Happy Accidents:

Cases as Opportunities for Teacher Learning

by

Judith H. Shulman
WestEd
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

ABSTRACT

This paper explores opportunities for learning when teachers use case-based teaching methods to take the time to step back, analyze, reflect on, and learn from their experience within a community of learners. Frst, we examined what teachers learned from going through an intensive, collaborative case writing experience, and how they used their increased knowledge and understanding to make changes both in their own classrooms as well as in district policies. We then explored how their cases were used to provide opportunities for others to learn from their experience in equally powerful and significant ways. We conclude with a comparison of the narrative case with other forms of methods that use video or emphasize the crafting and teaching of a single lesson, and some implications for case use in teacher education.

Happy Accidents: Cases as Opportunities for Teacher Learning

Judith H. Shulman, WestEd

What makes text-based narrative cases and our pedagogies of case development and case-based teaching educative for teachers? What do teacher-authors learn as they undertake a case development experience? What can other educators learn from analyzing and discussing these cases? And what are some of the similarities and differences between learning from narrative cases and learning from other strategies of building upon and transforming records of practice? These are the questions that will be addressed in this paper. But first we might listen to one of those teacher-case writers, Diane Kepner, speak for herself as she describes the experience of crafting a narrative case based on her own teaching.

> …*The process of reframing my personal experience into something that could be useful to others forced me to consider seemingly isolated incidents as part of larger, more fundamental issues. At first, I was annoyed with some of the probing questions that Judy and others asked; the answers seemed obvious to me. But as I struggled to articulate those answers and make them intelligible to others, they became insufficient. I found myself digging more and more deeply into a nest of previously unexamined assumptions than I would have otherwise…*
>
> *I think that my current reflections about teaching are more purposeful and less self-indulgent. Now as I make notes about events within my classroom, I find myself reframing those experiences around central questions and issues with broad implications. One mental strategy has been to ask myself, "If this were a case, what would it be a case of? What questions need to be asked? What would others see here that I'm overlooking? Through this rethinking, I am currently trying to tease out some significant issues for more intensive investigation.* (Shulman & Kepner, 1999, p. 106)

The above statement, written by a veteran teacher who contributed to our casebook on groupwork 18 months after she completed her case, is representative of what many case writers say after working on a case development project. In a paper I wrote subsequently, I examined the many surprises that Diane encountered, both as she wrote her case and how it stuck with her afterwards. My hunch is that Diane might not say that her experience was "happy" during the process of case writing—it was sometimes painful to face some of the things she learned while

1

writing her narrative. But in hindsight, she's a strong advocate for the power of the process, because it provided her an opportunity to learn things about herself and her practice that she probably never would have learned without taking the time to do it.

First, I will set the context for our work and explain what we mean by a "case." Then, with a focus on our pedagogies of case development and case teaching, I will examine what teachers can learn during case writing and case discussion experiences—giving some examples and telling a few stories—and then compare what can be learned from this kind of case-based experience with what can be learned from other types of cases, specifically video records of practice (Ball, 2002) and lesson study (Lewis, 2002). I will conclude with some implications of this work for teacher education and professional development.

During the past 20 years, cases have enjoyed increasing popularity (L. Shulman, 1987, 1996; J. Shulman, 1992; Sykes & Bird, 1992; Merseth, 1995; Barnett, 1998) and are viewed as a way to bridge the abstract nature of principles and teaching standards to classroom practice (L. Shulman, 1996; Bliss & Mazur, 1997; J. Shulman et al., 2002). Because they tell vivid, often moving stories, cases give life to abstract principles and standards, and are more likely to be remembered. Several casebooks have been published on a variety of themes (e.g., J. Shulman & Mesa Bains, 1993; J. Shulman, Lotan, & Whitcomb, 1998; J. Shulman, Whittaker, & Lew, 2002; Kleinfeld, 1993; Wassermann, 1993), and a growing number of researchers have studied the impact of case writing (Whitcomb, 1997; Shulman & Kepner, 1999; Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, in press) and case-based teaching (Shulman, J. 1996; Barnett & Tyson, 1999; Lundeberg, Levin, & Harrington, 1999) on teacher's practices.

