

8 Genre Research in Workplace and Professional Contexts

In addition to the growing body of empirical research on genre in academic contexts is a wide range of research studies that investigate professional and workplace genres. Parallel to the interest (described in the previous chapter) in how novice writers gain access to academic discourse and learn new genres, a rich body of research examines how novices learn new genres in the workplace and use those genres to carry out the social goals of the organization. Catherine Schryer notes, “Although some composition researchers have brought genre theory into university classrooms, it has been empirical researchers in professional communication who have most profited from and most developed [Carolyn] Miller’s linking of genres to social contexts” (“Genre and Power” 77). Like those who conduct research on academic genres, those who study workplace genres are interested in writers’ processes of learning genres and initiation into the community, their use of genres in the production and transmission of knowledge, and the ways in which genre constrains or enables the social actions of participants in professional organizations.

Moving the debate defined by Freedman regarding tacit learning or explicit instruction of academic genres to new contexts, workplace researchers are similarly interested in what aspects of genre can be taught explicitly and which learned through “immersion” or participation in a workplace community. Further deepening this connection between learning of academic genres and learning of workplace genres, a number of recent studies seek to explore how genre knowledge transfers from university to workplace settings. In *Worlds Apart: Acting and Writing in Academic and Workplace Contexts*, Patrick Dias, Aviva Freedman, Peter Medway and Anthony Paré carry out a multi-site, comparative, longitudinal (seven-year) study of writing in different university courses and corresponding workplaces: law and public

administration courses and government institutions; management courses and financial institutions; social work courses and social work agencies; and architecture courses and architecture firms. Rhetorical Genre Studies informs the research project, serving as “the main conceptual frame for inquiry” (23). After selecting four matching university and professional settings, researchers conduct an inventory of genres in each domain, track documents, conduct reading protocols, carry out ethnographic observation and interviews, and ask for participant validation of results. While the study reinforces the idea that learning to write in the community’s genres is a means by which individuals are socialized into particular goals, activities, identities, and ideologies, the researchers also found that work and school comprised very different genre systems (223), with more flexibility for innovation in workplace genres (230). For instance, school texts and workplace texts differed in terms of reading practices, with workplace texts having multiple readers (rather than the teacher as reader) and fulfilling a different purpose or function for readers, outside of the “epistemic motive and need to rank” (224). Workplace genres also have more “intertextual density” and are situated in “a complex multi-symbolic communicative web,” with functions that differ from academic genres, such as recording information or performing an action (224-25).

This conclusion that academic and workplace settings are “worlds apart” is backed up by the findings of research reports collected in a book by Patrick Dias and Anthony Paré entitled *Transitions: Writing in Academic and Workplace Settings*, a book that “grows out of a long-term study of writing in certain academic disciplines and their related workplace settings” (1). In a chapter from the book entitled “Write Where You Are: Situating Learning to Write in the University and Workplace Settings,” Aviva Freedman and Christine Adam seek to differentiate processes of novices learning to write in the workplace from processes of students learning new genres in university courses. They studied seven MA students involved in full-time internships organized by a Canadian University’s school of public administration, in which the students spent a semester working in paid, full-time public sector jobs. They compared these to a second set of subjects—3 students in an upper-level undergraduate course in financial analysis. Through visits to the respective classroom and workplace sites, observations, interviews, and collection of texts, they found that the goals of academic and workplace writing differed significantly. Whereas learning was the

goal of academic writing, action and policy setting were the goals of workplace writing. Freedman and Adam concluded, “When students leave the university to enter the workplace, they not only need to learn new genres of discourse, they need to learn new ways to learn such genres” (56) since the complex and dynamic rhetorical setting of the workplace cannot be replicated in the classroom.

Freedman’s and Adam’s conclusion is reinforced by Jane Ledwell-Brown’s study of genre users within the Heath Care Company, a Canadian arm of a large, multinational pharmaceuticals company. Brown studied 22 managers, directors, and employees, drawing on interview data, review of documents, and recorded observations. She found that organizational values—such as teamwork, commitment to quality services, and salesmanship—shape writer’s expectations and rhetorical strategies but that these values often run counter to the values cultivated during the employees’ university education. Ledwell-Brown notes that the genre expectations of the workplace—presenting cases in ways that will get desired results—are “a far cry from the demands placed on writers in school, where writing is hardly expected to change anything, desired outcomes other than grades are not in the balance, and the single reader does not expect to be informed or changed by the writing” (220). These differences in values for newcomers leads Ledwell-Brown to argue for more guidance from supervisors and a focus on both implicit and explicit methods of socializing novices into the workplace, a topic of research explored further in the next section.

