
Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond

Edited by

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Rhetorical Genre Studies and Beyond is addressed to researchers and teachers alike. Its purpose is both to allow its readers to refine their understanding of what it means to master genres as well as to indicate directions for the development of new genre pedagogies. The collection provides readers with an overview of the most recent developments in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and emphasizes the importance of empirical research for the field. The majority of chapters address issues of genre learning and the development of professional identities by novices taking their first steps in the professions. The collection demonstrates how a combination of RGS with other related theories (e.g., Activity Theory, situated learning perspective, and so on) powerfully illuminates various aspects of genre learning. At the same time, the collection discusses other complementary theories and points to new possibilities not yet explored by researchers within the RGS tradition.

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The chapters assembled in this volume reflect recent thinking and research in the field of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS)—a term coined by Freedman (1999, 2001) to refer to that body of genre theory, research, and scholarship that has developed primarily in North America over the past twenty years. Our objectives in putting together this volume were as follows: 1) to provide an overview of recent developments in Rhetorical Genre Studies, 2) to point to some of the gaps or limitations that empirical research has revealed in the theory so far developed, and 3) to illustrate how scholars have been able to draw on other, complementary theories to enhance the explanatory power of RGS, particularly in the research into the school-to-work transition.

The conventional view is that the approach to discourse implicit in RGS was first introduced to contemporary work in rhetoric in Carolyn Miller's seminal article "Genre as Social Action" (1984/1994). Since then, a combination of further theorizing and especially extensive empirical work has provided composition researchers with a very rich body of highly textured, largely qualitative work that has explained and elaborated on the discursive practices of professionals in their workplace and students in universities.

The power of RGS as an explanatory framework has derived from the following. First, rather than concentrating primarily on literature as earlier work on genre had done, rhetorical studies of genre have focussed on non-literary forms of writing and speaking. As Miller (1984/1994) argues: "To consider as potential genres such homely discourse as the letter of recommendation, the user manual, the progress report, the ransom note, the lecture," etc., is not "to trivialize the study of genres." On the contrary, "it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves" (p. 27). More important, rather than focusing simply

on the regularities of texts, RGS has looked at these textual regularities as traces of the social, political, and rhetorical actions implicit in these texts. Indeed, as Artemeva observes in this volume ("Approaches to Learning Genres"), for RGS, genres themselves play a key role in reproducing the very situations to which they respond. At the same time, far from being rigid templates, genres can be modified according to rhetorical circumstances (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995); or, in other words, genres evolve, develop, and decay (Miller, 1984/1994). In her overview chapter in this volume, Artemeva traces the development of RGS over the past twenty years, paying particular attention to the interplay of the "stabilized-for-now" (Schryer, 1993, 1994) quality of genres and their flexibility.

For these reasons, RGS has provided a powerful theoretical framework for illuminating research into the historical evolution of genres, the creation of specific genres in response to evolving socio-cultural, ideological, and political circumstances, and the acquisition of genres by novices to new communities of discourse.

Chapters in this collection illustrate the rich and nuanced nature of empirical research conducted using an RGS framework. It shows how the theory helps researchers make sense of what they observe as well as how empirical data sharpen the theory. At the same time, it also dramatizes the way in which more recent researchers have been forced to reconsider their theoretical framework in the light of their empirical investigations and to consequently modify and/or complement RGS theory with other theoretical perspectives.

All the chapters in this volume illustrate the necessity of looking for complementary theories to help researchers make sense of the data. For example, Artemeva ("Approaches to Learning Genres") proposes to complement RGS with Activity Theory and theories of situated learning when studying the process of genre learning. She suggests that such a combination helps researchers see connections that cannot be seen when RGS is used as the sole theoretical framework, specifically in the study of novices learning genres of their profession. Two chapters by Freedman focus on the relations between theory and research, in particular the relations between RGS and research on students and professionals working "in computers." The first chapter ("Interaction between Theory and Research") provides a

brief overview of the similarities and differences between the "North American" and "Sydney" schools of genre and shows why one theory is preferred over another because of the nature of the empirical realities that the researchers have chosen to explore. This chapter may be of particular interest to teachers of English for Specific Purposes/English for Academic Purposes who may be more familiar with the Sydney school of genre, but less familiar with rhetorical genre theory.