Our work with case writers draws from two traditions. First, we are influenced by Jerome Bruner, who distinguishes between paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing. The former takes the form of principles, which is the kind of knowledge that social scientists generate from their research. But teachers know that principles alone do not inform good teaching. Their knowledge is more situated and often takes the form of good stories, which they can compare

2

and, contrast in their search for consequential instructional strategies for their students. Teachers tell one another stories all the time. But writing them down provides opportunities for teachers to dig much more deeply and analytically into their own experience, as well as to leave a legacy so that others can learn from both their experience and their reflections.

Our cases are also rooted in the tradition of business school cases (Christensen, Garvin, & Sweet, 1991), which are researched-based, problem-focused narratives of authentic events, crafted to stimulate analysis and discussion about the kinds of problems that business school students are likely to face when they graduate. In contrast to most business school cases, which are written by professional case writers or academicians, however, ours are written by teachers who engage in a guided, collaborative developmental process. In earlier writings, I have argued that these cases are research-based as well, but the research is retrospective and investigated by the case writers themselves as they reconstruct and reconstitute their experiences as insiders (Shulman, 1991; Shulman & Kepner, 1999). In this paper, I look deeper into the methods of case development and use, focusing on what we learned from our newest casebook, *Using Assessments to Teach for Understanding,* as a case in point.

What is a Teaching Case?

The cases that we publish are not simply stories that a teacher might tell. They are crafted into compelling narratives, situated in an event or series of events that unfold over time. They have a plot that is problem-focused with some dramatic tension that must be relieved. They are embedded with many problems that can be framed and analyzed from various perspectives, and they include the thoughts and feelings of the teacher-writers as they describe the accounts. The cases also include reflective comments by the author that raise questions about what they may do differently in the future.

All stories are not cases. To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim that it is a "case of something" or an instance of a larger class (L. Shulman, 1986, p. 11). Asking, "What is this a case of?" is central to our collaborative inquiry with the teacher-authors. Through an

iterative process, we develop a shared understanding of the big ideas and essential questions of the case. This helps an author select which details are necessary in the narrative and which ones are irrelevant.

Pedagogy of Case Development

What are our methods for supporting teachers to write cases? How do we create a learning community safe enough for teachers to write about dilemmas and challenges in their classrooms? I use the term "safe" because the case writing experience is often the first time that teachers make their teaching public to their peers. And since we ask teachers to focus on the *surprises* that occur in their classrooms rather than their celebrations, it can be quite threatening. But our goal is to make such surprises *opportunities for learning*, rather than occasions to avoid.

Recently I wrote a methodological note on our pedagogy case development for our new assessment casebook (Shulman, Whittaker, & Lew, 2002) that describes in detail what our methods entailed. Here it's important to note that we begin any new project with a thematic analysis of the generative topics that serve as the focus of a particular set of cases, whether they are published in a casebook, an assignment in a teacher preparation program, or activity for a professional development seminar. For the assessment casebook, they are part of a set of guidelines that accompanies the book. Examples include: designing, using, and interpreting assessments that capture student learning; incorporating assessment into instruction; and using assessment tools for grading.

Our work with teachers begins first with an analysis of these topics, and then an examination of some existing cases—through case discussion and analysis of the narrative elements—so prospective case writers get a sense of what a "teaching case" is. This is followed by an iterative set of writing activities with collaborative feedback after each event over a period of several months. Several researchers (Whitcomb, 1997; Shulman & Kepner, 1999; Hammerness

& Darling-Hammond, in press[1]) suggest that teacher learning occurs during each part of the process and gets deeper through each revision. Thus, a teacher-written narrative case is far from an unmediated record of classroom life. Instead, it is a carefully crafted, interpretive transformation of a first-person experience into an intentional account, often enriched by artifacts of teacher and student work. Let's explore how this process plays out by looking at one case writer's experience.

