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THE ROLE OF

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

IN THE TRANSFER OF IDEAS

THE CASE STUDY

AND MANAGEMENT THEORY

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The case study report – which I will call simply the case study – constitutes a special form of scientific and technical writing. It is widely used but not well understood. Intuitively we know that a case study communicates information and that it is a kind of story. But how does it communicate? And what kind of a story is it?

Discourse analysis offers a methodology that reveals the linguistic and textual strategies employed by the case study and allows us to formulate explicitly the conception of it that we hold intuitively. This essay examines the case study as discourse – as the text involved in an act of communication that takes place within a particular speech community. I have chosen to examine the case study as it is used in teaching management theory. Illustrative texts come from casebooks in the field, selected in consultation with Boston University School of Management faculty, which show a representative range of subject matter, pedagogical principles, and style.

A discourse analytical approach, by its very nature, demands particularization: unless the context is fully specified, it is impossible to view a text as discourse. Hence the analysis here focuses on one particular kind of case study used in one particular kind of activity. It is offered as a model for a discourse analytical approach to the case study in other areas. I will

look first at the functions of the management case study within its communicative context; then I will consider its form — its structure as a narrative text — and the ways in which that form serves its functions.

Functions of the Case Study

Harvard Business School is generally credited with the invention of the case study method of teaching; certainly it is identified with that method today (Christensen, 7). In 1910, Harvard instructor Copeland was advised by Dean Gay to augment his lectures with student discussion, which then began to revolve around cases; by 1921, Copeland had published the first collection of cases intended for use in teaching (Leenders and Erskine, 12). These cases and the many that followed tell the story of actual problems met, explored, and resolved. They translate theory into practice. "Instinctively," says Roland Christensen, generally acknowledged as the method's greatest exponent, "the faculty may well have seen the case method as a bridge between the classroom and the realities of business practice" (7).

The management case study teaches theory by fulfilling two functions: (1) illustration (translating from the abstract to the concrete), and (2) socialization (conveying the paradigm that governs the theory's application).

ILLUSTRATION

A case study attempts to show what a problem actually looks like (Reynolds, 53), so as to provide material for a specific application of theoretical principles. Two properties make a case study effective in rendering the abstract concrete. A good case study is, first of all, specific. The more concrete details, the better: names, places, time, objects, events — all these contribute to specificity.

Paul is 42 years old, married with two teenage daughters, and lives comfortably in Hinsdale, Illinois, comfortably as a classical musician's salary will allow that is. Besides his position as third violinist at the symphony, he gives private lessons in his home and teaches music at a nearby college. (Glueck, 183)

Details accumulate, building up a densely textured picture. The reader begins to see a particular situation — in this case, the violinist Paul Anyon at a particular stage in his career.

Second, an effective case study is realistic. Proponents of the case method of teaching have called the case study "a chunk of reality . . .

brought into the classroom," a "snapshot of reality" (Lawrence, 215), a "slice of life" (Erskine et al., 12). Realism means including facts that don't fit neatly or that turn out to be irrelevant to the solution. The student is asked to deal with what Christensen (9) calls "the 'as is,' not the 'might be'."

At a recent social event, Paul had become obviously drunk and was getting abusive with one of the ladies on the Women's Symphony Committee. Chuck decided the best way to help was to take Paul home. He had a terrible time getting him in his car. First Paul denied he was drunk and said he wanted to stay. Then he said he could get home himself and didn't want to leave his car there.

Replicating real-world problems means reproducing the messiness—the vagueness, ambiguity, and uncertainty—with which a problem first presents itself. Here the reader, asked to identify with Chuck, the orchestra's personnel manager, must decide which facts to accept and, ultimately, whether any of them are relevant to the problem at hand (the question of Paul's upcoming promotion). The realistic case study incorporates such exigencies as lack of crucial information, conflicting objectives, needs too great for resources. As in life, things do not lay themselves out neatly at the outset. The messiness of the "as is" brings home the central thing the neophyte needs to know about translating from abstract theory to concrete situation: the almost inevitable lack of fit between the two. As Lawrence puts it, "a good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations. It is the anchor on academic flights of fancy" (215).

Yet specificity and realism result not from a faithful recounting of the facts but from their artful selection and arrangement. Truth does not guarantee realism; nor completeness, specificity. As the later discussion of form will show, both realism and specificity reside in the telling; they are properties of the text.

SOCIALIZATION

The second function of the case study is to help bring the neophyte into the community of the discipline. A case study conveys the theoretical paradigm to new members of the theoretical community by telling a story that shows the paradigm in action. Reading a case study, the neophyte sees not only what problems look like, but also what problem-solvers look like. By setting out the problem in such a way as to suggest how to play the role of problem-solver, the case study is in effect socializing the neophyte. Socialization results from achieving Fayerweather's four objectives for the case method (2):

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- orienting to the nature of the business;
- imparting specific knowledge;
- teaching principles useful in guiding business decisions;
- training in the analysis of business problems.