RESEARCH INTO GENRE LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

The focus in academic genre research on the tacit acquisition of genre knowledge carries over to research on workplace genres, through various studies of how novices learn the genres of their profession. In her chapter, “Learning New Genres: The Convergence of Knowledge and Action” (*Writing in the Real World*), Anne Beaufort tests Freedman’s hypothesis of acquisition versus explicit teaching. Drawing on her ethnographic study of four writers at a Job Resource Center, a non-profit organization, Beaufort analyzes the genre of the press release, letter of request, and grant proposal. Examining how adult writers at advanced levels of literacy acquire competence in new genres, Beaufort posits that “understanding the social action the genre represents within the discourse community is . . . crucial” (111). Among her findings

were the claims that content and procedural knowledge worked together, that depth of genre knowledge grew over time, and that genre knowledge was based on participation in the community. Comparing Freedman's findings in an academic context to those in a workplace context, Beaufort found that genre knowledge is largely tacit, although she acknowledges that in order to learn a new genre, both immersion and "coaching" are needed.

Continuing this focus on explicit teaching versus tacit acquisition in a workplace context, Lingard and Haber carried out a study that seeks to explore how the medical apprenticeship complicates explicit/tacit debates in genre instruction. Their data was drawn from a 160-hour observational study at an urban teaching hospital in California, where they observed and conducted discourse-based interviews with 12 medical students. They found that while the apprenticeship experiences of the medical students appeared to offer contextualized, authentic genre instruction, in reality—as students participated in medical teams and interacted with residents and attending physicians—the explicit genre instructions were often given without clarification of rhetorical or contextual origins, intentions, or situational significance. For example, one medical student, John, was told by a resident to make his patient presentation of symptoms more concise, but when later communicating with the attending physician, the physician demanded more detail. There were specific reasons for this difference (the attending physician was not "on call" as frequently and was thus unfamiliar with the patient background), but they were not articulated. In addition, as a counterpart to the study by Giltrow and Valiquette cited in the previous chapter on academic genre research, this study found that experts in the organization, like instructors, do not always communicate the wealth of tacit, experiential knowledge they have. As a result, "students may interpret a-contextually the cryptic feedback that they receive on rounds" (167). What Lingard and Haber ultimately call for is "meta-awareness," similar to what Devitt has described as "genre awareness"—teaching genres in the context of situated practice and explicitly articulating the interrelation of rhetorical strategies and social actions.

It is just such genre awareness or meta-awareness of genre that Graham Smart and Nicole Brown sought to develop in their participatory action research of 25 interns in a professional writing program. The interns were placed in a variety of organizations—high-tech companies, media and PR firms, and non-profit organizations—and they

spent 10-20 hours per week in the organization for 15 weeks, practicing multiple genres. As part of the action research, students were assigned to investigate how writing functions in the organization and to reflect on their own experience, drawing on research questions that connect textual features of the genre to ideologies of the worksite, an approach based in “genre awareness”: “the notion of genre had provided the student interns with a powerful theoretical tool for seeing how written discourse is situated within local organizational contexts and for understanding how writing functions to accomplish different kinds of work” (251). Smart’s and Brown’s context-sensitive qualitative approach to research into genre learning was paired with their collaborative action-based research to assist students in “developing a rhetorical vision both useful across different workplace cultures and significant to the formation of the interns’ professional identities” (Artemeva and Freedman 5). Student interns learned how to use their genre knowledge to navigate new workplace sites and for understanding how genres function to accomplish different kinds of work within these sites—“how the activity of planning, producing, and using documents enables co-workers to discuss issues, negotiate positions, make decisions and develop relationships” (267). Unlike the results of the previous study by Lingard and Haber that point out the mismatch in novices’ and experts’ genre expectations, this study posits genre as a tool for aligning the attention and levels of expertise of co-workers, thus coordinating their efforts and actions. Acquiring competence in a genre, then, is necessary for producing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge, the focus of the research studies described in the next section.