Susan's Case: A Case in Point:

Susan Schultz's case, "Exploring Alternative Assessment," is an interesting example of how the first draft of her case evolved into a narrative with artifacts that provided many more opportunities for analysis and entry points for discussion than had been originally anticipated. In her first draft, Susan, a 7-year veteran chemistry teacher who had recently taken a seminar on a new form of instruction using groupwork, recounts how she decided to depart from her traditional approaches of teaching and develop a lesson on mass and density that would incorporate the techniques she had learned. Her goal was to provide an opportunity for students to *discover* that all substances have a specific density and that density is the ratio of mass to volume for any substance. Instead of using the lecture she usually gave for this lesson, she created a 4-day unit that included a combination of four small group tasks—each of which had a different hypothesis to test out—and a scientific convention during which each group presented its result. At the end of the series of lessons, Susan vacillated between excitement at seeing her students solving problems in more meaningful ways, and concern that she had already spent four class periods on a topic that usually took one period. So she decided to give them the quiz she had always used, and then proceed with the chapter. But when she discovered that the students didn't do any better than students from previous years, she was "crushed"; she "really thought the students had

---

[1] Karen Hammerness also has a Web site that illustrates how learning by students in the Stanford Teacher Education Program is enriched through iterative case drafts (see "Learning from Cases," http://km12.carnegiefoundation.org/users/khammerness).

grasped the concept of density and could apply it. The next day, when asked why the quiz was so difficult, several students said that the test didn't give them an opportunity to show what they had learned; one said, "It was all math; and I'm not good in math." At that point, she asked the students to develop their own questions, and then combined some of their open-ended questions (e.g., write a song or story that conveys the meaning of density) with some of the more traditional calculations into an alternative test. After grading the alternate quiz, she was delighted to see that their scores were better, but didn't understand why. This stimulated a discussion with a colleague, who told her that she's doing a disservice to her students in offering such non-traditional tests, "because they don't prepare students for standardized tests or what they will meet in college." The case ends with a range of questions about genres and purposes of assessments. In analyzing what this was a case of, it appeared to focus on the ramifications of using performance assessments with a subtext of some curricular concerns about using groupwork.

During a conference on Susan's draft with one of the editors and four other case writers, there was an active discussion about the pros and cons of performance assessments. Susan was asked to incorporate as artifacts into her next draft the assignment sheets for each of the small groups and copies of both tests. We wanted to see if we could figure out *why* students did better on the second test. This became clear in her second draft. When the editors compared the group assignments to her first assessment, we found that there was no alignment between these activities and the test. During the group activities, students responded to open-ended questions and were never asked to use the kind of algorithms that were on the quiz. So it wasn't surprising that the students' scores on her original quiz weren't higher.

Suddenly the case became "of" many more things than was first anticipated. We could envision a case discussion that would provide opportunities for facilitators to examine such things as the role of assessment in curriculum planning and the importance of aligning instruction and assessment as well as the initial focus on performance versus traditional forms of assessments.

We asked Susan to clarify some details in the case that would enable subsequent learners to dig into these issues.

The case raised many questions for Susan during her case writing experience. Though she was reputed to be an excellent teacher, she had never thought about the role of assessment in curriculum planning or about the importance of aligning her instruction with assessment. Driven by these and other questions, Susan subsequently applied to a doctoral program and worked on projects that focused on assessment.