Other exponents of the case method refer to "learning by doing" (Erskine, 17), "relating analysis and action" (Christensen, 9), developing "proficiency in analyzing . . . reaching decisions . . . and formulating programs" (Robert W. Merry, head of the Harvard Business School, quoted in Erskine, 16).

The case study in management, then, gives the reader the discipline's typical vision of a particular problem situation and, at the same time, elicits problem-solving behavior like that of the experienced practitioner. The case study of the violinist Paul Anyon concludes:

You are Chuck. Do you discuss Paul's problem with the concert-master or the conductor? What, if anything, do you do for Paul?

Another of Glueck's cases (185) ends with the injunction:

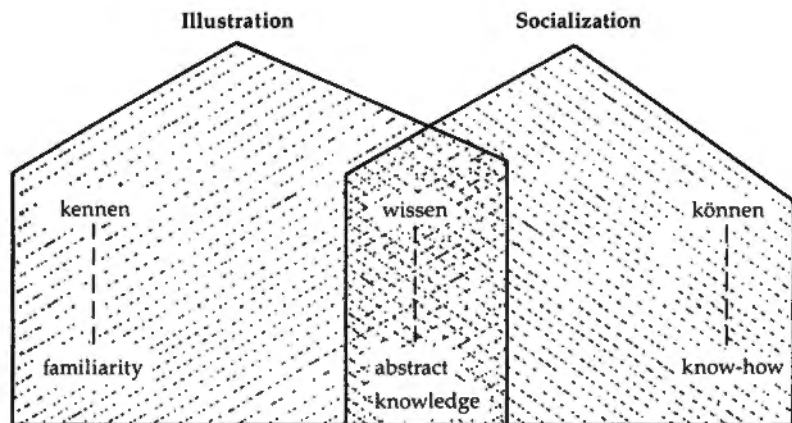
You are Ray Buffa, personnel manager at Columbia. Bob has just described the incident to you at lunch. Bob has asked you to comment on the whole incident from the company's point of view. Ray had just filed the memo on Bob in his personnel file.

It is important to note that the problem-solver's role is modeled not directly but obliquely. In order not to give away the solution, the case study must elicit the desired behavior without actually depicting it. This is achieved through ingenious use of the narrative mode, in two ways. First, the details of the problem are presented within what Kuhn has called the "paradigm" of the particular discipline.¹ The material is viewed through the lens of a particular theory, so that the reader sees it through the eyes of a particular theoretical community. Second, the story is told in such a way that the reader experiences himself or herself imaginatively as a member of that community. Solving the problem then becomes an exercise in role-playing for the reader. As Lawrence (215) puts it, "a good case . . . is the target for the expression of attitudes or ways of thinking."

INVOLVEMENT

Through illustration and socialization, the case study in management conveys knowledge that augments the abstract knowledge of principles. Merton (133) distinguishes between abstract or theoretical knowledge (*wissen*), on the one hand, and two kinds of relatively concrete knowledge, on the other: familiarity or direct acquaintance with phenomena (*kennen*), and practical knowledge or know-how (*können*). These three

kinds of knowledge are related to the functions of illustration and socialization in the following way:



In performing its illustrative function, the case study provides familiarity with specific instances; in performing its socializing function, it provides problem-solving experience.

However, neither illustration nor socialization can occur without the reader's involvement, on a personal as well as an intellectual level, with the material presented. Christensen (3) emphasizes the necessity for the "active intellectual and emotional involvement of the student." Stories engage. They catch, hold, and focus our attention. In a well-told story the facts come alive, and the neophyte finds himself or herself immersed. It is the case study's narrative form — and the particular adaptation made of it — that secures involvement.

Form of the Case Study

Though some case writers and proponents of the case method of teaching have implicitly acknowledged a relation to storytelling (Fayerweather, 8), the case study has never been analyzed as a narrative text. In the following sections, I will look first at the narrative structure of the management case study and then at its use of the elements of narrative. In the process of determining how the form of the case study allows it to fulfill its functions with the communicative situation — by looking

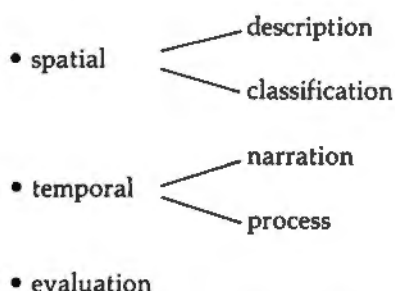
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at text in context – we shall be able to see in detail the textual characteristics of the case study report. Surprisingly, we shall not only see ways in which the case study makes use of the conventions governing narrative form. We shall also see the ways in which the case study departs from those conventions to create a special kind of narrative text.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE CASE STUDY

The narrative structure of a text exists on what van Dijk (153–55) calls the macrolinguistic level – above the level of individual sentences or paragraphs, on the level of discourse.² Narrative structure organizes content. By means of what Chafe (11) calls “subchunking,” it carves up the total content into smaller, more manageable units presented in a logical and predictable sequence. Subchunking not only makes processing easier for the reader but also holds and directs the reader’s attention. Narrative subchunking consists in the ordering of events in time.