RESEARCH ON WORKPLACE GENRES: CONSTRUCTING, DISTRIBUTING, AND NEGOTIATING KNOWLEDGE

While the previous section examined research that focuses on how writers new to a workplace learn the genres of their professional organization, this section examines research studies of how genres are used to create, disseminate, and negotiate knowledge. Anthony Paré, in “Discourse Regulations and the Production of Knowledge,” examines how genres shape expectations and how genre constraints influence the production of knowledge. Paré carried out a qualitative study of writing done by social workers, with a focus on the genre of the

predisposition report (PDR), which is written by a social worker as an advisory report on the sentencing of an adolescent. The PDR is a genre that includes narrative versions of the incident from police, the adolescent, the parents, and the victim—all of whom are interviewed by the social worker; a section detailing prior convictions; assessment of the adolescent and family; and a summary and recommendation for sentencing. After interviewing eight social workers and collecting protocols from four of the subjects as they wrote PDRs, along with discourse-based interviews, Paré discovered that the genre of the PDR both reflected and reinforced the knowledge, beliefs (that adolescents fit a particular profile), and expectations (of delinquency) of the social work community. The very nature of the document “predisposed” social workers to connect the narrative of the adolescent’s offense with prior convictions in order to make a recommendation for sentencing. In the case of a social worker, Sophie, before even meeting the adolescent, the PDR worked to shape her view of the adolescent male as “a bad boy” (117), and despite the adolescent’s lack of a prior history, she felt constrained to produce a report portraying the community’s expectations of a progression of delinquency.

Similar to the PDR’s role in shaping expectations, Berkenkotter and Ravotas study how a genre of classification—the APA’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV)—shapes interpretation and diagnosis. These researchers studied both the local situated writing of clinicians and the circulation of therapists’ reports through the mental health system, carrying out linguistic and rhetorical analysis of five therapists’ written evaluations and conducting follow-up interviews and participant-observer research. They discovered that the client’s descriptive narrative is “recontextualized” into the acceptable genre of the diagnosis and codified classifications of the DSM-IV. Similar to the shaping power of the PDR described in the previous study, the DSM-IV shapes interpretation by classifying patients into categories based on population and activity (i.e. “borderline personalities” or “survivors of sexual abuse”). When a client tells the therapist “I just seem to be falling apart lately,” this gets recontextualized in DSM-IV categories as “A predominantly dysphoric mood” (268). The client’s narrative and local knowledge are factored out as the condition is taken up and resituated into a universal classification system based on the field-specific knowledge of medical psychiatry.

Related studies have examined the genre of the psychiatric interview, such as a Brazilian qualitative study of a patient diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Through observation of the filmed doctor/patient interaction as well as interviews with the doctor and his team, researcher Tânia Conceição Pereira described four forms of interaction that define the kind of information elicited and activity carried out in the genre of the psychiatric interview: 1) the opening frame, which establishes information about the patient; 2) the exploratory frame, which draws the patient into more of a conversation with the doctor; 3) the co-constructive experience frame, in which the patient takes on the role of speaker while the doctor listens; and finally, 4) the closing frame, in which the doctor reflects on the patient's present condition and treatment (40). Each of these frames of interaction is structured by the genre and, in turn, structures the roles of the participants.

The role genre plays in the formation and shaping of communal knowledge is also the subject of inquiry in a participant-observation study done by Aviva Freedman and Graham Smart. Freedman and Smart studied the genres produced at Bank of Canada, a federal agency that conducts monetary policy, and spent six years observing the site, interviewing BOC employees, collecting texts representing typical genres, and collecting reading protocols from managers. The researchers found that the written genres (annual report, monetary policy report, white book, inter-projection information package, notes and briefings) are linked to organizational interactions or interactive genres, such as meetings. Thus, the interwoven genres coordinated much of the work and reflected the complexity of policy making: "The BOC thinks and distributes its cognition through sets of genres" (247). For instance, the staff prepared the "White Book" every quarter in order to recommend an interest rate profile for the next eight quarters and offered a number of alternative scenarios and Risk Analyses, reflecting the negotiation between management and staff projections. Genres, then, are sites for reflecting on information and negotiating knowledge and "function consequently as repositories of communal knowledge, devices for generating new knowledge" (244).