Teacher Learning From Case Writing

Though most of our teachers who go through a case development process don't end up in doctoral programs, our data suggests that all the teachers benefit from these collaborative case writing experiences. Considering "what is this a case of," focusing on breakdowns in the classroom, and developing a case for an audience, are particularly powerful catalysts for professional growth. But never has the power of the process been more dramatically evident than with the group of teachers who contributed to the recent assessment casebook. Six months after they had completed their cases, *all* of the teachers said that the case writing process had a profound impact on their professional lives. In a videotaped debriefing session, they reported many examples of instructional changes they had made as a result of their experiences. These include:

- ♦ examining the alignment between student assignments and assessments;
- ♦ revising classroom assessments;
- ♦ influencing change in district assessments;
- ♦ revising vague and incomplete rubrics;
- ♦ involving students in both their own assessment and the development of new assessments;

♦ dividing instructional methods into smaller parts so students can more readily understand concepts and tasks;

♦ encouraging students to assess one another (e.g., using running records during paired oral reading); and

♦ inaugurating out-of-school remedial classes for students reading below grade level.

During the debriefing session, we asked the teachers why this process prompted such a profound learning experience. Among the reasons they gave were these:

1. **Time for focused reflection.** Like authors of previous casebooks, these teachers appreciated the time—away from the students—to meet with other teachers and reflect on, deliberate about, and analyze their cases. But unlike some previous experiences when we used the summer for writing, this time we began in December 1998, and were finished by the summer. All the teachers agreed that, although they were very busy with the pace of day-to-day teaching, it was important to have an opportunity to step back and reflect *in the midst* of their teaching, so they could immediately try new things and discuss what happened with their colleagues. As one teacher said, "Both the writing and discussion really helped us focus in-depth around an issue." Another said: "The whole process was important—writing and discussing. Sometimes it happened in a group, sometimes it happened by myself at the computer, or sometimes just with a partner. Having the in-depth focus is what's important, because we just don't take the time to learn from what we're doing; we just do it!"

2. **Questioning assumptions.** Many teachers looked at their assessment tools in different ways and began to question how and why they were using the assessments. "I really transformed the way I thought about assessment," one teacher said. "I started asking myself, 'What are my students teaching me about the way I'm teaching them?'" They focused more sharply on what they were measuring and why. One noted, "As I was trying to figure out what my case was about, and what I was doing and how I was assessing, I began to wonder: Is it to inspire

the kids? Is it to inform the kids? Is it to motivate the kids? What's the best way to report it?"

3. **Increased understanding and empowerment.** This kind of questioning led to increased understanding and empowerment. Many teachers began to see the usefulness of mandated assessments they had simply taken for granted, revising them to suit their needs. One teacher said, "For me it was like this light bulb that went on," and she and another case author began to revise their rubrics. Others took their cases to their colleagues and district administrators and became the catalysts for major changes in the assessment procedures. When asked why they felt so empowered, one said: "I think it's understanding ourselves and respecting ourselves as professionals. I know what I'm doing here; I know what my students need; and I'm going to make sure that I use something that I know will work and be helpful to me."

4. **Value of situated learning.** Many of the teachers talked about the value of situated learning and the opportunity to work on their own problems. As one said, "…there is no seminar or workshop that you could take that would be this valuable, because there's none that lets us figure out our specific needs and gives us a few days to work it out…It's like we created our own seminar that was specific to each one of us…"

5. **Link between theory and practice.** The question "What is this a case of?" was instrumental in helping the teachers select the classroom dilemma they wanted to deal with then craft their narratives into teaching cases. Noticing how similar themes popped up in several cases, they began to see how their individual stories made theoretical statements—their cases were instances of a larger class—and they participated in the development of a table that illustrated how thematic issues intersected the set of cases. As one teacher advisor talked about the themes she saw in both the advisor cases and her advisee's classrooms, she said: "I used to deal with survival issues with my teachers, one at a time. But this [experience] has helped me get thematic...[In helping one new teacher] I keep seeing threads going through her

9

teaching...it's had a huge, not just a ripple effect...a really big effect in the classroom, not

only with the work the students produced but with their behavior as well."