The centrality of time distinguishes narrative from other rhetorical modes. Elizabeth Harris (142–43) schematizes the possible rhetorical modes in the following way:



Narration, like process, is a temporal mode. It contrasts with the spatial modes of description and classification. Because we are speaking of a concept and its linguistic expression, we are already at some remove from reality. It is not real time, but temporality that concerns us. Psycholinguistic research sees temporality – reflected grammatically as tense and lexically as adverbials – as basic to the conceptual framework underlying natural language (Miller and Johnson-Laird, 411). Underlying the expression of temporality in natural language (and therefore in narrative) is a time line, which Miller and Johnson-Laird represent as:



Here time is a sequence of discrete points (events), with some reference point (A or B) to which the speaker/hearer is oriented, moving backward (the past) and forward (the future) from that point and locating events with respect to it. A time line runs through all narrative.³

The events of the story are sequenced along this time line in such a way as to hold and focus the reader's attention. As Labov (366) puts it, every good narrator is continually warding off the question: "So what?" Labov finds the following sequence in a well-formed narrative (363):

1. Abstract
2. Orientation
3. Complication
4. Evaluation
5. Resolution
6. Coda

Briefly, the abstract presents a quick summary of the story about to be told; the orientation provides background information and setting; the complication constitutes the problem to be solved; the evaluation shows the significance of each action to the story as a whole and to its theme; the resolution solves the problem, resulting in a reversal of the situation; the coda signals that the narrative is finished and returns speaker and hearer to the present moment.⁴ In Aristotelian terms, a fully formed narrative has a beginning (abstract and orientation), middle (complication, evaluation, and resolution), and end (coda). The lifelong experience of stories that comes from participating in the traditions of his or her culture, both oral and written, leads a reader to expect these elements and to perceive as incomplete any story that lacks them.

A striking feature of the management case study, in comparison with ordinary narrative, is that its form is truncated. Take the case study "Johnson Control, Inc." (Schwartz, 276-92). It begins with an abstract:

By late September 1974 time had run out and Project Manager John Riley was faced with a critical decision concerning one of his division's major projects—the Eastern Electric contract.

This is followed immediately by an extensive orientation, which gives John Riley's background, the history of his company, and a description of the internal organization and working procedures of the company. The next section of the narrative, the complication, presents the problem (Eastern Electric's delay in deciding to continue with the project, while the deadline for completion rapidly approaches). There the report stops. There is no evaluation, no resolution, no coda.

The truncated structure of "Johnson Control, Inc." is typical of the case study in general. The last three of the six segments found in ordinary

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narrative are omitted. Reynolds' recommendations for case writing make this explicit; in his view, a case study should comprise three sections—opening, case body, and closing—defined as follows (95):

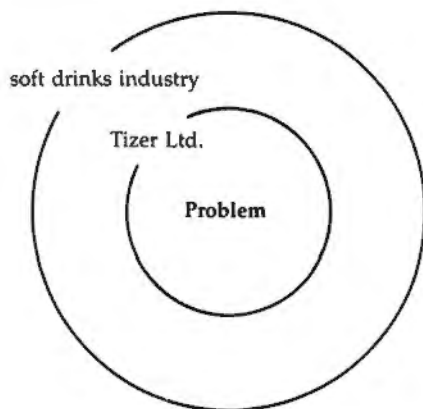
| | |
|--|--|
| Opening: (First few paragraphs) | Name and title of responsible manager Name, location and product line of organization Date Synopsis of decision or problem setting |
| Case body: | Company history, if relevant Environmental facts, if relevant Expanded description of the decision or problem situation Organizational relationships Other case characters Products and processes Financial data Marketing information Human interaction facts etc. |
| Closing: (Last paragraph or two) | Scenario to establish a sense of urgency about the problem or decision |

Here the opening constitutes an abstract, the case body presents both the orientation and the complication, and the closing brings the problem into focus, centering the reader's attention on it and making it vivid enough ("sense of urgency") to trigger reader identification. In effect, the case study is the first half of a fully formed narrative:

FULLY FORMED NARRATIVE**CASE STUDY REPORT**

Within the truncated narrative of the case study report, the orientation section generally shows much greater length and density than in ordinary narrative. An example is the orientation section in "Johnson Control, Inc.,"

which exhibits the "layered" structure typical of the case study orientation. The section proceeds from largest to narrowest context, placing the complication within concentric circles:

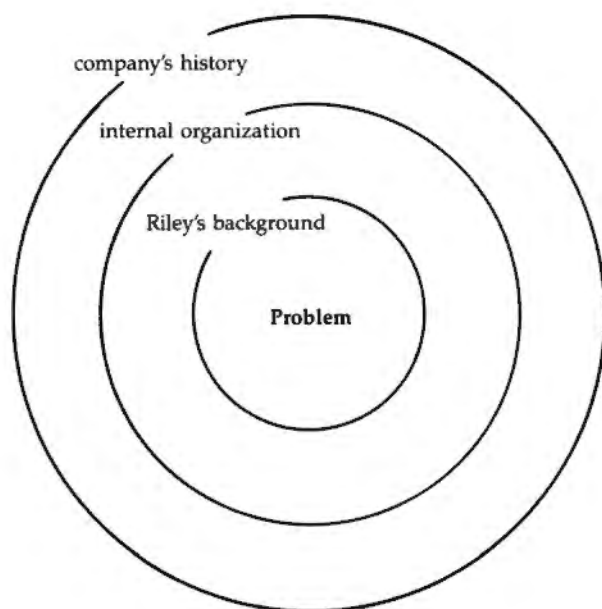


This report presents the concentric contexts out of order: first the inner circle, then the outer one, and finally the middle one. Often, however, the order of presentation moves from the outside in, as in "Tizer Limited (A)" (Stopford et al., 61-78). This case, as the abstract makes clear, deals with the adjustment of a new employee to the company:

In the spring of 1972 Mr P. Quinn described to the casewriter his move from Polyfoil Ltd, an aluminum foil manufacturer, to Tizer Ltd, the soft drinks manufacturer. Mr Quinn had been the general manager of Polyfoil Ltd, a subsidiary of Alcan Ltd, until February 1970, when he assumed the position of managing director of Tizer Ltd. Mr Quinn was reviewing both his evaluation of Tizer prior to joining the company, and his subsequent approach to the task of returning the company to a position of profitability.

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The orientation here shows the following structure:



The elaborate orientation characteristic of the case study serves both of the functions discussed in the preceding section. It deepens the reader's involvement by the sheer volume of information it gives: the more one knows about a subject, the more deeply one is engaged by it. An elaborate orientation provides what Schegloff calls "common-sense geography" — the context-within-context that children practice when they give their address as town, state, country, the world, the solar system, the universe (Traugott and Pratt, 273). The degree of detail involved supports the function of illustration by enhancing concreteness and realism, and

the function of socialization by immersing the reader in the problem.

Elaborating the orientation section is one way in which the case study narrative compensates for its truncated structure; another is the use of subheadings. For example, we find the following:

"The Inspection Machine" (Gellerman, 15-26)

- [Abstract]
- Farini Deliberates
- Swanson Is Consulted
- The Decision-Making Process
- The Outcome

"The Colonial Beef Company" (Schwartz, 17-29)

- [Abstract]
- The Meat-Packing Industry
- Portion Control
- Company History
- Marketing
 - Market
 - Product
 - Price
 - Distribution
 - Promotion
- Production, Cost Control, and Labor Relations
- Finance
- The Future

Subheadings, whether colorful (as in the example from Gellerman) or controlled (as in the example from Schwartz), point up the subchunks into which the narrative falls. At the same time, they label or title those subchunks to focus the reader's attention on the core idea of each one. Thus subheadings give the reader footholds to use in scaling the problem. The lengthened orientation furnishes a wealth of information; the subheads help the reader organize it. Case studies that do not use subheadings tend to have specific, directive titles that focus attention on central issues. DuBrin, for example, uses lively titles that offer a clue to the nature of the problem: "Isolation Blues," "The Maladroit Firing," "Bruce, the Behavior Mod Landlord"; Glueck has titles like "How High the Doc" (about an alcoholic surgeon). Both the longer orientation and the use of subheadings or pointed titles help the reader with the task of solving the problem—which is also the task of completing the narrative.

The most striking difference between the case study and ordinary narrative is that, in the case study, it is not the storyteller but the reader who must answer the question, "So what?" Cutting off the narrative after the

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complication section propels the reader into solving the problem, because of the momentum created by his or her expectations – the internalized story grammar. As narrative, the case study fails to meet the requirements for a “minimal story” held by most narrative theorists since Aristotle: it does not show a change of state.⁵ The essence of plot is reversal (Aristotle’s *peripeteia*), “the passage from one equilibrium to another” (Todorov, 111) – from complication to resolution. For instance, a much-cited, typical minimal story is Prince’s “John was unhappy; then he met a woman; then, as a result, he was happy” (31), in which the protagonist’s emotional state undergoes a reversal from the beginning to the end of the story, with an intervening event supplying the causal link between the two states. But causality, because it would constitute interpretation of the problem presented, cannot be indicated in a case study narrative; neither can the reversed state, which would constitute a solution to the problem. Therefore it is the reader who, by deciphering the cause of the problem, supplies the evaluation; it is the reader who, by solving the problem, supplies the resolution. And finally it is the reader’s coda that brings the narrative to closure.

Gellerman (xiii–xiv) indicates the kind of interaction between reader and text that results in the reader’s completing the story:

Ben Caldwell, a 42-year-old engineering manager, has been recruited from a larger company to become manager of Media Corporation’s printing plant in Harperville. The Harperville plant, Media’s largest, is twelve years old and has already had four managers, all of whom came from other Media Divisions. Two of these were fired, one resigned, and one accepted a demotion and transfer to another division. For the past year-and-a-half, the plant was managed by Jim Storch, a 34-year-old plant accountant who had been given the title of acting plant manager.

