Georgina? Were all the boys united in their view towards Georgina? Did Georgina have any talents and faculties that made up for her lack of sight? What was the main thing that changed in the story?
Trying Too Hard	What do you think Cantara's problem was? Is it possible that a fisherman can be so wise as Hakim was? If so how did he get his wisdom? Why did Hakim keep asking Cantara to take off her sunglasses? Did the sunglasses protect Cantara from anything? How did Hakim help Cantara to solve her problem? What did Hakim mean by receiving messages? Why did she think her uncle Hakim could help her? Why did Hakim want her to continue to walk?
Shoe Laces	What was the first lesson he taught? What were the other lessons he taught? Was the grandfather mean? What was behind the grandfather's methods of teaching?
Shadow	What was shadow's lesson? What can we learn from it about humans? What can you learn from it?

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