6. **Collaboration in a community of learners.** All of the teachers talked about the importance

    of working collaboratively with colleagues. Besides gaining insights into their own

    dilemmas, the teachers noted the importance of getting confirmation that others had similar

    problems. As one teacher said: "It was useful for me to hear people bringing up the same

    issues that I'm feeling over a specific topic (assessment)...and to be able to critique others and

    help them revise. It also helped me to see different perspectives, like the viewpoint of a

    teacher advisor helping new teachers." One of the advisors saw a parallel between her

    advisee's work with students and her own work with advisees. Other teachers described the

    significance of the questions that were posed during feedback sessions. As one said, "It was

    really helpful to me to have other people asking me questions that I wasn't asking

    myself...those kinds of questions challenged what I believe, you know, got me out of my

    box." [2]

After the debriefing session, we (the editors) asked ourselves: Why did this set of cases

appear to have such a consequential impact on these teacher-case writers? What was it about this

set of cases and this particular group of teachers that appeared to stimulate a larger proportion of

teachers reporting to making substantial changes in their classrooms?

We have some hypotheses for both questions. One is that many of the teachers came out

of the same teacher preparation program, which might have contributed to shared values and a

climate of trust. Perhaps more important, however, are some other possibilities. First, they were

all struggling with the challenges of high-stakes assessment and accountability, which gave the

topic of their cases a pressing immediacy. Second, all the teachers' depicted *current* challenges

---

[2] This section draws from the Preface of *Using Assessments to Teach for Understanding* (Shulman, Whittaker, & Lew, 2002).

and dilemmas in their cases, unlike previous case writers who often wrote about experiences that happened more remotely in the past.

There is a third hypothesis that may be the most appealing. In contrast to earlier casebooks, most of the narratives in this casebook are accompanied by artifacts (e.g., examples of classroom-based assignments and assessments, district- and classroom-based rubrics, and samples of student work), so subsequent readers can use original resources to analyze the case and not simply rely on the authors' testimonies. In her doctoral dissertation, Anna Richert (1987) found that the two most important determinants of the richness of reflection among teachers were the richness of artifacts and the availability of a partner in the process of recall and reflection. My impression is that our latest casebook, by combining an editorial partner in a community of teachers with an emphasis on physical artifacts of teaching and learning, may create the optimal conditions for teacher learning. Perhaps a "happy accident" for this group was that the artifacts— intended to help others' analyses—in fact contributed to the impact on the writers.

Teaching Knowledge: A Legacy for Others

In the previous section, we explored the powerful ways that case writing contributed to the case writers' learning about their practice. In most professional development situations, that would have been enough; the case writers demonstrated several ways in which their experience enabled them to make concrete changes in their own teaching. But these cases were not written merely as a tool to change the authors' own practice. They were researched and crafted to leave a legacy for others to learn from their experience, and thus constitute knowledge of teaching— reliable documentation of the practical knowledge that teachers acquire over time. These cases and others like them contribute to a small but growing effort to build a scholarship of teaching, so that future teachers will not have to reinvent the wheel and develop their own understandings from scratch.

The Pedagogy of Case-based Teaching

What is our pedagogy of case-based teaching? Our methods draw from the business school tradition of using case discussions to peel away the layers of a case. In short, our case discussions typically last at least an hour and have the following four parts:

1. *What's Going On* (identifying the important facts of the case)

2. *Analysis* (raising questions and issues, analyzing challenges from multiple perspectives, evaluating solutions proposed in the case)

3. *Action* (proposing alternate solutions, considering advantages and limitations of each, and short- and long-term consequences of each)

4. *What Is This a Case Of*? (creating generalizeable topics, principles)

Though we don't always stick to this linear pathway during our discussion—what *particular* avenue we take depends on our purpose for using the case—we make sure to take the necessary time to develop a shared understanding of the relevant facts of the case and analyze the questions and problems embedded in the case, before going to the action section. We do this because teachers are often prone to generating alternate solutions before taking the time to appropriately analyze what's involved in a particular problem. A good discussion leader will lead participants up and down the levels of abstraction, beginning with an analysis of the evidence in the case from multiple perspectives and evaluating proposed solutions, to generating alternate solutions and developing or testing principles. Ending a discussion with asking, "What is this a case of?" enables participants to connect a particular case to more generalizable ideas. In sum, our goal is to engage discussion participants in the same kinds of learning experiences that the case writers went through while creating their cases.

