

7 Genre Research in Academic Contexts

Complementing the largely theoretical perspectives discussed in Part 1 is an international body of empirical research on genre—systematic observations of genres within their settings of use—that has contributed to reconceptualizations of genre and our understanding of genre as a dynamic discursive formation and site for interaction. Research studies on genre—ranging from case studies of legal genres, to examination of the historical evolution of the experimental article, to participant-observer explorations of veterinary records—seek to describe how genres are learned and acquired, how genres evolve and change, and how genres function as discursive actions within particular social, historical, and cultural contexts. This chapter and the others in Part 2 survey research studies on genre that have sought to explore, empirically, how genres function as sites of interaction that enable access to, structure, and frame participants' actions within groups or organizational contexts. Aviva Freedman, in *Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond* (with Natasha Artemeva), captures this interactive relationship between theory and empirical data, noting that “the data flesh out and specify the theory, modifying, elaborating, and necessarily shaping it in the context of what is observed” (101-02). Working in relationship to theoretical perspectives on genre as a dynamic social action, empirical studies seek to test and contribute to theoretical assumptions by exploring the complex interplay between texts and their social contexts.

Further reflecting on the interaction between theoretical and empirical inquiries (and between social actions and individual actors), Charles Bazerman, in a recent methodological article, defines “theories of the middle range” or empirically grounded theories that grow out of historical research and “can build a systematic and principled picture of contemporary and future writing practices” (“Theories of the Middle Range” 302). Historical genre studies, because they are

grounded in broader social and cultural theories while simultaneously examining particular textual phenomena and individual processes, can mediate between the abstract and the particular. This historical research is exemplified by studies across a range of genres, from the scientific article (Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*, “How Natural Philosophers Can Cooperate”; Selzer; Gross, Harmon and Reidy), to letters (Barton and Hall), to business correspondence (Yates, *Control through Communication*), to economic discourse (McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics*) to political genres (Campbell and Jamieson, *Form and Genre; Deeds Done in Words*). Walking readers through his own processes of methodological reasoning and investigation in his rich and varied historical work, Bazerman describes how the balance of theoretical concepts and empirical details contributed to identification of different levels of research questions (from more “universal” questions to site-specific ones), to locating a strategic research site, to formulating a method of data gathering (locating archives and focusing a research corpus). Historical inquiry brings into interaction theoretical and empirical inquiry; thus, “theory and concepts are heuristics for finding and seeing things in the world; conversely, noticing what exists in the world is heuristic for conceptual development” (315).

With its focus on inquiry into communal literacy practices, historical research on genre is in dialogue with multiple types of inquiry, from sociological research to linguistic research to psychological or cognitive empirical work. Indeed, research studies from a genre framework have ranged from cognitive studies of genre acquisition and genre knowledge—such as Aviva Freedman’s work on the “felt sense” of genre—to linguistically-oriented work, such as Swales’ groundbreaking work on the rhetorical moves of the empirical research article (see Tardy and Swales for a further overview of genre research from linguistics, language and discourse studies). While more recent studies examine the social contexts shaping genres and the social actions that genres enable, Bazerman has recently called for “a renewed sociocognitive research program in writing to learn” (“Genre and Cognitive Development” 287). Indeed, genre research forms a rich site for interdisciplinarity, with Amy Devitt arguing, in her conclusion to *Writing Genres*, that further research on genre is needed, including cognitive studies, historical studies, and collaborative research between sociologists and genre theorists (218). Joining this call, Bazerman argues for forging links in our research on genre with methods arising from

related fields and disciplines, such as discourse analysis and ethno-methodology (as we noted at the end of Chapter 5, genre research in Brazil has embodied such interdisciplinarity). Research that draws on multiple methods “holds much promise for drawing humanities’ understandings of the workings of language into relation with the social sciences’ understandings of human relations, behavior, and consciousness” (“The Life of Genre” 23). In this way, genre studies can benefit not only from research studies of how genres are learned, performed, and situated, but genre analysis itself can be used as a research methodology and “can play a major role in the current investigations into the communicative grounds of social order” (23).

Genre analysis, located between textually oriented and socio-cultural methods, enables a pluralistic methodology, integrating multiple methods and data sources in the study of genre. However, while genre analysis is a useful analytic approach for studying texts as meaningful social actions, Bazerman acknowledges the “methodological dilemma” of trying to “make sense out of the complexity, indeterminacy, and contextual multiplicity that a text presents us with” (321). Without access to the immediate evidence of the readers’ uptakes of a genre or to the immediate contexts in which genres are used, researchers often have to rely on their intuitions about a text, creating a related methodological challenge—the challenge of achieving a kind of critical distance or reflexivity and moving beyond a “‘naturalized’ user’s view of genres and activity systems to a more carefully researched, observed and analyzed knowledge” (“Speech Acts” 321). In addition, with the focus on regularized features of texts, genre analysis can limit our observations of the complexity and multiplicity of texts and the ways in which they differ and change. In order to address this methodological dilemma, Bazerman suggests employing a variety of methods when conducting genre analysis: 1) Examine less obvious patterns or features of texts; 2) Extend the sample to include a larger number and range of texts from different social and historical contexts; 3) Gather other people’s understanding of genres via interviews and observations; and 4) Conduct ethnographic research of how texts are used in social organizations—particularly within genre sets, genre systems, and activity systems (321-22, 326). The genre-based research studies surveyed in this chapter and the chapters that follow (Chapters 8 and 9), while by no means exhaustive, illustrate multiple methods for “gather[ing] information not just about the texts but about other people’s under-

standing of them” (325), beginning with a focus in this chapter on genre research in academic contexts.

