Review

Telling a story

Nirupama Akella

Innovation in Learning Center, College of Education, University of South Alabama, AL 36688, USA. E-mail: nra702@jaguar1.usouthal.edu. Tel: 2513802462.

Accepted 3 March, 2011

The genre of storytelling in the form of case studies is an effective way of teaching and learning. Contemporary research on the case method is absent in the academic discipline of communication. This issue needs to be addressed and research on the effectiveness of the case method needs to be done in the academic area of communication. This paper discusses the reasons behind the popularity of the case study method including its research paradigm. The final section of the paper discusses the scarcity of academic research pertaining to the case study method in the field. The paper details a personal example focusing on the benefits of using the method of case study to effectively teach and engage students in the classroom.

Key words: Storytelling, research, case study, narrative paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

The case study method is a recognized important educational tool. “Cases are narratives of a real life situation that puts across a problem or unresolved tension for students to analyze and solve” (Akella, 2010). This means that cases present a problem for students to resolve. Case resolution enables students to think logically and critically developing a realistic and coherent sense and value of textual theory (Robbins, 1975).

The case study method serves many benefits both to the teacher and student. On one hand it helps the teacher establish a rapport with the students and stimulate their minds regarding challenging theories. For the students, case studies present a novel and interesting way of learning dry and heavy theories, and concepts. Case study method can be described as a unique way of examining and understanding realistic situations against the backdrop of a theory (Kreps, 1984). Case studies illustrate what can happen as a guide to what to do (Cox, 2001).

1. Helps instructors in generating class discussion by presenting meaningful solutions (what to do).
2. Allows students to think creatively, engage in critical thinking and identify solutions.
3. Helps instructors explain theories, clarify concepts with reference to the case.
4. Allows all learners to understand and grasp the situation and problem presented in the case (Kosa, 2008).
5. Allows students to make connections and develop own solutions based on theories.
6. Helps students to creatively explore possible solutions to the case problem.
7. Helps students to know and become aware of real life situations and crises.
8. Helps students to gain experience in professional report writing and presentations (Kreps, 1984).

Despite these advantages, case method of teaching remains confined to academic fields of nursing and business. Research on case method as a viable tool of teaching and learning is abundant in the sphere of nursing (Bailey and Tilley, 2002). In contrast, such research is outdated and sparse in the academic fields of social science.

Case studies are seen as a valid teaching tool in the applied field of organizational communication but academic literature is silent on its usage in other fields of communication (Kreps, 1984). Instructors in fields of applied communication and theory such as Public Relations, Ethics, Law, Advertising and Social Effects are using the case study method to teach important concepts, theories and issues in class. Case method teaching and learning forms an important contemporary pedagogical tool in the academic field of communication. There needs to be current research supporting or negating this position.

This paper discusses the concept and practice of the case study method in the academic field of communication. Using the narrative paradigm of the case
STORYTELLING IN RESEARCH

Academic storytelling in the form of case studies is a recognized qualitative research tool (Dooley and Skinner, 1977). Case study work was first introduced in the academic spheres of medicine, library science, business, legal education, and social work. The goal of the case study method is to present the actual "meaning" of action and behavior (Avis, 1995). Hence, storytelling or case study research is described as a qualitative alternative paradigm where the objective is not to find the ‘truth’ but ‘meaning’: “a representation (of reality) from one particular point of view in contrast to the quantitative understanding of reality as truth… a social and physical reality which exists independently of our experiences of it” (Avis, 1995: 1206). This means that a story in academic literature seeks to present a subjective meaning of an event. This event or real life episode can be interpreted in various ways by many people. All interpretations are true and valid meanings of the real life episode. This is in contrast to quantitative research which states that research exists to find the ‘truth’ which is objective in nature devoid of any social or physical, emotional interpretation.

The goal of case study researchers is to provide ways of understanding this meaning and experience (Schwandt, 1994). Thus, one case study can have different meanings colored by social, physical, and emotional reality. Case study inquiry is based on the view that knowledge is not absolute or devoid of any subjectivity. Knowledge is relative and is a creation of the interaction between researcher and the researched (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Avis, 1995; Reed, 1995; Strubert and Carpenter, 1999). In other words knowledge is not an independent entity but is dependent on human interaction. This epistemological basis forms the foundation of case study research.