In seminars on case methods, we are often asked, "When is the best time to use cases, with neophytes or veterans?" Our response is that there is no optimal time to use cases; they can be used effectively in courses or professional development programs with *any* group of educators and at any time of their career; it's the quality of the discussion that will differ. Since veterans

and novices can draw from their experience during a case analysis, there is real potential that a series of case discussions can impact a teacher's practice (J. Shulman, 1996; Barnett, 1998; Barnett & Tyson, 1999; Lunsdeberg et al., 1999). But preservice teachers need the reality of the cases to test the theoretical knowledge that's prevalent in teacher preparation programs. When they participate in case discussions, they may make more informed decisions when they face similar problems in their own classrooms (Wilson, 1992).

Another common question is: "Should cases be used to *introduc*e theory or be scaffolded *by* theory?" Again, there is no general rule; it depends on one's purpose for using the case. I have often used Susan Schultz's case with preservice teachers as an introduction to the variety of ways that assessment *should* be considered, in contrast to the way assessment is traditionally used in classrooms. The discussion is a different experience, however, when it's scaffolded *by* theory, and teachers have opportunities to identify principles situated in practice. I have also used the INTASC standards as a theoretical frame for analyzing cases. This kind of analysis also helps teachers understand how standards interact and sometimes collide with one another, as happened in Susan's case.

Recently, Andrea Whittaker, from San Jose State University and co-editor on the assessment casebook, had two experiences which suggest that the clearer the lens into a case discussion, the greater the potential for participants to identify principles in practice. Andrea began using cases in her teacher education classes after working on our assessment casebook together, and often told me how important they were as an addition to her course. The first entails using Susan Schultz's case six weeks into her graduate course on assessment. Before discussing the case, students read articles and examined such topics as what makes a good assessment; the relationship between curriculum and assessment; and the role of reliability, validity, and practicality in developing assessments. During the case discussion, Andrea began by listing the issues and questions that students raised as she typically did, and then deviated from

the four-part discussion format by asking them to link these to the key concepts they had

discussed in previous classes. As she described the experience, she said:

> The conversation was amazing! I couldn't believe how they were relating the
> psychometric concepts we've discussed in previous classes to the concepts embedded in
> the case…. One of my main purposes of this class is to help teachers develop a solid
> rationale for their assessment practices. In order to have that rationale they must have the
> technical language, and be able to make an argument using that language to justify their
> assessment tools and how they implement them. This case discussion gave them a
> chance to practice using that technical language in a real teaching situation (interview,
> 10/31/01).

Andrea used the case one week before student papers were due, and maintained that this was the

best set of papers she had ever read, because "they could use the technical language appropriately

to justify their decisions."

Her second experience focused on how cases can be used to bridge theory and practice

with university faculty (Hutchings, 1993). On a recent retreat to prepare a framework for an

upcoming NCATE review, the San Jose State University education faculty wanted an opportunity

to have a deep analytical dialogue about "equity" and "excellence," but a few were concerned that

the discourse would diminish to "meaningless buzz words without identifying real instances of

the practice." To solve the dilemma, the dean asked a philosopher on the faculty to provide an

analysis of fairness and equity from a philosophical perspective, and asked Andrea to follow up

the presentation with a case discussion. The case she used was a poignant narrative that raises

questions about the role of assessment in teaching, especially when dealing with a special needs

student.

> …The impact was profound. Perhaps because of the initial analytical and philosophical
> presentation to teaching about fairness, the faculty engaged in a dialogue in deep and
> meaningful ways…and ended by drawing implications from the case that had
> implications across all departments (teacher preparation, administration, special
> education, technology and counseling)…It was the first time that I had seen our faculty
> engaged in a dialogue around a common text for the purpose of learning together (email
> message, 3/17/02).