RESEARCH ON GENRE LEARNING AND ACQUISITION IN ACADEMIC CONTEXTS

In a 1993 special issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*, Aviva Freedman illustrates well how empirical research is necessary in backing up theoretical and pedagogical claims and assumptions about genre. She introduces a key theoretical debate regarding the explicit teaching of genre and draws on research to support her claims, first taking up the Strong Hypothesis—that explicit teaching of genres is neither necessary nor productive since students acquire genre tacitly. Freedman cites an earlier large-scale research study she conducted (“Development in Story Writing”) in 1987, which examines the narrative structure in the writings of 7,500 students in grades 5, 8, and 12. Results indicated that students were able to perform a narrative structure without being taught the stages or structural organization. A “plausible interpretation,” argues Freedman, is that students learned to perform narrative genres through reading narratives or hearing stories told orally, leading her to conclude, “This schema was internalized, without evidence of any prior explicit teaching and was brought to bear as tacit, shaping knowledge in the course of their writing in the context of the elicited task” (“Show and Tell” 227). To further test this premise, Freedman devised an ethnographic study of students in an undergraduate class in law, a broader study that ultimately focused on the case studies of six students. Freedman and her research associates conducted in-class observations, weekly interviews with students, interviews with instructors, and analyses of students’ logs of law-related activities, notes, and drafts for all writing in the law course. Based on analysis of this data, they discovered that these six students produced distinctive subgenres of academic writing—lexically, syntactically, structurally, and rhetorically—despite the lack of explicit instruction. Freedman notes that in comparison to other academic writing produced by these same students, these essays “evinced a very distinct mode of argumentation” (“Learning to Write Again” 99). The students, however, consulted no models, were given no explicit instructions about writing legal essays, and made no attempt to formulate the rules underlying the genre in the course of drafting and revising. How,

then, did they acquire a new genre? According to Freedman's study, learners used the following model for acquisition:

Learners approach the task with a 'dimly felt sense' of the new genre they are attempting. They begin composing by focusing on the specific content to be embodied in this genre. In the course of the composing this 'dimly felt sense' of the genre is both given form and reshaped as a) this 'sense,' b) the composing processes, and c) the unfolding text interrelate and modify one another. Then, on the basis of external feedback (the grade assigned), the learners either confirm or modify their map of the genre. (101)

The felt sense is, as Freedman describes it, a generalized sense of academic discourse that is modified based on inferences writers made from writing assignments, feedback on assignments, class discussions, lectures, and readings. Students learned the genres, then, through active performance, and intuitively acquired new genres, making explicit methods unnecessary.

Despite her conclusion that "*Clearly, explicit teaching may not be necessary for the acquisition of even very sophisticated school genres*" ("Show and Tell" 230), Freedman grants that the research evidence from genres studies is "scanty and suggestive rather than conclusive" (241), and she poses a Restricted Hypothesis, which "does allow for certain limited conditions under which explicit teaching may enhance learning" (241). These conditions might include contextualized learning (where, for instance, students are reading the genres they will be asked to write) and engagement in an authentic task, where students are able to clearly see how genre is tied to social motive. But such instruction, according to Freedman, is dependent on the accuracy of the teacher's explicit knowledge of genre, the learning style of the student, and the time period between exposure to context and application of knowledge; thus, questions remain about the effectiveness of explicit teaching of genre. Freedman concludes by issuing a call for further research that will help answer some of the lingering issues and questions:

. . . [M]y presentation of the two hypotheses is intended to point to the necessity for further study. . . . Further research and further observation may be able to provide substantive evidence for one or the other of

these hypotheses. Certainly, experimental procedures can be designed to find out whether and to what degree the exemptions specified in the Restricted Hypothesis hold—and importantly, for whom. It is likely that different learning styles, different maturational stages, and (or) different socio-cultural experiences may require different teaching strategies. (245)

In response to Freedman (in the same 1993 issue of *RTE*), Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb cite earlier research studies that, while not specific to genre approaches, confirm the effectiveness of explicit teaching within contextualized learning (Hillocks) and the necessity of explicit teaching in secondary education (Fraser et al; Walberg). To support their “case for explicit teaching,” Williams and Colomb cite data from their educational research at the University of Chicago, which explored students’ perceptions of writing abilities in order to argue that students value and profit from explicit instruction. Their study examined 400 students enrolled in advanced academic and professional writing courses who received explicit teaching of the features of genres, including syntactic, lexical, discursive, and rhetorical features. Students saw as particularly valuable explicit teaching of problem formulation, introductions, organization, and verbs and nominalizations, and their perceived usefulness of these strategies corresponded with their evaluation of their writing abilities. Based on their findings, Williams and Colomb argue for explicit teaching of “prototypical features” or the central constitutive features of genres, which can help students gain access to knowledge of context:

When students practice explicit features *even before they are fully socialized*, they are compelled to focus on, perhaps even to generate the knowledge for those generic moves. When we learn social context, we are also learning its forms; but when we learn forms, we may also be learning their social contexts. Generic forms may be more generative than Freedman realizes. In any event, we have a chicken-and-egg problem that only research will unscramble. (262)

While Williams and Colomb posit that explicit teaching of generic forms may help students generate genre knowledge, their study is limited to a focus on how explicit teaching of generic forms leads to learning

of generic forms, rather than to the broader rhetorical understanding of genres as responses to situations. As a result, they call for more research to “unscramble” this interaction between explicit teaching and implicit learning and between generic patterns and social patterns. In her rejoinder to Williams and Colomb, Freedman acknowledges that learners participating in authentic contexts of communication can develop a genre awareness or raised consciousness of specific features that will, in turn, lead to acquisition. However, Freedman joins in the call for further research, ending her response to Williams and Colomb with an “Invitation to the Community”: “It should not be the task of the skeptics to argue against a pedagogic strategy but rather the work of the proponents to bring forward convincing research and theoretical evidence. . . . The relevant research and theory-building need to be undertaken” (278).