The second chapter by Freedman ("Pushing the Envelope") focuses on the relationship between theory and empirical data from a different perspective. Here, she describes in some detail certain phenomena uncovered during the course of several research studies—phenomena that RGS cannot seem to account for. She seizes on the aberrations in order to point to potential gaps in RGS, arguing that the theory needs to be amended or expanded in order to account for such significant wayward data. The chapter tentatively explores other theories of discourse that might account for the wayward data—for example, the linguistic categorizations of Roman Jakobson and James Britton et al., as well as the symbolic philosophy of language of Susanne Langer. There is no attempt, however, to provide a large-scale theoretic reconceptualization. The objective of this chapter is to ask questions of RGS and to point to possible complementary theories, with the hope of encouraging more exploration of this kind.

Researchers using a RGS framework have paid particular attention to the processes of genre learning and use during novices' acculturation to the workplace and their professional identity formation. The majority of chapters in this volume address issues of genre learning and the development of professional identities by novices taking their first steps in the professions.

Schryer, Campbell, Spafford, and Lingard present a study of the genre of the medical case presentation conducted by students who are trained to become physicians and social workers. The authors focus on how professional ways of using language, especially the ways health-care providers cite patient information, shape the students' professional identities. This chapter again demonstrates one of the important characteristics of RGS: its ability to coalesce with and to be expanded by a range of other related theories. In this chapter, RGS combines

with Activity Theory, Giddens's theory of structuration (1984), Bourdieu's social theory of practice (1972), as well as with textual linguistic analyses. The linguistic perspective allows the authors to analyze strategies that study participants use in their genre interactions. The study demonstrates that there are some significant differences between the ways the genre of the case presentation functions in the training of physicians and social workers and shows the effect of the training on the formation of professional identities of novices in these two fields.

In the second chapter by Artemeva ("A Time to Speak, A Time to Act"), a combination of RGS, Bourdieu's social theory of practice (1972), and a discussion of temporal aspects of genre based on classical rhetoric (*kairos* and *chronos*) provide a productive theoretical framework for a longitudinal case study of a novice engineer who has successfully challenged a workplace genre. As in Schryer et al.'s work, this study also explores professional identity formation in a novice who has recently entered a workplace. This research shows that a combination of the novice's family background, a university engineering communication course, and workplace experiences helped him achieve success. It also provides evidence that, even though genres may differ from workplace to workplace, experienced professionals do recognize and accept more effective communicative practices imported from elsewhere. Thus, best practices may be taught apart from local contexts.

The chapter by Smart and Brown concludes the collection. It demonstrates the use of a context-sensitive qualitative approach to research into genre learning. In this study, Smart and Brown combine participatory action research, RGS, and Activity Theory in a powerful framework that allows them to engage a group of professional writing student interns in examining their own learning as they encounter new genres in the workplace. This integrated framework permits the authors to combine research and pedagogy as they assist the student interns with developing a rhetorical vision that is both useful across different workplace cultures and significant to the formation of the interns' professional identities.

This volume provides readers with the most recent developments in, and emphasizes the importance of empirical research for, Rhetorical Genre Studies. In addition, it discusses ways in which RGS may be complemented by other social

theories and methodologies to make it more powerful and encompassing in its analysis of empirical data. Chapters presented in this volume are addressed to researchers and teachers alike as they allow the readers to refine their understanding of what mastering genres means and indicate directions for the development of new genre pedagogies.