Apparently, the dialogue continued long after the formal case discussion was completed, which is

one criterion of a successful case discussion. Faculty began sending email messages to one

another, trying out both frames "of" the case and how these frames might play out as a conceptual framework for the NCATE review.

The above examples of case use, which examine rich learning opportunities for the participants involved, highlight at least four ingredients that are necessary for a case discussion that fosters learning: 1) a case worth discussing, 2) a clear purpose and/or scaffolding for the discussion, 2) a skillful facilitator who probes and challenges teachers' thinking during the case analysis, and 4) an opportunity to see the particular case as an instance of a larger class or type of quandary that arises with some frequency in teaching situations (i.e., examining what this is a case of). Research and experience indicate that, if any one of these is missing, the discussion might diminish into an opinion swap, which, while interesting, may not generate new learning. In a worst-case scenario, a discussion may confirm previous stereotypes instead of opening windows for new insights (Shulman, 1996).

I mention these four ingredients because case methods represent a kind of pedagogy that's more time consuming to institute and difficult to teach well. Too often I have seen or read critical articles on case methods that suggest that cases do not stimulate rich discussions. But when I investigate the situation, I often find that either the cases used were too simplistic for substantive analysis or the case discussions were not scaffolded appropriately.

Implications for Teacher Education

In this paper, I have explored opportunities for learning when teachers use case-based teaching methods to take the time to step back, analyze, reflect on, and learn from their experience within a community of learners. First, we examined what teachers learned from going through an intensive, collaborative case writing experience, and how they used their increased knowledge and understanding to make changes both in their own classrooms as well as in district policies. We then explored how their cases were used to provide opportunities for others to learn from their experience in equally powerful and significant ways.

What are the unique features of this particular form of case method, and hence, of teachers learning from experience about teaching? Unlike other methods that use video or emphasize the crafting and teaching of a single lesson, narrative cases most often extend over quite long periods of time. Rarely does a single lesson serve as the context for a narrative case. Thus, although other genres of learning from practice like lesson study (Lewis, 2002) and records of practice (Ball, 2002) afford the teachers both the opportunity and the imperative to take a long view around the particulars of the episode under review, the "grain size" of the case is normally larger.

The teacher is the clear protagonist in narratives cases, as both agent and reflective narrator. The genre is autobiography rather than ethnography. This can be both a source of virtue and of limitation in such work.

Because the work is conducted in the first person, narrative cases tend to capture more of the emotionality, ambivalence, and personal response of the teacher than might other forms. We are seeing the events through the eyes of a teacher who is encouraged by the editor and the fellow teachers to express his or her motives, intentions, anxieties, and evaluations quite explicitly. Moreover, the writers are encouraged to write about surprises, shocks, disappointments, and other events where their intentions and their accomplishments were incongruent. As such, this form of narrative case is far more often a tale of difficulty and frustration rather than an account of a golden moment when everything fell into place and a "vision of the possible" was laid out inspirationally for the readers.

The narrative case is crafted, not individually but collectively, with the support and active coaching of both an editor and a group of fellow case writers. Where do the reflections and memories of the writer end and the reconstructions of the group begin? This question is impossible to answer for the narrative case, but I would propose that it is also puzzling for lesson study and video records of practice. Although the vivid availability of direct observation or

16

visual artifacts conveys a much firmer sense of objectivity, I suspect that much of that sense is illusory.

Once the narrative has been completed and has had its impact on both the writer and her immediate collegial group (though we recall that Diane kept learning from her case for years), it becomes community property (L. Shulman, 1993). A narrative case becomes an artifact for the stimulation of learning among other teachers, both practicing and potential. In this form, it can be used much like business school cases, but with one striking difference. The readers immediately grasp that the case has been written by another teacher, whose goals and dilemmas are identified with quite readily by other teachers. These teachers can then insert themselves into the same situation as the case writer and begin to ask themselves: What is this a case of? and Where might I have encountered (or be in the process of encountering) similar problems?