MacIntyre (1984) states that man is a story-telling animal. According to him, telling stories which detail an event or a process are critical to human experience and learning (1984). He further clarifies that story telling can be described as a “narrative enquiry” (MacIntyre, 1984; Flyvbjerg, 2006: 240). His view is further propounded by a phenomenological approach, which states that stories are snapshots of human experience. This approach is advocated by Christensen (1987) when he says that similar stories build knowledge about a particular phenomenon. Christensen further adds that these stories are described as cases (1987). Thus, he notes that case studies are central to human learning and knowledge utilization (Christensen, 1987; Flyvbjerg, 2006: 222). The approach focuses on the aspect of human interaction, and states that human learning does not evolve in a straight vertical or horizontal line (Flyvbjerg, 2006). But, cases present human interaction which can project, diverge in many different ways. Thus, exposure to case studies builds human experience and learning (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The phenomenological approach echoes the essence of the qualitative constructionist theory (Avis, 1995).

The constructivist theory argues that all reality has meaning which is a construction of human interaction (Avis, 1995). This means that a case study researcher is involved in the process of reality construction. Thus, the case study researcher can write the case constructing another reality.

The reality of the researcher can be different from that of the audience and that of the researched. But, every reality construction represents subjective meanings. In case study research "subjective knowledge is a myth" (Avis, 1995: 1207). Hence case study research: …challenges the quantitative researcher's [modernist] idea of a single, transcendent meaning of reality and the importance of the search for empirical patterns that correspond to and represent ultimate meaning [truth] (Reed, 1995: 71).

Thus, the phenomenological approach places case study research within the scientific paradigm of realism (Lincoln and Guba, 1994). The researchers explain that a case moves from the particular to the general. They further elaborate that, when a case has many solutions as it depicts one story (Lincoln and Guba, 1984; Perry, 1998). Thus, they conclude that a case is descriptive and biased. But, on the other hand researchers Hunt (1991) and Parkhe (1993) argue that cases are the study of "observable" phenomena, and therefore fall into the realm of objective research. Hunt further states that cases are not prescriptive (Hunt, 1991). Cases do not provide an answer or the solution to the problem, but encourage readers and researchers to probe and think further to propose suitable appropriate answers. Thus the focus is on "how do" rather than on "how should" (Hunt, 1991). Hence, case study utilizes the scientific paradigm of realism with an emphasis on the induction research methodology.

Researchers such as Hunt (1991), Leplin (1986), and Tskouas (1989) state that case study research does not follow a pure induction methodology. It embraces the scientific paradigm of positivism. Cases represent a mix of induction and deduction methodologies (Perry, 1998). On one hand cases have a narrative descriptive quality which takes support from pure induction methods (Perry, 1998; Mishler, 1986; Parkhe, 1993). Cases, in this respect describe "unobservable" phenomena, and their report is dependent on the biased narrative of the storyteller (Hunt, 199: 282). At the same time, a more appropriate paradigm is realism which advocates a deductive-based approach to cases. According to Yin...
(1994) there are essentially two forms of cases which fall into two distinct paradigms. Yin states that descriptive cases are positivist based, while exploratory cases which further knowledge and human learning adopt a realistic scientific paradigm (Yin, 1994; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Researcher Richards further clarifies that cases are a mix of prior theory and newly compiled theory emerging from the raw data (Richards, 1993: 40). Richards explains that case research cannot be value free and have a single conclusion or "truth." He says that case research is subjective and objective at the same time. This means that a case study researcher, or reader cannot approach a case without any "prior theory in mind" (Richards, 1993: 40).

Case study research also falls within the paradigm of qualitative narrative analysis (Mishler, 1986). The basic premise of this argument holds that individuals develop and create constructions of reality and, make sense of meaning and their world by telling and listening to stories (Ricoeur, 1981; Smith, 1981; White, 1981; Connelly and Clandinin, 1986, 1990; Sacks, 1986, 1992; Riessman, 1990, 1991, 1993; Bruner, 1991; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Wiltshire, 1995). Case studies are steeped in the ethnographic tradition. The researcher observes an event, or is an active participant in the event. Case study research does not restrict the researcher to the role of an observer and interviewer. Hence, case studies can be autobiographical in nature filled with rich description and dialogue. The listener can take any perspective and create any construction. The ultimate goal of the case study is to make the audience think and become critical enquirers and reality constructivists (Atkinson, 1992; Mishler, 1979, 1986, 1990; Bailey, 1998).