HISTORICAL STUDIES OF PROFESSIONAL GENRES

If, as noted above, genres are "repositories of communal knowledge," then studying an organization's corpus of genres can give us insight

into that community's practices and knowledge production, as well as insight into how genres emerge in a community, how genres are used by participants, and how genres evolve and change within organizations. Historical investigations of professional genres—including genres of the “academic workplace,” such as research articles—have illustrated how such genres evolve in relation to changes in social context and cultural ideology. In his extensive study of the historical development of the experimental report, reported on in *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*, Charles Bazerman collected a corpus of 1000 articles from the first scientific journal in English, *Philosophical Transactions*. Analyzing one hundred articles from this corpus, in addition to 40 articles from *Physical Review* and scientific writings by Newton and Compton, he explored how changes in the generic features and structure of scientific articles are tied to changes in the social structures of the discipline, shifts in the theoretical composition of arguments, and changes in material practices within the sciences.

Further tracking the historical evolution of the scientific article from its debut in the 17th century to the present, Alan Gross, Joseph Harmon, and Michael Reidy mapped the changes in the generic features as they occurred across three languages: English, French, and German. Examining scientific articles from a cross section of journals and in the context of national and disciplinary differences, they concluded the following: “The scientific article is a developing vehicle for communicating the conceptual system of science and, in the case of argument, a developing means for creating that system” (15). This historical study of the genre of the scientific article, following Bazerman's study, further demonstrates how genres emerge from and in turn influence the shared goals, assumptions, and practices within the profession.

Historical research on the academic article has taken place not just in the sciences but also in the field of economics. Donald McCloskey, in his study of economics journals from 1920 to 1990, found a rise in the scientific ethos of authors, with early articles in the 20's taking a philosophical perspective and later articles taking a more mathematical perspective, reflecting a push toward more “testable hypotheses” (141). Additional historical studies of economics and genre appear in a collection of essays entitled *Economics and Language* (Henderson, Dudley-Evans and Backhouse; see also McCloskey, *If You're So Smart*;

The Rhetoric of Economics), including Bazerman's study of 18th century economist Adam Smith's major works, essays, and lectures ("Money Talks"). While the corpus of Smith's work reflects a skeptical view of economics in his early work, his later work is didactic, reflecting a shared social purpose and common goals for economic action. Similar to his findings from his historical study of the scientific article, Bazerman discovered that economic genres function as "a socio-psychological category," with "the opportunity to create shared communal beliefs by asserting a scheme that speaks to the shared experiences and conditions of the audience community" ("Money Talks" 181).

This negotiation between social systems and experiences of audiences is further explored in John Swales' historical study of six economics textbooks spanning two decades. While the stylistic and rhetorical features of economics textbooks have been examined in earlier studies (McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics*; Henderson and Hewings), Swales focused his analysis on textbook treatments of a sub-topic in mainstream economics texts, the "paradox of value" or the discussion of the economic principle of use value versus exchange value ("The Paradox of Value" 226). He discovered that the textbooks present a vision of progress with regard to economic theory and that "this historicist approach adds a further kind of authority to the introductory textbook genre": that economics is a "subject which has succeeded—over time—in providing technical solutions to economic puzzles and perplexities" (236).

Historical studies of legal genres have similarly examined the ways in which genres shape participants' experiences within professional contexts, in this case the social-legal system. In "The Sociohistorical Constitution of the Genre Legal booklet," Leonardo Mozdzinski traced the historical antecedents of the legal booklet as they existed in religious and school primers, illuminist political pamphlets, and early legal/educational booklets. He found that "legal booklets not only support but strengthen the primary objectives of law, defining patterns of social behavior, and therefore guaranteeing the sustenance of the structured and well-established social-legal system" (100).

But perhaps the historical study that has had the most impact on professional genre studies is JoAnne Yates' *Control through Communication*, which—via comparative case studies—examined in detail the history of three businesses (railroads and manufacturing firms) and the role of communication in business changes. Focusing on printed

and archival documents from 1880-1920, Yates examined the developing genres of internal communication and the shared characteristics of form and function of documents like reports and memos. Observing that “the genres of internal communication that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th century evolved in response to new demands put on them by growth and by changing management philosophy” (100), Yates established the interrelationship between communicative genres and managerial functions. As business philosophies and functions changed, new genres—such as letters, manuals, forms, in-house magazines, and meetings—emerged in order to meet the changing needs and roles of participants in the organization. Yates’ research on how new genres develop in response to new situation contexts has made important contributions to the study of professional genres and to research on the relationship among genres within communities or organizational systems, the subject of the next section.