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Approaches To Learning Genres: A Bibliographical Essay

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Recent research into the university-to-workplace transition (e.g., Anson & Forsberg, 1990/2003; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000b; MacKinnon, 1993/2003; Winsor, 1996) has revealed that novices typically go through a fairly slow process of organizational acculturation before they acquire and can successfully use workplace genres. Observations made in such studies also demonstrate that the types of communication that university students are involved in at school and in the workplace are often “worlds apart” (Dias et al., 1999, p. iii). In other words, these studies are clearly suspicious of the efficacy of traditional classroom-based professional communication education that often fails to prepare students for the world of work (e.g., Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994). However, some of my recent observations made in the course of an eight-year-long study (see “A Time to Speak,” this volume) provide evidence that under certain conditions, classroom instruction can, in fact, have a markedly positive effect on students’ learning of genres of professional communication.

One of the central questions Dias et al. (1999) seek to answer is where genre knowledge comes from. Lemke (2004) raises a complementary question: “We don’t know much about how we overcome the differences between settings and setting-specific activities by creating trajectories and traversals of integration across settings and activities” (n.p.). In this article I introduce a conceptual framework that helps us find preliminary answers to these key questions. This theoretical framework further extends Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and provides researchers with a more complete view of genre learning, especially as it pertains to the school-to-work transition.

In the past decade or so, the body of research on workplace learning and school-to-work transition has

significantly grown with many of the recent studies conducted within the theoretical framework of Rhetorical Genre Studies (e.g., Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002a; Dias et al., 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000). RGS moves the study of genre beyond the exploration of its textual features on to the analysis of the social contexts that give rise to and shape genres (Freedman & Medway, 1994a, 1994b; Miller, 1984/1994a) and, thus, lends itself as a useful theoretical framework to research into changes in genre creation, development, learning, and use. However, as Freedman ("Interaction between Theory and Research," this volume) explains, while theories both help us understand the data and shape further studies, data sometimes make researchers reconsider, modify, and/or complement the theory with other theoretical perspectives. This is why empirical research has proved essential for Rhetorical Genre Studies.

RGS provides us with a social perspective on the way that individuals learn and use genres. In order to better flesh out relationships between *individual* and *social* (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967), between *agency* and *structure* (cf. Giddens, 1984; Schryer, 2000, 2002), some researchers have successfully complemented RGS with such social theories of learning as activity theory, situated learning, distributed cognition, linguistic approaches to genre, and other theoretical perspectives (e.g., Artemeva & Freedman, 2001; Freedman & Adam, 2000b; Freedman & Smart, 1997; Dias et al., 1999; Le Maistre & Paré, 2004; Schryer, 2000, 2002, 2005; Winsor, 2001). In this chapter, I propose to extend the RGS framework and complement it with both activity theory (AT) and situated learning. This combination of complementary yet distinct theoretical perspectives will allow researchers to explore the interplay of individual and social in the study of genre learning in the process of novices' transition from school to the workplace.

This chapter consists of three major sections. In the first section, I review the development of RGS over the past twenty years and discuss its implications for the study of genre learning during the school-to-work transition. This review is followed by the sections that introduce and discuss complementary theoretical approaches: activity theory and situated learning. Each of these additional theoretical perspectives has already been combined with RGS by researchers in order to illuminate particular aspects of human communication: for example, by Artemeva and

Freedman (2001), Freedman and Adam (2000b), Paré (2000), and Schryer (2000). The chapter concludes with a discussion of such applications of the combined theoretical constructs from RGS, AT, and the situated perspective to the study of various communication contexts.

KEY CONCEPTS IN RHETORICAL GENRE STUDIES

The development of Rhetorical Genre Studies as a discipline started with the reconception of genre as social action proposed by Carolyn Miller (1984/1994a). Unlike the traditional approaches that view genres as stable text types characterized by their textual regularities, RGS considers genres as “typified symbolic actions in response to stock sets of situation types. Such a notion of genre allows for dynamism and change, given the inherent fluidity of the sociohistorical context to which genres respond” (Artemeva & Freedman, 2001, p. 166). The rhetorical approach to genre conceives textual regularities as socially constructed (Miller, 1984/1994a) and brings together “text and context, product and process, cognition and culture in a single, dynamic concept” (Paré, 2002, p. 57). RGS views genres as much more than simple organizers and regulators of human social activity (Devitt, 1996, 2000; Miller, 1984/1994a); genres are now seen as *constituting* human activity by “making it possible through its ideological and rhetorical conventions” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 340).