**STORYTELLING IN THE CLASSROOM**

The story telling genre is becoming popular in lecture halls and classrooms of communication departments and colleges again (Cox, 2001). This is because ordinary lectures consisting of a monologue by an 'authority figure' do not mentally stimulate the audience (Kreps, 1984). Stories are a first person human account of what happened, how it happened and to whom it happened. It involves the audience as it calls upon the audience to resolve the crisis or problem with a theoretical rationale or explanation (Cox, 2001). In a nutshell, stories compel a listener to think critically (Cox, 2001).

Stories are illustrations of real life episodes and take on the form of cases. A case is a snapshot of human activity and crisis, with real characters, dialogues and a problem (Kreps, 1984). Some of the features of a typical case study include:

1. A case is a knowledge management learning tool of consultation, continuing education and memory.
2. A case study must incorporate elements and further the cause of course curriculum...
3. Case studies inspire students towards self thinking... case studies help students to integrate knowledge holistically and expand knowledge
4. Case studies help the student to understand critical and complex real life behavior... (Cox, 2001: 863).

Case studies are used to learn how to effectively apply communication theory to actual situations. The emphasis is on a message and action centered perspective. A student analyzing a case must first understand the situation – what is going on – who is the main character. The student must recognize and identify the problem and address the issue with relevant strategies pertaining to the academic theory and literature (Schnelle, 1967; Mier, 1982). The reader should experience the emotion and mental trauma of the protagonist and grapple with dilemmas as if they were personal. And when the dilemma is solved the reader should feel relieved. That is the primary focus of the case study method – the audience has to have a 'feel good' experience at the end of the discussion. Development of knowledge base and critical thinking is a necessary by product – something that has to happen for the achievement of the solution (Mier, 1982).

A typical case study must incorporate rich background information which provides the setting for further action and behavior. This background should provide the student with appropriate clues as to why the protagonist is facing a problem (Kreps, 1984). There should be dialogue between the characters in the story. It should be as realistic as possible providing background information about the characters – their education, personalities. The listener should be able to visualize these characters from the description in the case. The most enriching cases describe – show and not tell – "the processes by which actions take place" (Ulrich, 1953: 31).

A good case is a vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced up to in real life situations. It is the anchor on academic flights of speculation. It is the record of complex situations that must be literally pulled apart and put again before the situations can be understood (Lawrence, 1953: 215).

A case study also provides many pedagogical benefits to the instructor and student (Mier, 1982). It clarifies the role, function and usage of theory in a professional workplace – how someone can use theory to effectively resolve workplace problems. Its varied dimensions include:

(a) Help formulate key concepts introduced in textbook and readings.
(b) Help reinforce key concepts covered in textbooks and readings, visual presentations and films through application.
Students are apt to remember and engage in continuous learning if they learn by active participation (Mier, 1982). Knowledge learned through passive participation is bound to reside in short term memory. This limits a student’s ability to analyze and comprehend situations and theories (Mier, 1982). It is crucial to select appropriate case material which reflects course information and explains important appropriate theories. It is the responsibility of the instructor to present the story in an engaging fashion with appropriate usage of visual aids, audio and role play exercises (Kreps, 1984). The main attraction of the case study method is the active participation of the audience. This means that the listener should be physically and mentally involved in the case (Kreps, 1984). Instructors often use the exercise of role play where students are given roles of the characters in the case. The students then engage in dialogue and action and can experience the crisis unfolding. This provides a further insight into the situation and helps them to develop critical thinking (Kreps, 1984). Case method teaching is a highly beneficial learning and teaching tool as:

(a) Provides a satisfying learning opportunity because it combines two essentials – realism and participation
(b) Provides opportunities for the development of social skills; of respect for the opinion of others; of effective participation in a group; an improved understanding of why people act the way they do.
(c) Bridging the gap between knowledge and skills.
(d) Acquaints individuals with the elusiveness of wisdom and truth and the complexities of administrative situations.
(e) Provide opportunities for effective role playing, in which a role player can see himself/herself as others see him/her.
(f) Offers experiences, in which people in varying degrees learn to modify or get rid of some of their prejudices because they must take into account the different views presented (Schmidt and Lipstreu, 1975: 2).

It is the responsibility of an instructor to create a conducive class environment for case study teaching and learning (Glover and Hower, 1953). A student should not hesitate to ask questions, clarify doubts and think aloud.