TAKING UP THE CALL FOR RESEARCH ON GENRE KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

Freedman’s call for further research on genre has been taken up by researchers over the past two decades who are interested in the question of how students acquire genre knowledge, how teachers can facilitate genre learning, and how this learning translates to performance. The question of what it means to learn genres has been central to researchers examining early childhood writing development. Contesting Freedman’s above claim that research on genre acquisition has been inconclusive, Marilyn Chapman notes that “research studies of young children’s writing have shown that learning genre is part of children’s literacy development” (“Situated, Social, Active” 472). In their comprehensive review of research studies on children’s genre knowledge, Carol Donovan and Laura Smolkin summarize the three major research questions addressed by research on children’s understanding of genre: 1) What is the nature of children’s genre knowledge and their developing understanding of genre? 2) In what ways do different tasks and other methodological choices reveal differences in children’s genre knowledge? and 3) How can teachers best support young children’s writing development in different genres? (135-36). In response to the first question, a large strand of research has focused on children’s ability to acquire and perform in narrative genres (Langer, *Children Reading and Writing*; Donovan, “Children’s Story Writing,”

“Children’s Development and Control”; Pappas, “Is Narrative ‘Primary?’”; Kamberelis and Bovino) or to transfer knowledge of narrative genres to informational or persuasive genres (Chapman, “The Emergence of Genres”; Donovan, “Children’s Development and Control”; Langer, “Reading, Writing, and Genre Development”; Troia and Graham). Other studies, in response to the third question, have focused on pedagogical approaches that support genre acquisition, such as reading or rereading genres (Pappas, “Young Children’s Strategies in Learning”), providing explicit genre instruction (Duke and Kays; Fitzgerald and Teasley), and situating approaches to teaching genre (Chapman, “Situated, Social, Active”). And in response to the second question, regarding methodological choices used to study children’s genre knowledge, Donovan and Smolkin argue that careful attention must be given to methods employed to study children’s processes of learning genres, particularly since the majority of studies on genre knowledge are descriptive and qualitative in nature.

Many studies of genre knowledge at all levels of education draw on Freedman’s model of genre acquisition as a basis for data-gathering, which was one of the first to propose multiple research methods: 1) exploring past and current readings of genres, 2) analyzing previous writing experiences, 3) collecting assignments from instructors, 4) observing talk about writing, or 5) analyzing class discussion. Drawing on these methods and data sources, researchers seek to more clearly define what Freedman describes as a “felt sense” or sense of genre, a recognition that students’ initial “broad schema for academic discourse”—their “sense of shape, structure, rhetorical stance, and thinking strategies”—must be modified when confronted with new genres in response to particular disciplines or assignments (“Learning to Write Again” 104).

At the University of Washington and the University of Tennessee, the authors of this book along with their research teams conducted a cross-institutional study to determine what types of genre knowledge student writers enter college with and the extent to which that prior knowledge helps or hinders their abilities to learn new academic discourse conventions. Drawing on research methods that explore modes of acquisition defined by Freedman (surveys that ask students to report on previous literacy experiences, instructor syllabi and assignments, examination of texts produced in class, interviews with students), the focus of our research is on student writers’ previous experiences with

genres, participation in rhetorically situated language use (including written, oral and digital communication), and familiarity with typical ways of responding to communicative situations. The study addresses the following research questions: What genres (written, oral, digital) do students already know when they arrive in first-year composition courses? How do students use their prior genre knowledge when writing new genres for first-year composition courses? To what extent does this prior knowledge help or hinder the student's ability to gain access to academic discourse? And what factors contribute to how and why students transform prior genre knowledge into new genre knowledge?

To answer these questions, we asked participants to respond to a survey describing past literacy experiences (reading, writing, digital literacy), both in school and out of school. In addition, we invited students to participate in discourse-based interviews that pose questions based on early texts students have produced in their first-year composition (FYC) courses (a beginning-of-term writing sample and Paper 1), with the purpose of reflecting on how they called on previous discursive resources in order to write their first paper in FYC. We also collected and analyzed all writing produced in FYC in order to deepen our understanding of the evolution of students' genre knowledge and how, over time, that either helps or hinders their ability to approximate academic discourse. Finally, to contextualize this analysis, we also collected the syllabi and assignments that prompted the students' writing.

While the study is still in progress at the time of this writing, preliminary findings back up some of Freedman's earlier findings, namely that composing processes are important in formulating and modifying a felt sense of genre (for more on preliminary findings from this study, see <http://utuwpriorgenre.blogspot.com/>). According to Freedman's study, as students write in a new genre, they employ a number of subprocesses to carry out their purpose, and "in the course of composing, there is a shuttling back and forth between this felt sense and the unfolding text, each modifying the other as the text unfolds" ("Learning to Write Again" 102). Nearly half of the UT respondents (46%), for example, reported drawing on familiar writing process skills or habits (invention, brainstorming, freewriting, drafting, revision) when facing a new writing task or new genre. Freedman's study underscores that invention methods, in particular, can assist not only in generating ideas but can also suggest and limit the range of possible rhetorical strategies, thus helping students formulate a clearer sense of

genre. Freedman's acquisition model also emphasizes the importance of previous writing experiences, and students in the UT/UW study did, in fact, indicate the influence of their high school writing courses and AP courses. These responses reinforce the complex activities and interactions that Freedman describes that constitute a "felt sense" of genre: "students begin with a broad schema for academic discourse—a schema that has itself been inferred in the course of their previous performances, their previous creations of such discourse" ("Learning to Write Again" 104). A number of students from both UT and UW indicated the significance of these previous genre performances, with 34% of UW students and 31% of UT students noting the importance of genres written in high school, such as research and persuasion papers, critiques, essays, and reports. Bazerman notes,

Genre is a tool for getting at the resources the students bring with them, the genres they carry from their educations and their experiences in society, and it is a tool for framing challenges that bring students into new domains that are as yet for them unexplored, but not so different from what they know as to be unintelligible. ("The Life of Genre" 24)

Through studies of classroom genres and students' generic productions, we can explore the complex interaction of psychological, social, and institutional factors within the classroom setting and can draw on students' prior genre knowledge to inform strategies for teaching students to enter new realms of discourse.