Storch had accepted the acting plant managership somewhat reluctantly. His main interest was in accounting. But he was a loyal company man, and when the previous plant manager resigned he realized that Media desperately needed someone to manage on a temporary basis, while a fully-qualified plant manager was sought. However, as the “temporary” assignment continued for more than a year, Storch began to like general management and felt that he was growing into the job. About two months before Caldwell was hired, Storch told Adam Siemanski, Media’s Vice President for Manufacturing, that he’d like to be considered for the plant manager’s job on a permanent basis. Siemanski was careful to make no commitments, but praised Storch for having run the plant in a reasonably efficient manner during his tenure as acting plant manager.

When Caldwell accepted the job, Siemanski told him that Storch had also applied for it. Siemanski said that he didn’t know how serious Storch had really been, and was uncertain as to whether Storch would be seriously disappointed to see the job go to an outsider—even a highly qualified outsider like Caldwell. Siemanski told Caldwell to organize his management team at Harperville as he saw fit, and to do his best to keep Storch happy.

What’s wrong?
Plant
managers’
graveyard?
Why did it
take so long?
Doesn’t any-
body want it?

disappointed?
demoralized?

won’t be easy;
use S. as an
executive, not
as an
accountant

From the reader's point of view, the truncated narrative structure of the case study is a powerful motivator. He or she feels the pull toward closure, rooted in human psychology and reinforced by the expectations a lifelong experience of ordinary narrative has set up. Trying to create closure, the reader is drawn into interaction with the text. He or she asks questions concerning the origin and consequences of the facts reported, striving to forge the causal connections that will make the problem yield to interpretation (adding an evaluation section to the narrative structure) and ultimately to solution (adding a resolution). By violating the reader's narrative expectations and leaving the story unfinished, the case study draws the reader into its construction in the role of problem-solver. At this point, the elements of narrative come into play; the case study's adaptation and manipulation of the elements of narrative provides the resources the reader needs to carry the story to completion.

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE CASE STUDY

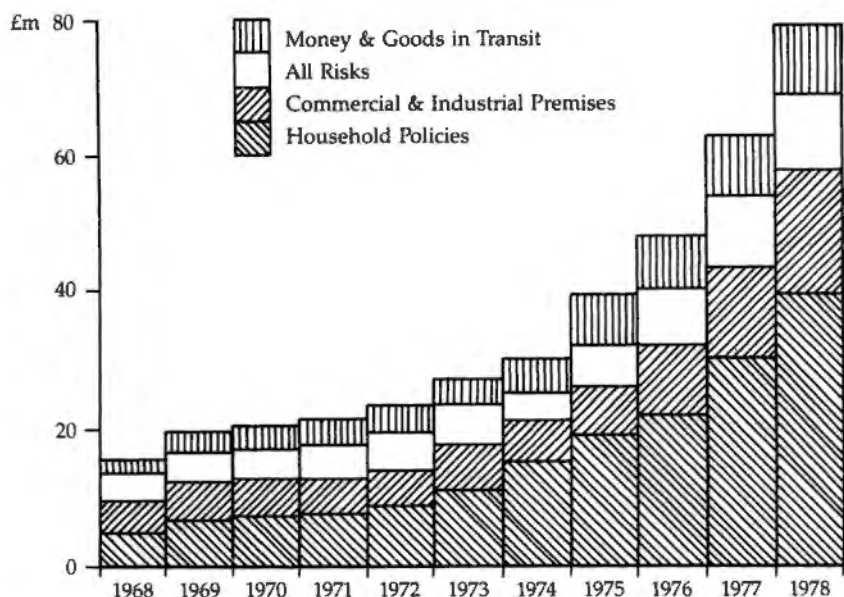
Narrative structure is implemented by means of plot, character, and point of view.⁶ The first of these elements, plot, is the particular sequence of events that actualizes the narrative structure in a given story. We can think of the structure discussed in the preceding section as a set of ordered slots; the plot of a given story is the sequence of events with which that story fills the slots. Plot unfolds over time. What Scholes and Kellogg (209) call the essential temporality of the narrative act threads events together into a structure with coherence and inevitability.

In the case study, plot becomes the basis for the reader's problem-solving activity. In reading ordinary narrative, readers frequently project from the temporal axis onto the causal axis, interpreting succession in time as causal connection (Warren, Nicholas, and Trabasso). Indeed, tellers of ordinary stories often invite readers to do this, since constantly making the cause-and-effect explicit would be inelegant and tedious. Readers of the case study, generalizing from their experience of ordinary narrative, seek the origins of a problem in events that happened earlier in time.

In projecting from the temporal to the causal, the case study employs a resource not found in ordinary narrative (with a very few idiosyncratic exceptions): the use of schematics. Organizational charts, bar and line graphs, flowcharts, piecharts—all these supplement the information presented verbally. Take the following bar graph (Stopford et al., 306):

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Exhibit 3
Insurance Losses Through Crime



This schematic summarizes events over time and makes a trend clear. It organizes facts that could be (and largely have been) presented verbally and imposes a structure on them. Because they summarize, schematics stand outside the plot. Conceptually, they are juxtaposed with the events of the story, laid side-by-side with the time line. Because they represent analysis of facts—facts arranged in such a way as to lead the reader to certain conclusions—schematics introduce a kind of “back-door” causality into the case study narrative. As we have seen, the goals of the case study demand that interpretation of the facts be left to the reader; but schematics can guide the reader toward interpretation.