This means a permissive atmosphere in which they (students) feel free to put forth their ideas and questions without the instructor reacting in the form of rejection, derision, blame or authoritarian injunctions to think along other lines preferred by the instructor at that moment. This free atmosphere will be fostered if the instructor makes up his mind to hear and try to understand what students have to say and encourages others to do the same (Glover and Hower, 1953: 14). It is essential to develop a supportive class atmosphere of communication, non-judgmental behavior, cooperation, empathy and spontaneity. These factors help the student experience first-hand the workplace environment envisioned in the case (Gibb, 1961).

After reading and discussing the case in-depth in class, a student must be able to successfully answer the case questions. Case analysis represents the outcome of the comprehension and explanation process (Kreps, 1984). A typical case analysis must comprise of three primary parts:

(a) The opening problem identification statement.
(b) Problem analysis.
(c) Recommendations or solution.

A case analysis report must be systematic, logically organized, be realistic, well researched and, have a theory base (Bernthal, 1975).

Case studies have the power and ability to engage every type of student: the kinesthetic student learns best through case studies, by getting physically involved in the case study activities. The tactual learners find the case study method most appropriate as it engages the emotional ego. In short the tactual learner identifies with the verbal exchanges and drama of the case study. The case study method is apt for the auditory learners who are able to establish, identify and understand complex relationships, concepts, ideas and theories during discussion. Visual learners also benefit from this method. This method gives them (visual learners) the opportunity to see in person the problem; the unfolding of events. Class activities such as role playing and games allow them to see how theory can be used to address an issue (Kosa, 2008). Case studies are usually used to introduce a new topic, concept or theory. Cases disguise challenging theories and dry language and make learning a fun and interesting experience. “Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember but Involve me and I will understand and remember forever” (Kosa, 2008: 45).

APPLIED DISCIPLINES: ROLE OF CASES

Contemporary teaching methods in the academic field of communication are narrow (Robbins, 1975). The emphasis is on teaching students “what to do” rather than “how and why to do it” (Robbins, 1975). In other words, educators are confining students to the ‘novice’ level of competency and comprehension. Novice teaching methods include textual analysis and printed notes by the teacher and the formal, traditional lecture. This method is based on the assumption that students learn “best when someone else tells them what to do” (Robbins, 1975: 38).
Thus, students spend time reading, listening to an instructor and taking notes. The instructor decides when and what students should learn and periodically evaluates their level of knowledge (Robbins, 1975).

Here, students do not engage in critical thinking, logical and symbolic organization of academic content. They simply follow what is presented to them, read and verbalize it without understanding its value, importance and meaning (Cascio, 1991). There is minimal student-teacher interaction resulting in a failure to organize relevant thoughts and concepts for use in future situations.

In addition, this passive method of teaching does not encourage “students’ abilities of discovery, problem solving, and collaboration with peers to formulate discussion thoughts and ideas (Reich, 1991). The novice method fails to facilitate and teach students to solve problems with the use of related theory (Digman, 1995). The traditional novice stifles competency building leaving the graduate communication student unfit for professional work in the real world (Digman, 1995).

Applied communication disciplines are usually taught by the ‘craftsman’ method or, the workshop method. The focus is to train students to fit into the professional field. Here again, the emphasis is on ‘doing something’ rather than on ‘understanding the how and why of a situation or process” (Robbins, 1975). Students write assignments, theses, produce documentaries, write copy and advertising text, business communication memorandums and letters to display and prove their declarative and procedural knowledge (Robbins, 1975; Blanchard and Thacker, 2003). However these activities fail to teach the student to understand how and why he/ she is doing that activity. Workshop method develops craftsmanship or expertise in doing activities (Robbins, 1975). But students need to learn more to be able to function as communication practitioners.

Current communication academics are slowly making the transition towards the ‘expert’ method of teaching. Instructors have realized that they need to broaden the focus of their teaching and make it relevant to real life. The ‘expert’ method of teaching equips students to:

(a) Be able to examine a real life situation and discover communication problems and opportunities inherent in it.
(b) Be able to research the communication environment he/ she is a part of and critically study diverse aspects of the audience, media and technology including organizational constraints placed by them.
(c) Should be able to formulate communication goals, targets and objectives.
(d) Should be able to evaluate alternative communication paradigms, theories and strategies to achieve his/ her objectives.
(e) Should be able to engage in a high level of critical thought and logical cognitive organization (Robbins, 1975: 38).