The cross-institutional research at UT/UW sought to replicate and extend findings from a research study exploring students' prior genre knowledge and the effect on learning new academic genres that was conducted at the University of Kansas. Using teacher-research methods, Amy Devitt conducted research on how students' antecedent genres influence their writing of new genres in first-year composition, posing the following questions: "What genres do first-year students in my own writing course already know when they arrive at my class? And how do those students use their known genres when writing new genres for my class?" ("First-year Composition and Antecedent Genres"). Based on questionnaires and collection and analysis of student writing, the preliminary results indicated that "students do use the genres they already know when writing for new situations,

whether or not they report knowing or enjoying that genre” (“First-year Composition”). Backing up Freedman’s finding that a student’s “broad schema for academic discourse” is “inferred in the course of their previous performances, the previous creations of such discourse” and is modified for particular assignments and disciplinary expectations, Devitt’s findings suggest that new academic genres are defined against prior or antecedent genres:

Students may be assessing the similarity of rhetorical situations between the known and new genres and making decisions about how to adapt the known genre to the new situation, or they may be acting less consciously but merely grounding themselves in what they know in the face of a new and difficult task. (“First-year Composition”)

Devitt cites the example of “Nathan,” who does not report writing academic genres but uses academic genre conventions in his writing. While Nathan reports on the questionnaire that he did not write many papers in high school, “the papers he wrote for his college composition course consistently drew on traditional thesis-support papers, especially the five-paragraph theme, genres he did not report knowing” (“First-year Composition”). While this case seems to demonstrate Freedman’s claim that genre knowledge exists on an unconscious level, Devitt’s study challenges Freedman’s claim that there are no benefits to explicit teaching and proposes teaching “genre awareness” explicitly—an approach that both recognizes that genre knowledge is tacit but also emphasizes the importance of contextualized approaches to explicit teaching of genres. She develops this claim more fully in her book *Writing Genres*, arguing that students can acquire an awareness of how genres function rhetorically and socially—“a critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic forms” (192).

This claim for the importance of both implicit teaching—through immersion in writing situations (for instance, through classroom discussions or assignment sequences)—and explicit instruction is backed up by a qualitative study done by Mary Soliday in collaboration with a colleague in science, David Eastzer. The study focused on a science course taught by Eastzer at City College in New York. Researchers used surveys, conducted interviews with students, observed and audio-

taped classes, and gathered course documents in order to respond to the following research questions, which sought to unpack the interaction between implicit and explicit methods: What genres did David ask students to produce in his course? How did David convey genre knowledge to the students? How did students approach those requirements to produce written genres? How did David judge whether a students' writing fulfilled his expectations for genre? (66).

Researchers discovered that David "mapped out genre both implicitly and explicitly" (68). He immersed students in the genre they were asked to produce through sequencing of assignments, lectures, class discussion, assigned readings, and conferences. He also explicitly mapped out his genre expectations in course documents, assignment sheets, and model texts. While "this qualitative research provides some evidence that writers acquire genre knowledge both consciously and unconsciously" (66), the findings also confirm Freedman's hypothesis that the success of explicit versus implicit teaching may depend on individual learning styles. One student, Jonathan, conforms to the explicit expectations outlined by David while also reworking and revising the genre expectations, using a comparative analysis of two scientific newspaper articles to insert his own judgment about the journalists' scientific knowledge. Another student, Carson, uses his prior genre knowledge to acquire the new genre and relates the writing assignment in the science course to a similar essay he wrote for his law class. However, a third student, Dawn, demonstrates "a weaker grasp of the genre of the case study" (78) and does not seem to have the same genre repertoires as Jonathan and Carson: "Her approach to genre was more closely tied to the texts, the assignment sheets, and to what she heard in class—she did not accent the genres with her own preferences as freely as did Jonathan or Carson" (78). In other words, Dawn did not bring her prior genre knowledge into engagement with the new genres she was learning. Dawn's case, in particular, may confirm Freedman's claim that the success of explicit teaching may depend on whether or not the student is at the appropriate stage of development as a writer or may depend on "the congeniality of the student's learning style" (244).

Based on these findings, Soliday concludes that, because learning genres is based on both individual genre knowledge and communal expectations, students benefit from both implicit and explicit approaches to teaching genre, a finding similar to Devitt's conclusions. In addition, just as Devitt and others (see Richard Coe, "Teaching Genre as

Process”) have suggested teaching genre awareness by having students practice writing alternative genres or “reinventing” genres, Soliday argues that writers are able to assimilate genres when they “rework the voice of the other, the communal form, into their own individual words, intentions, and worldviews” (82).

Freedman’s earlier research suggests that a key factor in the acquisition of genres and developing awareness of communal expectations is a dimension of collaboration—feedback from other writers or the instructor (the final stage of her acquisition model), where students can make adjustments to their writing and refine their rhetorical choices and sense of genre. This role that feedback plays in genre acquisition is explored in a study by Elizabeth Wardle. Wardle explores the relationship of peer response to genre knowledge and authority, arguing that students’ interactions with peers can help them begin to learn new genre conventions and gain academic literacies. Drawing on participant/observer research (which involved observation of both classroom and workshop talk), collection of peer critiques, and interviews with students, Wardle observed how 26 students in an intermediate college writing course “wrestled with” and “began to learn” new genre conventions. When confronted with writing new genres, students tended to work through their genre confusion in workshop discussion, suggesting that it might be more effective for students to write out their critiques following the discussion. While none of the students, in their peer critiques, offered any explicit genre feedback, the peer groups created an opportunity for “immersion” in the class context, leading Wardle to conclude that “genre knowledge may at least partially be gained through participating in the work of creating a new genre with the help of a community of supportive peers” (“Is This What Yours Sounds Like?” 101).