In presenting the events of the plot sequence, the case study restricts itself to the past tense, in contrast to ordinary narrative, which often uses the present and sometimes even the future as the main tense in which the action is presented.⁷ The reason lies in the choice of realism over immediacy. The past tense gives a sense of definiteness (“It did happen”), the

solidity of completed events; whereas the present tense conveys the immediacy of an event in progress. Thus the past tense, though it increases the distance between the reader and the narrative, enhances the reality of the problem situation by conveying it as the culmination of events that have already taken place.

Character, the second element of narrative structure, creates empathy in the reader (DuBrin, 11). He or she identifies with the character who faces the problem: the personnel manager of a symphony orchestra who must deal with an alcoholic violinist (Glueck, 183-84); the vice-president for international operations who must determine whether a new mill is endangered by guerilla activities (Gellerman, 105-18); the committee members who must decide whether or not to admit men to Women's Medical College (Schwartz, 143-53). The character thus beset is the protagonist of the case study.

But identification with the protagonist helps the reader solve the problem only if he or she can dilute it enough to maintain the perspective of an expert called in to solve the problem. Distance is the crucial element. That is why the case study, in contrast to ordinary narrative, offers only "flat" characters—characters who are simple and do not develop in the course of the narrative (Forster, 75). A range of variation exists: compare the following passages.

Shutting down the machine would have disrupted the agency's work during a peak period. More importantly, it would have raised doubts about the machine's effectiveness only a few weeks after it had been delivered. The government's original decision to purchase the machine had attracted considerable controversy in the newspapers, and even in Congress. A shutdown could easily lead to investigations, adverse publicity, and administrative delays. Farini, having gone through a stressful period when the machine was initially sold, had always been fearful of having, in effect, to "sell it again" by reappearing before various committees, while simultaneously having to fight a public relations "battle." The resulting delays would hamper the agency's efforts to learn to use the machine efficiently. An engineer by training, Farini had a personal distaste for administrative delays. Besides, he had faith in his machine. (Gellerman, 20)

When asked about growth over the next five years William Baker expressed confidence that a 32 percent growth rate would be achieved. He considered the best growth prospects to be acquisition of a contract cleaning business and expansion into nearby geographic areas. He expected that increasing demand for security services would be a source of rapid expansion for Safeguard. Baker

asserted that the contract cleaning industry was maturing rapidly. It would become increasingly difficult for small, inefficient firms to survive; future volume should be concentrated in a few large companies. The ability of any company to become larger would depend on its ability to manage its people and resources. (Schwartz, 243)

In the first passage, we look into both the mind and the emotions of the character. We know how Farini assesses the problem, what his reasoning is; and we also know how he feels: his dislike of administrative delays, his faith in his machine. He is endowed with an emotional past, including a previous "stressful period," from which these feelings come.

In the second passage, in contrast, we look only into the mind of the character. We hear Baker's reasoning and his predictions; but we know nothing at all of how he feels about his ideas or how his past may have shaped them. The first passage here depicts a character less flat than the one in the second. However, for the case study in general, the range of characterization is considerably narrower than for ordinary narrative. Both passages employ indirect rather than direct presentation (Rimmon-Kenan, 59) — that is, neither passage contains the kind of authorial intrusion that defines or attaches labels to characters. Instead, both passages follow the maxim of "Show, don't tell" (Booth, 8), letting us see and hear the characters rather than merely telling us about their qualities. The difference between the two passages lies in *what* they show — mind and emotions in the first, mind only in the second — rather than in *how* they show it.

The third element of narrative structure, point of view, is the most complex. Point of view involves both the question of who sees and the question of who speaks (Rimmon-Kenan, 72). Is the narrator the person from whose perspective the events of the story are viewed? In ordinary narrative, it frequently is not. (For example, in *Great Expectations* — told in the first person by its protagonist — Pip as a child sees the events of the narrative, but Pip as an adult tells the story.) Degree of identity between viewer and speaker correlates with degree of empathy between narrator and reader. The closer the one who speaks is to the one who sees, the greater will be the empathy between narrator and reader.

The relation between viewer and speaker is reflected in the choice of grammatical person for the narrator's voice. In a first-person case study, viewer and speaker usually coincide. Consider the following passage from "The Boss Is the Boss," about a division manager whose choice for branch manager conflicts with that of his superior (White et al., 79):

I tell you I was stunned there for a minute. Bill had been brought into the organization about 14 months ago specifically to train for a managerial post with us — this arrangement no doubt having

something to do with the fact that Bill's father (head of a large equipment company in the city) and Jim were very good friends. Undoubtedly he was management material, and I knew nothing whatever about him that would suggest he wouldn't make a first-rate branch manager some day. In fact I didn't really know very much about him at all, since he had never worked in the Local Division; I knew his connection with Jim (everybody said that he was the "fair-haired boy" of Number One), the plan to push him along as fast as possible, that he had been married and had one child, but that his wife had obtained a divorce, and I had heard that on a couple of occasions since he came with us he had been seen downtown at night heavily under the influence. But I would never in the world have thought of Bill in terms of the job that was opening up now.