Thus, the expert method of teaching argues for the holistic competency development of the communication student. This method takes the form of case study teaching or storytelling in a communication classroom. However, there is a definite lack of empirical research detailing the benefits and limitations of case study teaching. Questions such as the number and names of communication sub-fields currently using this method including the rate of success has to be empirically investigated. Case study methods are being used in contemporary classrooms of business, education, information technology, organizational communication, and mechanical engineering (McDade, 1995). The aim of such applied disciplines, explains McDade (1995) and Gerring (2004) is to identify possible workplace problems in a realistic paradigm, and offer feasible solutions. Applied academic disciplines require students to think creatively, analyze and be critical thinkers, and be cognitive categorical decision-makers (Robbins, 1974; Gerring, 2004). This means that students of applied disciplines have to move beyond the "craftsman" stage and acquire expertise in the field (Gerring, 2004).

Academic fields such as business marketing, financial management, nursing, accounting, research and program evaluation, abnormal and industrial psychology, counseling psychology, information technology, architectural design, instructional design, and mechanical engineering are some of the contemporary academic users of case studies.

However, applied communication disciplines such as media theory and law, advertising, public relations, and research methods do not use this method as an official classroom methodology for imparting knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Given the critical link and influence on human learning, researchers McDade (1995) and Kosa (2008) opine that the explicit lack of case study as a viable classroom teaching method in applied communication disciplines is astonishing. McDade points out cases are a way of sustaining a student's interest as they encourage students to think and analyze, make associations and draw possible conclusions. Cases help students to remain focused on the issue, and develop a working knowledge of the feasibility of textual fact in the "real" world (McDade, 1995: 10). This is crucial for applied communication disciplines because as the name suggests, the aim of such disciplines is to equip students to apply classroom knowledge in the workplace (Kosa, 2008).

LEARNING BY READING A STORY

This paper is a personal observation of my experience of learning about a qualitative communication research method through a case study rather, than systematic empirical research into the practice of case study as a teaching and learning tool. I am a communication
graduate student at a large mid-western university. In my third semester, that is, Fall 2009 I had to enroll for a research methods class. This class, 501: Qualitative Research Methods is a core course and has to be taken by every graduate student. The class, designed to be a conference class for a maximum of 15 students, is offered every Fall as an evening class from 6 p.m. to half past eight. The class follows the traditional lecture format with additional class readings and assignments on various research methods, paradigms, concepts, theories, traditions and practices. Outcome evaluations done at the end of the semester have a research and a written examination component. Students have to submit an original piece of research and take an examination to pass the course.

In fall 2009, the Qualitative Research Methods class was scheduled on Monday evenings. It was a big class of 22 students which was more than the designated number. There were two course texts and a number of additional readings and assignments. The class was due for two lectures on participant observation in the month of October. And I was not looking forward to it. It would be the same old lecture where my classmates and I would sit with our heads resting on our elbows listening to a monotonous monologue by the professor. There would be hushed chatter and a couple of yawns. The professor would give the class a ten minute break and my classmates and I would rush into the corridor thankful to escape the ordeal. Some of us would stretch our legs while others would drink water and eat chips from the vending machine.

Then the class would return to the conference room. The door would close and then it would be time to catch a few winks before the class would end at precisely half past eight. Perhaps the professor would call attention to the sleeping class by giving a written assignment.

It would be exactly like that, I thought, entering the room at precisely six p.m. and the class began. I stifled a yawn and opened my text. There was a flipping of pages as everyone seemed to be counting page numbers of the text. The Professor sat down and said,

“Another boring class…”

I sat down in my designated chair and waited for the professor idly doodling on my notepad. The Professor entered the room at precisely six p.m. and the class began. I stifled a yawn and opened my text. There was a flipping of pages as everyone seemed to be counting page numbers of the text. The Professor sat down and said,

“We are supposed to discuss participant observation tonight but I am not going to give a lecture and you are not going to take notes. Instead you are going to read a story…”

I sat up – a story… that was different.

The chatter had stopped. My neighbor put away his mobile … She handed the class a thick article and said:

“That's it for this evening. Let me take your attendance and you can go … read the story at home…”

I had wrongly assumed that it would be the same old lecture format but instead things had taken a different turn. The class had been saddled with a story. I put the article in my bag and left class.