An additional finding in Wardle’s study is that, despite poorly articulated genre expectations on the part of instructors, students still managed to gain genre knowledge while sharing papers in groups. Soliday’s above study further reinforces the challenge of negotiating individual and communal expectations when there is a gap between instructor’s knowledge of genre and explicit instructions to students. Some of the struggling writers she studied “were those who haven’t learned to translate a teacher’s requirements for genre into their own words” (81). This issue is taken up more formally in a study by Anne Beaufort and John Williams called “Writing History: Informed or Not by Genre

Theory?” They report on a longitudinal case study of students’ undergraduate work in six history courses taken from freshman through junior years, with Beaufort providing the compositionist perspective and Williams the historian perspective. One of their findings is that the instructor’s tacit genre knowledge makes it difficult to clearly articulate explicit genre expectations. Their research report focuses on the case of Tim, who—by the end of his senior year—could not articulate genre conventions and could recall no explicit instructions on writing history genres. Beaufort and Williams argue that many of Tim’s essays were less successful over his career due to his lack of understanding of genre conventions. After discourse-based interviews, analysis of twelve papers, and interviews with history instructors, they list a number of problems related to students’ vague awareness of genre expectations and what they call “genre confusion,” including, most significantly, a lack of a clear “framework of analysis” and conscious understanding of the connection between rhetorical purpose and disciplinary expectations, a “crucial aspect of genre knowledge [that] is often overlooked” (53-54). Without explicit instruction on how to apply an analytic framework—a metacognitive awareness of how genres function rhetorically and socially—Tim reported difficulty in making clear rhetorical choices regarding structure, style, ethos and authorial stance.

Beaufort’s collaborator on the research project and a faculty member in history, John Williams, simultaneously reported on his teacher-research experiment, which focused on using an explicit genre approach to teaching writing in history. Williams experimented with an assignment that specified genre in his junior-level history course. From the 90 student papers he read, Williams concluded that the emphasis on genre in the assignment did help students write better and more convincing papers, and it “pushed [him] to think further about the characteristics of the historical essay” (61). Together, the student perspective (Tim’s) and the faculty perspective (John’s) lead Beaufort and Williams to conclude the following: “The tacitly held conventions of historical discourse, and the difficulty of articulating them for students, lies at the center of this problem of expectations” (63). In other words, because genre awareness is tacit, instructors have difficulty articulating explicit features, a problem that Freedman earlier alludes to when she notes that the success of contextualized teaching of genre “depends on the accuracy of the teacher’s explicit knowledge” (244).

Even if teachers can articulate clear genre expectations, students' tacit genre knowledge may conflict with the teachers' genre knowledge. This finding is backed up by a study conducted by Janet Giltrow and Michele Valiquette called "Genres and Knowledge: Students Writing in the Disciplines," a study that explored the question of how members of a community conserve genre knowledge and how newcomers to the community acquire that genre knowledge. Giltrow and Valiquette conducted think-aloud protocols with experienced Teaching Assistants from two different disciplines: Psychology and Criminology. As TAs read aloud from student texts that they had already marked, they were asked to interrupt their reading to add commentary, which "a) identified discourse features that triggered evaluation, and b) expressed the discursive principles with which the student was either complying or failing to comply" (50). As TAs read students' papers and paused to reflect on meaning and conventions, it became clear that there were very different presuppositions regarding genre expectations and what shared knowledge can be assumed. As predicted by Giltrow and Valiquette, student writers attempting classroom versions of the academic genres they were asked to produce in each discipline were challenged by the task of estimating shared knowledge. Genre competence, then, and genre performance, rely not just on disciplinary knowledge, but also "knowledge about this knowledge"—a type of insider knowledge that helps writers judge how much background information to include and how much explanation of concepts is needed.

While Giltrow and Valiquette explored the conflicting genre expectations of students and Teaching Assistants, Pat Currie, in a study entitled "What Counts as Good Writing?" explored the different genre expectations of professors and TAs who are team-teaching a course. The study focused on the graded assignments and written feedback of non-native English writers in a business course and compared TA's evaluations with the professor's evaluation. When students wrote narrative genres, there was much agreement about genre expectations among students, TAs, and professors. However, when writers shifted to argument, "Neither the NNES students nor the assistant controlled the genre of argument expected: major problems were evident in terms of all components—claims, warrant, backing, and grounds" (74), leading to different responses and evaluations from the TA and professor. Currie concludes by arguing for further research that explores the articulation of conventions and expectations of various communities

students seek to enter. In addition, in order to measure the relationship between expectations and results, she argues for more research into genre performance—“research into both the skills and strategies” of successful and less successful students (77). The next section highlights research studies that focus on this connection between genre knowledge and genre performance.