RESEARCH STUDIES OF GENRE SYSTEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

Researchers have examined the role of genre systems in the workplace and are interested in how groups of connected genres or a range of interrelated genres comprise the complex communicative interactions of organizations, from insurance companies, to banks, to social work agencies, to engineering firms. In “Systems of Genre and the Enactment of Social Intentions,” Bazerman carried out a study of patents and the multiple participants (inventors, patent office) and corresponding legal documents to illustrate the complex nexus of system, genre, and intention. Through his study, he presented “a system of a complex societal machine in which genres form important levers” (79) and identified systems of genres as “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (97).

Further providing a glimpse into a “genre system” or “set of genres interacting to accomplish the work” of an organization (“Intertextuality in Tax Accounting” 340), Amy Devitt conducted research on a tax accounting community’s genres. Devitt interviewed accountants and asked them to identify genres. Thirteen genres constituting what Devitt calls a “genre set” (a particular set of genres used by members to accomplish particular tasks within a system of genres—see Chapter 6 for more discussion of genres sets, genre systems, and activity systems) were identified, reflecting the professional activities and social rela-

tions of tax accountants. The interconnected genres defined organizational roles and reflected and reinforced expectations:

Since a tax provision review has always been attached to an audit, for example, a review of the company's tax provisions is expected as part of the auditing activity; since a transmittal letter has always accompanied tax returns and literature, sending a return may require the establishment of some personal contact, whether or not any personal relationship exists. ("Intertextuality in Tax Accounting" 341)

Furthering this research on how genre systems structure interaction, Carol Berkenkotter began her study, "Genre Systems at Work," by noting "a burgeoning interest in the intertextual and interdiscursive character" of professional genres (327). She examined the various genres produced in a rural mental health clinic and the ways in which these interconnected genres coordinated the complex activity in this setting and across professional and institutional settings. As a genre system, the various reports by mental health aides on their interactions with clients living in group homes were written up—whether reports on a social or medical visit—and circulated from writer to supervisor to psychiatrist: "The various paperwork genres produced in a medical or mental health clinic coordinate the many different kinds of activity occurring within that setting" (333). One type of activity, therapist notes, also reflected a system of genres consisting of an oral session, written evaluation, initial assessment, treatment plan, progress reports, and termination summary. Drawing on the previous study of the DSM-IV (which recontextualizes patient conditions in terms of scientific classifications), Berkenkotter expanded the study to explore how the DSM-IV functions to link the social worlds of therapist-practitioner, psychiatrist, physician, social worker, insurance company auditor, and lawyer with that of client (338). She argues that the concept of genre system is a useful tool for researching the complex, historically mediated text/context relationships.

Like Berkenkotter, Dorothy Winsor draws on the framework of genre system, applying this framework to her study of engineers on the job. She reported on four case studies from a nine-year study of entry-level engineers writing at work. She was interested in the genre of "documentation," defined as "the representation of past or future

action used to build agreement about how that action is to be defined or perceived” (“Genre and Activity Systems” 207). The genre of documentation coordinates work and provides ways to deal with conflict and maintain consensus. As the entry-level engineers made the transition from students to employees, they documented actions to protect themselves (CYA) and to prompt action by putting decisions and instructions in writing. One engineer, Al, became a labor relations representative for his facility, thus acting as a “mediator” between the union and management. Whether interviewing workers accused of violating work rules, responding to a filed grievance, or taking minutes during contract negotiations, Al used documentation genres to “control understanding of both these past events and future ones” in order “to maintain the overall activity system in which all of his company’s employees participated” (219).

Furthering this study of how text and context are mutually constitutive, Orlikowski and Yates propose using—in the place of “genre system”—“genre repertoire” (following Bakhtin’s use of the term) as an analytic tool for investigating the structuring of communicative practices. They argue that “to understand a community’s communicative practices, we must examine the set of genres that are routinely enacted by members of the community. We designate such a set of genres a community’s ‘genre repertoire’” (542). The researchers conducted a study of computer language designers located at universities and company sites dispersed geographically through the U.S. and for whom interactions were conducted mostly through electronic correspondence. Based on their collection of transcripts and interviews with subjects, the researchers identified a genre repertoire consisting of three genres: the memo (for general communicative purposes), proposal (for recommending courses of action), and dialogue (responses to previous interactions). Examining the group’s genre repertoire revealed aspects of the organizing process:

The presence of the memo genre and the absence of the report genre . . . reveal that the CL participants implicitly organized themselves as a temporary organization. . . . The rising use of the dialogue genre over the course of the project suggests that the CL participants came to rely increasingly on ongoing conversations as an effective means for conducting their deliberations about language design. (570)

Not only did the concept of genre repertoire act as an analytical tool for “operationalizing and investigating communicative practices in communities,” but it was also useful for tracking change over time and for examining differences in structure, outcomes, and performance (571). Research studies employing a social framework focused renewed attention on how genres function as sites for enculturation into communities or systems of discourse, a subject of research studies described in the section that follows.