Here the narrator and the one through whose eyes we see the situation are identical. The lack of distance between the two creates a high degree of empathy in the reader, which the informal, confiding tone enhances. "I tell you I was stunned there for a minute" and "I would never in the world have thought" carry the tone of someone speaking to a friend.

In contrast to the first-person narrator, the third-person narrator can reflect varying distances between viewer and speaker. Compare these two passages:

Swallowing his resentment, Byrum left the branch office. He greeted Shuford and welcomed him into the section. He described the organization of the section and the responsibilities of the in-service operation unit. Also, since Shuford was new in this job, he was welcome to come to the chief's desk at any time to discuss his problems and to seek advisory assistance. But, when Byrum had completed his orientation remarks, he was almost knocked off his feet [when] Shuford made [a] comment. (Glueck, 179)

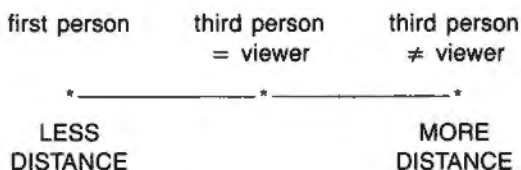
In June 1970, the first move into the hotel industry was made with the purchase of Pondust Ltd. involving Lex in the construction of a Hilton Hotel in Stratford-on-Avon. In December of the year, a ten year management agreement was signed between Lex and the Hyatt International Corporation for the construction by Lex of an hotel at Heathrow Airport that would be managed by Hyatt.

October 1971 saw the purchase of the The [sic] Carlton Tower Hotel from the Sonesta Corporation for £4.6 million. This well established luxury grade hotel was operated by Lex. In January 1972, Lex initiated the building of a hotel at London Gatwick

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Airport for operation by Lex. (Stopford et al., 101-2)

Both passages show a less intimate, less casual tone than the first-person passage above. Nevertheless, they stand at different points on a continuum from relatively close to extremely distant narrator. We can position them relative to the first-person narrator in the following way:



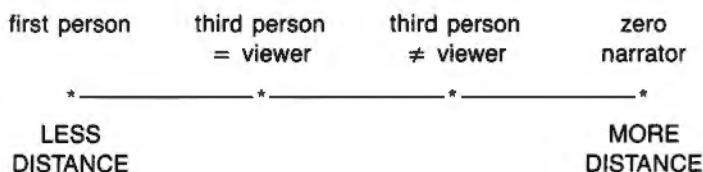
In the third-person passage from Glueck, the narrator positions himself so close to the protagonist, Byrum, that seeing the action and recounting it come from almost the same perspective. Closeness of speaker to viewer engenders a corresponding closeness between reader and protagonist, and we feel with Byrum his resentment and his surprise. In contrast, the third-person passage from Stopford does not even contain a protagonist. We do not know the people behind the actions described. (Who made the purchase of Pondust Ltd.? Who signed the contract between Lex and Hyatt International?) This passage gives the reader no one with whom to identify. The distant narrative voice is that of an anonymous puzzle-giver who simply presents the problem.

Speaker/viewer closeness is enhanced or diminished by the choice of person because of the psycholinguistic phenomenon known as the Empathy Hierarchy (DeLancey, 644), which ranks elements in discourse as follows:

- first person
 - second person
 - third person
 - human
 - animate
 - natural forces
 - inanimate
- Discourse Participants

We find it easiest to empathize with discourse elements at the top of the hierarchy and progressively more difficult as we move down. As Lyons (638) points out, only speaker and addressee, represented grammatically by the first and second person respectively, actually participate in the communicative act. Therefore, using the third person as a lens through which to view events automatically sets the action at some remove from the discourse participants.

The management case study prefers the third-person narrator; very few use the first person. Here again, as with the elements of plot and character, the case study departs from the tradition of ordinary narrative. In their use of point of view, most case studies go beyond the third-person narrator to what I will call the "zero narrator." The range of options for the case study looks like this:



The zero narrator, in which no voice tells the story, is created by two means: pure dialogue and exhibits. Both devices contain no narrative presence. They simply set information down on the page, forming a text by sheer juxtaposition.

Pure dialogue, unmediated by even the slimmest of *he said's*, occurs in the following passage from "How High the Doc?" (Glueck, 180):

Barret: Gary, what seems to be the problem?

Gary: Well, Ms. Barret, I just don't feel very good, and I'd just like to lie down for a while.

Barret: If you don't feel good, you'd better take the rest of the day off.

Gary: I don't think I need to do that.

Barret: Gary, can you tell me what's going on around here?

Gary: Well, most people just don't like to work for Dr. Collins. He's pretty slow and seems to be out of it most of the time.

Barret: Have you talked to Ms. Johnston, the circulating R.N., about this?