RESEARCH ON HOW GENRE KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATES TO PERFORMANCE

Taking up Currie’s call (as discussed in the previous section) for further research into the skills and strategies of successful and less successful student writers, a study done by Sally Mitchell and Richard Andrews, “Learning to Operate Successfully in Advanced Level History,” charts the transition of students from writing historical narrative to more complex cognitive and rhetorical tasks of writing historical analysis. Confirming previous studies, such as Bereiter and Scardamalia’s observation of a class in which students’ ability to specify features of an argument did not translate to writing effective arguments, Mitchell and Andrews argue that teaching explicit features of argumentative essays did not result in successful arguments. The focus of their study was the Cambridge History Project, a British secondary education project that focuses both on historical knowledge and disciplinary skills. Taking up Freedman’s claim that explicit teaching of genre and successful acquisition of genre are dependent on cognitive maturity and skill level, the researchers examined history essays that grew increasingly complex (following Bloom’s cognitive levels) with each assignment. They concluded that genre practice is tied to disciplinary genre knowledge and that genre conventions, such as structure and arrangement, cannot be taught apart from issues of context and meaning. “Planning an essay,” they argue, “is not the same as engaging in an argument” (95). In other words, genre knowledge—knowledge about the typified conventions of an argument—is not the same as genre performance—being able to produce argument genres. This critical engagement with genre is possible only if instructors and students understand that genre conventions generate thought and argument, a finding that supports Devitt’s approach to teaching “genre awareness.” Instructors can avoid teaching genres as forms by constantly linking form to context and by having students explore how formal features

are tied to rhetorical and social actions, a type of teaching that better ensures the transfer of genre knowledge to performance of genres in the same context or new contexts.

In “Transferability and Genres,” Devitt notes that genre knowledge gives writers “a place to start, a location, however different, from which to begin writing;” however, she also notes that “drawing from known genres in new locations results in mismatches as well” (220). In their study on “Teaching and Learning a Multimodal Genre in a Psychology Course,” Chris Anson, Deanna Dannels, and Karen St. Clair discovered that the tacit, prior genre knowledge that students bring to a new assignment may make it difficult to get outside the framework of traditional, single mode genres, thus negatively affecting performance of new genres. Anson et al. used a teacher-research approach and conducted surveys and observations to study the nature of genre acquisition and performance in a 200-level psychology course. The researchers hypothesized that when faced with a new genre—such as a “studio book” that included writings, artifacts, and visuals—students would “apply broad schematic representations to the genre first, placing it into the best-matching ‘metagenre’ category—general discursive types they have experienced before, often repeatedly” (174). They also acknowledged that, for the students, “acting on such generalized knowledge, however, is not enough to guarantee them a successful performance” (175). When it came to multimodal or hybrid genres that combine writing and speaking, for instance, students tended to interpret these multimodal genres as separate genres and had difficulty seeing them outside of the scripted classroom genres they were more familiar with. Based on these performances and students’ “difficulty seeing genres outside of their traditional instantiations” (189), Anson et al. recommend more fully supporting students in their acquisition of strategies and skills for communication.

Devitt’s study, too, explores the effects of previous genre knowledge on performance in new genres as demonstrated by a student, Mason, whose genre repertoire is dominated by personal narrative. Even when an assignment explicitly asked for an analytic paper, Mason wrote a personal narrative in response, leading Devitt to conclude, “Clearly, the personal narrative constitutes a strong antecedent genre for Mason, one that overpowered the assignment’s call for analysis papers that all other students in the class heeded” (“First-year Composition”). Mason did, eventually, adapt the elements of the personal narrative to new

genres, like analysis papers. As a result, while both Devitt's study and Anson et al's study show that prior genre knowledge may hinder, as well as help, genre performance, Devitt convincingly concludes that "writers use the genres they know when faced with a genre they do not know," and while these genres may not meet the needs of the new situation, "as antecedent genres, they help writers move into a new genre; they help writers adjust their old situations to new locations" ("Transferability and Genres" 222).

In the UT/UW cross-institutional study mentioned previously, we were interested not just in what prior genre knowledge students bring to first-year writing but also their perceptions of what genres they have performed most or least successfully and how these previous performances enabled and/or limited their access to college-level writing. When students were asked the question, "What do you consider your most successful piece of writing?" students from both UT and UW identified research papers and a range of creative genres as their most successful genres. Students' reasons for success were related to their interest in and investment in a topic they could choose as well as the investment of time in an extended project like the research paper. Students also linked their successful performance in a genre to their knowledge of rhetorically effective strategies, with a clear majority of students identifying rhetorical effectiveness and understanding of genre conventions as the reason for their successful performance. A preliminary finding from the study is that genre type does not predict success, but that success is dependent upon how the genre gets taken up and the social and rhetorical actions that it performs. Furthermore, preliminary results from the interviews suggest that it is not so much prior knowledge of genre that informs successful performance, but rather how and when students feel they can deploy that prior genre knowledge. Confirming Devitt's conclusions noted above, successful performance seems to depend on the flexible use of prior genre knowledge. Some students clung too closely and too long to prior genres even when the situations and tasks did not call for them. Others began to show an ability to abstract strategies from prior genres and reformulate them to new situations and tasks.

Students may be more likely to transfer genre knowledge from one situation to another if they have an understanding of the flexible, dynamic nature of genres. For example, an additional finding from Mitchell and Andrews' study (described above) is that explicit teach-

ing and cultivation of genre knowledge—in order to lead to successful genre performance—must include critical awareness of alternative genre responses:

Researchers such as ourselves and many teachers often seem to be caught in a dilemma: we want on the one hand to encourage and explore new and alternative forms of thinking and writing, and on the other we want to help students achieve as highly as possible within existing conventions. Too often the result is an overemphasis on conventional form as if repeated practice in that area will lead to the evidence of thought and engagement we are hoping for. (99)

These tensions between successfully performing within the conventions of genre while also using individual genre knowledge to challenge conventions are explored in Peter Medway's case study of six architecture students' sketchbooks and his finding that students can successfully negotiate a genre without being confined to following shared knowledge and conventions. He found, based on individual and changeable exigencies, that there was much variation in the sketchbooks that students wrote; therefore, if the sketchbook is defined as a genre, it is a very loose and "fuzzy" genre, with multiple functions of recording and preserving ideas, analyzing and developing arguments, and preparing actions. Based on his analysis, Medway finds that "each sketchbook is a unique composition individually improvised, sometimes from specific strategies known from particular genres, but also from rhythms and tonalities that have been 'caught' from a range of genres that are more generally and diffusely 'out there' in the culture" (149). What made the sketchbooks successful was some combination of students following genre conventions while also improvising and challenging conventions.