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF WORKPLACE GENRES

In his book *Other Floors, Other Voices*, John Swales employs a method of research that he calls “textography,” which he defines as “something more than a disembodied textual or discursal analysis, but something less than a full ethnographic account” (1). Swales considers the local, institutional context of textual production, examining the system of texts embedded in the literate culture of the university, particularly on three floors of the North University Building, which are occupied by three different disciplines (computing, taxonomic botany, and ESL). While carrying out a complex analysis of texts that is context-sensitive, the text itself remains the primary tool of analysis. Joining in Bazerman’s call for “a richer, more empirical” picture of how texts are used in organizations (“Speech Acts” 322), Anthony Paré and Graham Smart, in “Observing Genres in Action: Toward a Research Methodology,” propose an alternative approach rooted in the social sciences, specifically, ethnomethodology. Such an approach, they argue, would allow those researching professional organizations and workplace settings insight into not just the textual practices and process of learning genres but also the social role of participants and initiation into a workplace community or organization. They propose a definition of genre and research methods “that can help researchers explore the full range of social action that constitutes an organization’s repeated rhetorical strategies or genres” (153). In addition, they define a research tool and lens for examining the process of learning genres, how genres are learned through initiation and participation in a community, and how a genre constrains or enables participation in a community.

Exploring the socialization of participants in a workplace organization, Anne Beaufort (“Learning the Trade”) draws on data from a larger ethnographic study of a non-profit organization, focusing on

two writers new to the organization, Pam and Ursula, who are both experienced and effective writers. Via weekly interviews with the women, collection of their writing, and observation of the work site, Beaufort discovers how genres intersect with the communal goals of the workplace and thus play a significant role in the writer's goals and in the social apprentice model. For example, as Pam and Ursula learn the hierarchy of genres, they also learn about the hierarchy of social roles—for instance, that grant proposals are produced by the Executive Director and take precedence over form letters or press releases sent by lower-level employees. Genres, then, are important keys to socialization and identity within a workplace organization.

Moving from the research site of an NPO to a financial institution, Graham Smart conducts research that further seeks to describe the role of genre in carrying out social goals, research that “suggests a reinterpretation of genre as a broad rhetorical strategy enacted, collectively, by members of a community in order to create knowledge essential to their aims” (“Genre as Community Invention” 124). He studies a community of executives and research staff at the Bank of Canada, where he carries out participant/observer research as an in-house writing trainer. Through analysis of interviews with research staff, reading protocols by executive readers, field notes and collection of written texts, Smart discovers that the family of genres used at BOC is an important community resource that generates and structures the intellectual activity of the community:

Genres contributing to discussion of monetary policy include, for example, the note to management, which describes and interprets current economic or financial trends in Canada or other countries; the research memorandum, which presents macroeconomic work of a theoretical, of econometric nature; and the staff economic projection, which provides forward-looking analyses of the Canadian, American, and global economies. (130)

Based on his understanding of genre as “a community-enacted, knowledge building rhetorical strategy,” Smart argues that generic discourse responds to contextual influences and that, in turn, the interplay of contextual influences determines common (and distinct) genre features.

Further exploring the dynamic interaction of genre and context, Geoffrey Cross analyzes two genres produced by an insurance company, an executive letter and a planning report. In his ethnographic study of the group writing of two different genres within a particular organizational culture, Cross collected data while doing a 20-hour internship at the site and followed up with discourse-based interviews and collection of texts and drafts, including observation of brainstorming and editing sessions. Cross found that “Generic and contextual differences helped create two very differing collaborative processes” (146). In the letter-writing process, conflict emerged over how best to carry out the genre’s purpose of recounting the year’s progress, with one account more favorable to the company’s success or operating profit and the other representing the company as “struggling within a troubled industry” (146). With regard to context and genre, the report writing was smoother and goals more shared, perhaps because the more “multivocal genre”—which includes descriptions of the previous year, plans for the new year, and plans to execute—allowed the report to emphasize success while reporting the operating loss, thus resolving the conflict. Overall, Cross found that genres cannot be considered apart from the social forces that shape and are shaped by them. He concludes by arguing that “we need to conduct more real-world studies of the group writing of different genres in different contexts” (152), and this focus on the conflict and multiplicity of genres is the subject of the next section.