Narrative cases are the happy result of accidents, because the cases are rarely written about incidents or events that were planned or designed ahead of time. They are, in Bruner's apt phrase, the results of "vicissitudes of intention." Indeed, the words "case" and "chance" share the same etymological source. They exemplify the importance of learning from the accidents that occur when careful planning and design collide with the inevitable vagaries of lived experience. Narrative cases are teachers' ways of leaving behind accounts of such collisions, whose recounting serves to stimulate learning in both the writer and the readers.

I have neither an illusion nor a hope that case writing and case-based teaching could serve as a sufficient vehicle for educating teachers. But after more than 15 years of work with teachers in writing such cases and of research in studying their impact, I am convinced that they can play a central role in any serious design of instruction for teacher education.

REFERENCES

Ball, D.L., & Cohen, R. (2002). *Using records of practice to create opportunities for learning.* Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Barnett, C. (1998). Mathematics teaching cases as a catalyst for informed strategic inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*(1), 81-93.

Barnett, C., & Tyson, P. (1999). Case methods and teacher change: Shifting authority to build autonomy. In M. Lundeberg, B. Levin, & H. Harrington (Eds.), *Who learns what from cases and how?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bliss, T., & Mazur, J. (1997). *How INTASC standards come alive through case studies.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Phoenix.

Christensen, C.R., Garvin, D.A., & Sweet, A. (Eds.). (1991). *Education for judgment: The artistry of discussion leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Hammerness, K. *Learning from cases*. [Website] http://km12.carnegiefoundation.org/users/khammerness. Menlo Park: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Hutchings, P. (1993). *Using cases to improve college teaching: A guide to more reflective practice*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Kleinfeld, J. (1989). *Teaching cases in cross-cultural education.* Fairbanks, AK: Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, College of Rural Alaska, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Lewis, C. (2002). *Lesson study: Teacher-led research on the "swiftly flowing river" of instruction.* Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Lundeberg, M.A., Levin, B.B., & Harrington, H.L. (1999). Who learns what from cases and how? The research base for teaching with cases. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Merseth, K. (1995). Cases and case methods in teacher education. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education.* New York: Macmillan.

Richert, A.E. (1987). *Reflex to reflection: Facilitating reflection in novice teachers.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.

Shulman, J.H. (1991, September/October). Revealing the mysteries of teacher-written cases: Opening the black box. *Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(4), 250-262.

Shulman, J.H. (Ed.). (1992). *Case methods in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Shulman, J.H. (1996). Tender feelings, hidden thoughts: Confronting bias, innocence, and racism through case discussions. In J. Colbert, P. Desberg, & K. Trimble (Eds.), *The case for education: Contemporary approaches for using case methods* (pp. 137-158). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Shulman, J.H., with Kepner, D. (1999). The editorial imperative: Responding to productive tensions between case writing and individual development. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 26*(1), 91-111.

Shulman, J.H., Lotan, R.A., & Whitcomb, J.A. (Eds.). (1998). *Groupwork in diverse classrooms: A casebook for educators*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Shulman, J., Whittaker, A., & Lew, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Using assessments in teaching for understanding: A casebook for educators*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Shulman, L.S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14.

Shulman, L.S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1), 1-22.

Shulman, L. S. (November, 1993). "Teaching as Community Property: Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude*." Change Magazine*, 6-7.

Shulman, L.S. (1996). Just in case: Reflections on learning from experience. In J. Colbert, P. Desberg, & K. Trimble (Eds.), *The case for education: Contemporary approaches for using case methods* (pp. 197-217). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Sykes, G., & Bird, T. (1992). Teacher education and the case idea. In G. Grant (Ed.), *Review of research in education* (pp. 457-521). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Wassermann, S. (1993). *Getting down to cases: Learning to teach with case studies*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Whitcomb, J. (1997). *The impact of case writing on teacher learning and professional development*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.

Wilson, S.M. (1992). A case concerning content: Using case studies to teach about subject matter. In J. H. Shulman (Ed.), *Case methods in teacher education* (pp. 64-89). New York: Teachers College Press.