This negotiation between genre choice and constraint and between individual agency and social convention is the subject of study by Bill Green and Alison Lee entitled "Writing Geography: Literacy, Identity, and Schooling." This study focused on two cases that are part of a larger corpus of data and research collected for a project examining gender politics of school writing, a curriculum informed by the Australian systemic functional genre application of explicit teaching of genre. In studying the essays of two students, "Kathryn" and "Robert," research-

ers noted that Robert's text fits more the conventional genre form, whereas Kathryn's departs from those conventions. Compared to Robert's factual discourse with highly technical language, Kathryn's language is more qualified, her subject position more pronounced, and her discourse less focused on the presentation of facts than on the call for action. Noting that Robert's text is "situated within a dominant techno-scientific mode of representation of the world, a mode of representation extensively critiqued by feminists as hegemonically masculinist," the researchers found that the texts they studied "enact[ed] a significant gender difference" (214). They concluded that "genre is a category inescapable from the politics and problematics of gender, among other forms of social difference and power" (208). These forms of social difference and power that shape and are shaped by genre are the subject of the studies in the following section, which explore the negotiation of cultural identities and genre expectations and examine how the transfer from genre knowledge to performance is culturally mediated.

INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH ON GENRE WITHIN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

In their introduction to *Genres in a Changing World*, a volume featuring studies from the 4th International Symposium on the Study of Textual Genres (SIGET), Charles Bazerman, Adair Bonini, and Débora Figueiredo note that genre "has been researched in the social histories of many countries and has been creatively applied in many different educational settings internationally" (ix). Several presentations from SIGET, which was held in Tubarão, Brazil, focused on the genre-based approach to the Brazilian system of education, and many of these studies were later featured in a special issue of the journal *L1: Educational Studies in Language and Literature*. In one of those studies, Vera Lúcia Lopes Cristovão reported on her study of 4th and 5th graders who received genre instruction as they wrote in multiple genres—memories, opinions, and poems. She analyzed 230 memory texts (on the topic "The Place Where I Live"), randomly selected from 6500 texts total, and also observed students as they were led through a "didactic sequence" that first defines the features of the genre, then provides examples of genres, then asks students to read, analyze and finally produce the genre. She found that this approach to genre, based

in critical analysis and production, can empower students, “providing contact with their cultural anchorage and respect to their socio-cultural settings” (23).

Another study appearing in the special issue of *LI* found that, regardless of social environment, genre instruction can be effective. Ana Maria de Mattos Guimarães conducted a study of two fifth grade classes in Brazil, one a public school for low-income students, and the other a private school with students from a higher socio-economic class. Both schools implemented a “didactic sequence,” which begins with early production of the genre based on the prior knowledge of students. The didactic sequence then consists of reading and analyzing the genre, identifying the characteristic traits, defining the communicative situation, and finally producing the genre. After analyzing student texts and interviewing students at both schools, the researcher found improved final texts following genre instruction and analysis, particularly improvement in student writers’ abilities to mobilize thematic content and to organize material. Guimarães concluded that her study “reveals the importance of consistent work on genre teaching in schools” (31) and demonstrates that the method was effective, regardless of students’ social environment.

However, other studies have found the socio-economic class level can, in fact, play a significant role in the development of genre knowledge. Alina Spinello and Chris Pratt conducted research on the genre knowledge of two groups of Brazilian elementary school children—one group of middle-class and one group of working class students who had lived on the street at least one year. All participants were interviewed and were asked to produce the genres of narrative, letter, and newspaper article. They then read a text and were asked to identify genre and justify their response. Several weeks later the researchers met with some of the children for informal discussion with them about their exposure to stories, letters, and newspaper articles at home, school and on the streets. Middle-class children were able to identify and produce genres (particularly stories and letters) more successfully than working class students. They also were aware of the linguistic conventions and formal structures of stories and letters and displayed more of a “meta-textual awareness” or genre knowledge. However, street children were less familiar with “school” genres and more familiar with newspaper articles, leading the researchers to conclude that

different “literacy environments” in which children from different sociocultural groups interact account for differences in genre knowledge.

Shifting from groups of Brazilian children to British children, Debra Myhill also investigated the influence of sociocultural background on genre acquisition, arguing that middle-class children are better positioned for acculturation to academic genres. Myhill was interested in how students’ prior genre knowledge—defined as sociocultural conventions for organization, meaning, and formal features—affects their ability to produce school genres. From a large corpus of essays written in response to national tests and representing varied age levels and sociocultural groups, the texts were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Backing up studies like Freedman’s and Devitt’s, Myhill found that young writers draw on their prior knowledge of the narrative genre, based on broad cultural experiences of narrative. However, they struggled more with genres for which they had no prior sociocultural knowledge (much like the children in the above study by Spinello and Pratt). Students’ sociocultural prior knowledge of genre enabled them to produce genres with a fuller understanding of how form and content, text and context, interrelate—an understanding of genres as dynamic cultural forms. Myhill concludes, “It is necessary that we help teachers develop strategies to assist all children in learning how to balance the expectations of the school context with their own social and cultural experiences of written genres” (136).