RESEARCH ON CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL/WORKPLACE CONTEXTS

As genre research moved from analysis of single genres to groups of connected genres and the relationships among genres within activity systems, researchers were able to uncover the complex communicative interactions that shape social actions and professional identities and define genre sets, genre systems, and genre repertoires. Drawing on the framework of “genre repertoire” and conducting an “interpretive ethnography” that allowed him to read the group’s genres to learn something about the group and its activities, Graham Smart, in “Reinventing Expertise: Experienced Writers in the Workplace Encounter a New Genre,” studied how experienced writers encounter an unfamiliar genre. He observed staff economists at the Bank of

Canada as they went about producing, for the first time, an article for the *Bank of Canada Review*, an internally produced publication for external readership. Smart was interested in the contrast between writers' habitual, skilled participation in the mainstream discourse practices of the Bank of Canada and their contrary experience with an unfamiliar, rhetorically dissimilar genre (224). Comparing the *Review* articles to internal research memos, Smart discovered that writers have difficulty with the external *Review* audience and difficulty in adopting an institutional persona and communicating the Bank views to the public. He found that "making a successful transition to the genre . . . involves adjusting to a complex array of new rhetorical constraints, textual forms, and social relations" (245), a complex mediation of genre conventions and negotiation between individual choice and generic constraints.

As a counterpart to studies examining how writers negotiate new or conflicting genre expectations, some studies examine how workplace writers challenge and resist existing genres. In "A Time to Speak, a Time to Act: A Rhetorical Genre Analysis of a Novice Engineer's Calculated Risk Taking," Natasha Artemeva reports on a case study (as part of a six-year longitudinal study of 10 engineers over the course of their academic and professional careers) of a novice engineer, Sami, who learns to successfully challenge a workplace genre. The study focused on two research questions: "1) What are the ingredients of rhetorical genre knowledge that allow a novice to be successful in challenging and changing rhetorical practices of the workplace? 2) Where and how does a novice accumulate rhetorical knowledge of professional genres?" (192). Disappointed by what he sees as "Time, money and other resources constantly being wasted due to bad or lack of documentation," Sami drew on a proposal for a new implementation plan and presented it to management, who accepted his proposal. Based on his previous personal experiences (a family of engineers), educational experiences (in particular, an engineering communication course he had taken), along with his workplace experiences, Sami was able to use his engineering genre knowledge to adapt to the exigencies of a particular situation (217). Even as a novice engineer and new employee, he understood the flexibility of genres, which "underlies the importance of the rhetor's understanding of the improvisational qualities of genre" (225).

Following genre studies like those above that explored the dynamic interaction of text and social structure and text and culture, recent genre studies have also examined how genres reflect and reinforce ideologies. In her study entitled "Ordering Work: Blue-collar Literacy and

the Political Nature of Genre,” Winsor explores the political aspect of genre as a form of social action, arguing that previous research has neglected this aspect (155). She observed the work of three engineers and three technicians at AgriCorp, a large manufacturer of agricultural equipment. Winsor was interested in exploring the tension between lab technicians and engineers and, as a result, chose to analyze the genre of the work order, which negotiates between these two groups and “is used to both bridge and maintain an existing social structure” at AgriCorp (158). Work orders are generic textual tools that contain instructions for conducting tests of replacing parts (engineers set the tasks for technicians). Through 36 hours of observation of engineers as they wrote work orders and technicians as they carried out work orders, in addition to interviews with engineers and analysis of work orders, Winsor found that work orders both triggered and concealed the work of technicians and worked to maintain the corporate hierarchy. A hierarchical divide existed as engineers envisioned technicians as little more than tools that they activated through the work order, instead of seeing them as agents and participants in the social action. In this way, “genre is a profoundly political force” (183).

The political force and very real material consequences of genre are clearly evident in a study of the closing argument in the Brazilian legal system. Cristiane Fuzer and Nina Célia Barros conducted a linguistic analysis of how “the public prosecutor and the defense attorney in the genre of final arguments create different characterizations of actors to enlist the court in various representations of truth” (80). They note, for example, how the defense closing argument is constructed as if created by the defendant in order to humanize the bureaucratic process. Because the basic function of the closing argument is to request the defendant’s conviction or acquittal or to sentence the defendant, this genre plays a powerful role, with significant material consequences.