Gary: I've talked to her and Dr. Martin. Ms. Johnston gave me a hard time as usual. She says I am getting too big for my britches, and if I don't like the situation, I can ask for a transfer. Dr. Martin says that he's with Dr. Collins most of the time, and he looks fine to him.

Barret: Thank you Gary, this will be kept confidential.

A brief set of stage directions introduces this exchange, but no narrative voice intrudes. An entire case study report may consist of dialogue, without even an introduction, as in DuBrin's "The Price of Success" (158-63).

Like pure dialogue, exhibits are simply set down side-by-side with the verbal text — more precisely, intercalated with it — without narrative interpretation. They vary: letters written by participants in the case, records

of transactions, legal documents, texts (legal and otherwise) which have some bearing on the case or which participants have consulted, newspaper articles, and so on. Schematics could be put into this category. (In fact, they are sometimes labeled "exhibits" by the case writer.) However, to the extent that they provide some interpretation of the data, they are not, strictly speaking, free of narrative intrusion. Exhibits are "eternal" information, valid for the entire narrative, unlinked to any specific part of it. They could in theory occur anywhere, though they are most often gathered at the end.

The zero narrator compensates for diminished reader empathy by pulling the reader into the construction of the text. Pure dialogue and exhibits support the function of illustration by enhancing realism, using what Fayerweather (9) calls "live material" — reports, letters, quotations — the stuff of which real-life cases are made. They support the function of socialization by leaving their connection to events unstated. The reader must discover it. In the process, he or she engages with the material and begins the activity of problem-solving.

Conclusion

In most scientific and technical fields, the transfer of knowledge entails dealing with problems that can only be solved with uncertainty (Bazerman, 160) through an activity in which intuition and inference play a key role and ambiguity abounds. The problem-solving process combines knowledge and inspiration, experience and innovation, in proportions that cannot be predicted. As Fleck (10) puts it:

Whereas an experiment can be interpreted in terms of a simple question and answer, experience must be understood as a complex state of intellectual training based upon the interaction involving the knower, that which he already knows, and that which he has yet to learn.

How can such a process be communicated to the newcomer unfamiliar with the discipline? How can the problems themselves be conveyed, if they are shot through with uncertainty and ambiguity, and each is in some way unlike any other?

The case study is one way. The analysis here, offered as a model for a discourse analytical approach to the case study as it is used in other areas, gives us insight into the nature of the case study in general. Viewing the management case study from a discourse-analytic perspective, as a text embedded in a communicative situation, has shown precisely how the case study report allows scientific and technical problems and prob-

lem-solving processes to be set forth in all their variety and complexity. Because it tells a story, the case study, like all narrative texts, engages the reader. Its grounding in concrete detail serves the function of illustration and at the same time makes the abundance and complexity of that detail manageable by fitting it into the ordered sequence of components expected in narrative. However, as we have seen, the case study in management does more than merely adopt the conventions of ordinary narrative; it adapts them to suit its particular communicative purpose. By truncating the narrative structure, and by selecting and reshaping the narrative elements of plot, character, and point of view, the case study draws the reader into the story as problem-solver, thereby fulfilling the function of socialization. The resulting text is a special kind of narrative—a story interactively constructed by writer and reader together.

NOTES

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1. Kuhn (*Essential Tension*, xix) distinguishes two senses in which he uses the word "paradigm": (1) "exemplary problem solutions"; and (2) "the entire global set of commitments shared by the members of a particular scientific community." He notes with regret that the second sense has captured the imagination of scholars, though the first is closer to what he meant. In my opinion, the two senses are inextricably connected; in this essay I use the word in both senses at once.

2. On macrostructures in general, see chapter 5 of van Dijk. Van Dijk and Kintsch treats in detail the relation of the reader to discourse macrostructures, as does Gulich and Raible.

3. According to Rimmon-Kenan (14), recounting events in chronological order is what makes a text a narrative; however, as she points out (17), this temporality is not strict but multilinear. Because stories nearly always involve more than one character, events that are in reality simultaneous must be recounted sequentially. The most complete analysis of time and tense in narrative is that of Genette, who stresses the unreal nature of narrative time: stories transpose from what he calls the "temporal plane" (real time) to the "spatial plane" of the text (86).

4. For another version of Labov's approach, see Rumelhart's discussion of story schemata. For the application of schematic analysis to real-life stories, see Stein and Glenn.

5. Nearly all narrative theorists agree on the necessity for a change of state in narrative, though many would take issue with Prince's precise formulation. See, for instance: Culler; Smith (185); Brémond.

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6. Here I follow Rimmon-Kenan (43ff); however, she prefers the term "focalization" (after Genette) to "point of view." Scholes and Kellogg list four elements of narrative: meaning (theme), character, plot, and point of view.

7. Prince (149) claims that "narrative prefers tensed statements (or their equivalent) to untensed ones," so that "Every human dies" is less narrative than "Napoleon died in 1821." But this conflates the two ideas of time and specificity; as much contemporary fiction testifies, the present tense is fully as narrative as the past—provided what is narrated is specific (e.g., "Then, in 1821, Napoleon dies").

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