Further exploring the issue of class and genre performance is a study done by Rochelle Kapp and Bongsi Bangeni. Arguing for both explicit and implicit approaches to teaching genre, Kapp and Bangeni conducted a case study of 20 first-year students in the humanities at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. These were mainly black, working-class students and were nearly all first-generation college students; in addition, most studied through the medium of English (their second language). They argue that “While a genre approach is a key resource for providing metaknowledge of discourse conventions, it does not provide the . . . writing space to enable students from outside the dominant discourse to become critical participants” (110-11). The researchers focused on how teaching the genre of the social sciences essay can help students navigate their entry into the discipline. They were interested in a genre approach in which explicit teaching coincides with “acquisition”—a more unconscious process (113) and in which students learn formal features alongside the form of the aca-

demic conversation. Through conscious learning of genre and immersion in reading and writing genres of the culture, students “were able to articulate and demonstrate metalevel understanding of the genre of the social science essay” (125). Findings included the claim that while students can learn from explicit teaching of forms, acquiring genre knowledge and discourse knowledge takes time (126).

While the previous study makes a claim for both explicit and implicit approaches, Sunny Hyon makes a case for explicit teaching, particularly for students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Hyon studied the role of genre in a course taken by 11 students—8 graduate and 3 undergraduate—representing a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (five from East Asia, three from the Middle East, one from Latin America, one from Puerto Rico, and one from Africa). The students were enrolled in an ESL Reading course that focused on four genres—a hard news story, a feature article, a textbook, and a research article—that were discussed in terms of content, structure, language style, and purpose. Hyon’s method of instruction included “explicit discussion, modeling, and analyses of genres” (“Genre and ESL Reading” 126). While conceding Freedman’s point that students might have eventually developed genre awareness tacitly on their own, she found that “ESL university students may be among the ‘some’ for whom explicit genre-based teaching is helpful, as they have often not had as much tacit exposure to English-language genres as their L1 counterparts” (136).

RESEARCH ON GENRES AND ADVANCED ACADEMIC LITERACIES

The studies described above primarily focus on children’s literacies and the literacies of first-year college students; however, other studies of second-language learners have focused on genre as a component of advanced academic literacy. Solange Aranha, drawing on methods from Swales’ approach to genre analysis, studied a genre-based writing course for graduate students in two fields, Genetics and Dentistry, at São Paulo State University in Brazil. Through participant-observation of classes and discourse analysis of student texts, she found that “the act of recognizing (reading) is different from the act of producing (writing) academic genres” (487). She concludes by distinguishing between the writers’ genre awareness and their “reflexive awareness” or sense of ownership of and investment in the genre.

Interested in the cultural factors influencing genre awareness and expertise, Ann Beer conducted a study entitled, “Diplomats in the Basement: Graduate Engineering Students and Intercultural Communication,” using the framework of intercultural communication to explore the complexity and the challenge of negotiating different genres (63). She studied international graduate students in Engineering in a Canadian University and examined how their diverse languages, differences in levels of English proficiency and cultural backgrounds affected their ability to “reposition” with regard to cultural genre differences. Based on her examination of documents, observations of and interviews with the graduate students, Beer found that “success for these graduate students depends to a large extent on their language and genre competence in the new culture” (73).

Examining the development of genre competence in a new culture, Christine Tardy carried out a two-year case study of two graduate students and their writing in the disciplines (“It’s Like a Story”). Tardy conducted interviews with and collected writing from two students: Paul, a computer science major and native of the People’s Republic of China, and Chatri, an engineering student and native of Thailand. Focusing on Paul’s master’s thesis and Chatri’s research papers, Tardy found that, as these writers engaged in high-stakes writing tasks, their rhetorical and genre knowledge became more explicit and more sophisticated. In part, this knowledge was influenced by disciplinary participation, including mentoring and feedback from expert members of the community. Tardy expands on this research in her recent book *Building Genre Knowledge*, a longitudinal study of four multi-lingual graduate students in engineering and computer sciences. Through multiple methods of class observation (including a genre-based graduate-level class), analysis of written texts, interviews with the graduate students, and feedback from their professors, Tardy tracks the development of students’ genre knowledge and their increasing competence in performing genres of their disciplines as evidenced through formal, content, process, and rhetorical dimensions of genre knowledge.

Research studies in ESL and ESP make cultural background a significant variable in their research, necessitating more “cross-talk” between researchers across educational levels and across subdisciplines (such as Composition and Rhetoric and Linguistics or ESL). In “Crossing the Boundaries of Genre Studies: Commentaries by Experts,” a step was taken in this direction recently as Ann Johns invited

the authors of this book to join with experts from a number of traditions—Systemic Functional Linguistics, English for Special Purposes, and the New Rhetoric—to discuss genre theory and research as it crosses L1 and L2 writing. Drawing on her research (described above) of ESL graduate students, Christine Tardy described the multi-dimensional features of genre that interest all of us as teachers and researchers, including domains of formal knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, and procedural knowledge. Drawing on Ann Johns' work on ethnography, Brian Paltridge examined the use of ethnographies in L2 graduate courses and teacher education programs, while Reiff examined approaches to ethnography in FYC (see also Reiff, "Mediating Materiality and Discursivity"). Ken Hyland reported on his linguistic research on the writer's stance, drawing on his research of 240 research papers from eight different disciplines, while Bawarshi reported on the intersection of rhetorical genre analysis and the writer's invention process. Richard Coe and Ann Johns concluded the article by synthesizing the various perspectives, with Johns noting that, while all of the contributors emphasize different aspects of genre (text or context), speak in different disciplinary vernaculars, and draw from different traditions (linguistics, rhetoric, English, education), "there is also considerable overlap in the commentaries, indicating continued efforts to encompass in theory and practice the complexities of texts, contexts, writers and their purposes, and all that is beyond a text that influences writers and audiences" (247). Given this overlap in interests and research efforts, further dialogue among genre researchers "in linguistic and non-linguistic camps" (Johns et al. 234) and from a variety of scholarly traditions, as modeled by recent genre scholarship in Brazil, is needed. With this cross-dialogue in mind, the next chapter focuses on research carried out by genre scholars with interests in technical and professional communication, fostering an important dialogue among researchers interested in the interaction of genres in multiple social contexts, whether academic or workplace, disciplinary or professional.