The powerful role that genre plays in professional settings is the subject of studies done by Anthony Paré that examine the complexities of power in the rhetorical activity of social work. Through his interviews with social workers and apprentices and analysis of social work genres (referral forms, initial assessments, progress reports, transfer reports), Paré (“Writing as a Way into Social Work”) found that “Within the genre system of the hospital, social work texts are important insofar as they provide knowledge to the hospital’s more prestigious communities of practice. Social work newcomers learn to collaborate in com-

munity knowledge-making activities, or genre sets, that are shaped by levels of power and status within the larger genre system” (160). In a later, related study more focused on a particular social work culture and genre (record keeping), Paré (“Genre and Identity”) reported on his study of Inuit social workers, all women, from arctic Quebec, who were responsible for record keeping. What he found is that, due to their location between Inuit and Canadian cultures (63), there was a reluctance to keep detailed records to give to white authorities and a resulting tension between the workers’ lived experience of daily life and their professional role. In this way, the genres of records demanded an erasure of self and transformation into professional identity.

Further exploring the genre of records and the relationship between genre and power, Catherine Schryer designed a study of records within a veterinary medical context. In “The Lab vs. the Clinic: Sites of Competing Genres,” Schryer focused on two genres characteristic of research and practice in this context: the experimental article, expressed as IMRDS, and the medical record keeping system, the POVMR (106). According to Schryer, “These genres reflect and help to maintain a research-practice division characteristic of disciplines like medicine” (106). Schryer’s ethnographic inquiry consisted of 80 interviews with students, faculty, and practitioners; 200 hours of participant-observation (in the classroom, lab, and clinic); 10 reader protocols of faculty evaluating student papers; and extensive document collection. Schryer found that IMRDS (reporting genres) and POVMR (recording genres) differed in purpose, addressivity, and epistemology. Through her participation in the community and examination of its genres, Schryer found that the new system of record keeping mirrored the way that practitioners solved complicated medical problems and coordinated social action as other staff members later added to the records. In addition, by comparing competing genres—comparing the new system of records to the former system—Schryer was able to discern varying social purposes and values implicit in these two genres, divergences that revealed tensions between researchers and practitioners in the college. These professional genres “deeply enact their ideology” (122) by expressing clear power relations. Because research on genre suggests that genres coordinate the work of groups and organizations. Schryer concludes with a call for more research on the inherent ideological and socializing forces at work within genres (122).

Responding to her own call for genre researchers to explore the interrelationship of genre and power, Schryer conducted a later study whose purpose is to “assist in the development of methodological and theoretical tools that genre researchers can use to explore the ways genres work to reproduce power relations within and between organizations and individuals” (“Genre and Power” 74). She applied this perspective to one representative genre—examples of ‘bad news’ letters produced by an insurance company, demonstrating how contextual approaches (participant accounts) can enrich textual approaches or close readings of texts that instantiate a genre. Schryer framed her critical methods for studying genres within two major approaches that “overlap and mutually influence each other”—rhetorical and linguistic approaches (76). Reporting on a case study of negative letters in an insurance company, which included critical discourse analysis of 26 letters and interviews with 3 writers, Schryer found that all writers followed the same structure of delaying bad news (the buffer, explanation, decision, closing structure), even though they believed readers did not follow that structure. Based on her analysis of linguistic resources and strategies, she discovered that the letters revealed “a world in which readers are kept waiting, a world in which their movements are restricted often to speech acts, a world in which they are not encouraged to respond, and a world in which they are often judged harshly” (94). She concluded, “At its heart, this genre attempts to freeze its readers in space and time and reduce them to passivity and nonresponse” (94). In conjunction with the textual analysis, the contextual information gathered through interviews with the writers revealed “a network of power relations” as writers felt constrained to enact and reproduce the set of discursive practices, even as they were uncomfortable making decisions that affect their readers’ lives. Like the letter-writers, all writers are “genred all the time,” that is, socialized through genres and their exposure to various genres, which are “profoundly ideological” (95), a finding that has implications for further research. Schryer calls for further examination of the genres negotiated within organizations and “in particular the ideologies they create and especially the subject positions they create and maintain” (95). The next chapter, which focuses on genre research in public and new media contexts, takes up Schryer’s call to focus on genres as actions or verbs, as structures that are “strategy-produced and driven” and that “produce strategy” (95).