I went home, threw my bag on the floor and switched on the television. I did not even glance at the story that night. I did not look at it the next morning. It was during the weekend I thought about it. I had finished all my assignments for the coming week and was sitting idle. And I thought, why not read the story? It is a story after all...

I searched for the article. I found it and started reading – Street Corner Society by William F. Whyte (Whyte, 1983). After the first page I did not want to put it down – I wanted to know more. And so I kept on reading the story – the story of a Harvard doctoral student, William Foote Whyte, who decides to do his PhD research about the housing situation in slums. The story took me on a journey about his experiences, emotional encounters, interactions and thoughts during his stay in the slums of Cornerville.

I learn best when the reading material involves drama and emotion. I need to feel a part of the literature presented to me in order to identify, understand and critically analyze its various dimensions. Whyte's story managed to engage me at an emotional level. After reading the first page I felt sorry for Whyte, the poor PhD student. I am also a student, and know how difficult it is to live on a student salary. The reading material had already got me hooked and involved with the main character. I wanted to know how Whyte with his financial problems was going to do a comprehensive research study.

I had my text nearby in case I needed to consult it about methodological terms and concepts. After all, Whyte's article was only a story. I was in for a delightful surprise. I didn’t need to refer to my text at all. Whyte's article showed me everything. The paper was a combination of realism and my interaction with it. It depicted a journey of Whyte which was believable and humorous. By the time I finished the article, I knew everything about the qualitative research method of participant observation – the theory, pitfalls and validity, reliability concerns. And I had not read the textbook. I had just read the story of Whyte and understood, enjoyed his emotional rollercoaster ride in Cornerville. I lived through the entire process of data collection with Whyte, the protagonist of the story. I was there with him when he befriended his gatekeeper, Doc, who later became his source for information. I was at the edge of my seat when Whyte went on a drinking spree and indulged in illegal activities to fit in with the slum members – I grappled with his
mental dilemma of being objective and neutral as compared to becoming involved to lose perspective and become biased.

The following week in class – the last class on participant observation method – I found myself actively discussing and participating in a discussion on the method. Whyte’s article had successfully bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application of that knowledge in the field for us. We all saw and understood how scientific knowledge was shaped by administrative concerns. In this case, we identified Whyte’s doctoral grant funding committee as the primary stakeholders. Whyte was “forced” to choose the slum of Cornerville for his research as his finances controlled by the doctoral funding committee dictated it. Thus, Whyte’s study taught us that all scientific research has to be conducted within administrative constraints.

We were questioning each other, and encouraging a regular flow of interaction. Here, I must mention that my instructor made it possible for us to exchange ideas, debate and argue about research issues of reliability and validity. She created an open and informal classroom setting, where each one of us felt comfortable to discuss, and critically think. We developed respect for each other as individuals and students. This active participation, I am sure, will serve all of us in good stead when we work with diverse people in the workplace. In addition, dreary research issues of gate-keeping, participant observation, and field notes came alive. We engaged in a short skit immersing ourselves in the various characters in Whyte’s article. Someone became Doc, the gatekeeper, a few others enacted roles of the doctoral grant funding committee, and someone took up the role of Whyte. The students playing the roles kept changing, as all of us took turns.

The rest of the class was the audience. This role playing made us critically comprehend, sympathize, and also come up with preventive solutions. Each one us was able to see what Whyte was faced with – his research dilemmas, his mental tussle between objectivity and subjectivity—should he join the residents of Cornerville on their drinking binge or, should he refrain from becoming one of them and remain a fly on the wall? Similarly, the audience as well as the actors could understand Doc’s dilemma —should he betray his longtime friends and include a stranger among them on false pretenses, or should he tell the truth? Role playing also made us appreciate the storytelling narrative enquiry inherent in case studies. We realized that there is no “single” truth, but what we learn builds towards our knowledge of understanding academic phenomena, and human endeavor to uncover it.

At the end of the class, we came out feeling excited and refreshed. We felt happy for Whyte as by now Whyte had become an extension of our personal selves. We were personally involved in his successes and failures, and experienced a sense of relief and joy when Whyte’s research yielded successful results. For the first time we had moved beyond the “novice” method of learning where we just read what was given to us, repeated it and listened to a lecture. We had become participants in this lecture. We had shaped, influenced our instruction, and learned the material with the help of a story.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you professor for helping me discover, learn, comprehend the method of participant observation.

REFERENCES