The overview starts with a brief history of the development of the social rhetorical view of writing and with Miller’s reconception and redefinition of genre as social action. It continues by introducing the contribution made to RGS by Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, focusing on the key notions of addressivity and utterance and discussing the flexibility of speech genres. The section then presents: the revised definition of genre proposed by Catherine Schryer (2000); the notions of genre sets (Devitt, 1996) and genre systems (Bazerman, 1994) that allow researchers to look beyond a single genre; the Bakhtinian notion of the temporal qualities of genre; Anne Freedman’s (1994, 2002) notions of textual and

nontextual uptake, and others.

The Development of the Social Rhetorical View of Writing

The development of RGS followed the rise and fall of the product-based and later process-based approaches in composition studies (see Dixon, 1967; Faigley, 1985; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Perl, 1979; Pianko, 1979 for further discussion of these approaches). Both these perspectives—the product and the process—failed to account for how social contexts influence meaning and affect the way a writer approaches a writing task (the process) and what s/he writes (the product) (Cooper, 1989; Paré, 1994). Gradually, it became clear that "writing and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social;" that is, from the contexts in which "writing gets done, from the conditions that enable writers to do what they do, and from the motives writers have for doing what they do" (Reither, 1985, p. 621). Due to the changing perception of the social aspects of composing, writing began to be considered as located in the social world and, thus, to be fundamentally structured by the environment (Cooper & Holzman, 1989).

A philosophic foundation for social and contextual perspectives on writing was provided by Burke (1957), Rorty (1979), and Bruffee (1986). A new emphasis on rhetorical context in composition studies had resulted in the emergence of a new approach that focussed on the social aspects of writing. This approach, known as the *social view*, began to dominate the area of composition studies by the 1980s (Cooper, 1989; Freedman & Medway, 1994a). The social view perceives knowledge as socially constructed in response to communal needs, goals, and contexts and the composing of texts as part of the social process by which knowledge is constructed (Freedman & Medway, 1994a). A writer is seen as continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems, and the discourse is viewed as "social, situated and motivated, constructed, constrained and sanctioned" (Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002b, p. 2). While the early post-process view treated context as already existing, as something that needed a response that genre embodied (Barabas,

1990; Faigley, 1985; Freedman & Medway, 1994c), the current *rhetorical context view* treats the relationship between context and genre as co-constructing and emphasizes that awareness of audience and purpose influences why, what, and how a writer writes (Bawarshi, 2000; Giltrow, 2002; Paré & Smart, 1994).

Reconception and Redefinition of Genre

Traditional approaches define genres as regular groupings of text types characterized by regularities in textual, that is, thematic, stylistic, and compositional, features, “irrespective of the historical conditions under which the types come to exist and of the social values attached to them in a given context” (Hanks, 1987, p. 670). Because of this focus on the texts themselves, rather than on the actions of the writers who produce them, this concept of genre seems limited from the social perspective. As Swales (1993) noted, to understand how genres function “we need more socio-cognitive input than the text itself provides” (p. 690). The theoretic shift toward the social in composition studies has been accompanied by a reconceptualization of genre as social action which develops in co-construction with a recognizable construal of a rhetorical situation (Miller, 1984/1994a; Paré & Smart, 1994) perceived as a combination of purpose, audience, and occasion (Coe & Freedman, 1998). That is, the new perspective on genre allows us to see genres as helping rhetors to construct the very recurrent situations to which they rhetorically respond. Bawarshi (2000) defines genres as *both* “the situation and the textual instantiation of that situation, the site at which the rhetorical and the social reproduce one another in specific kinds of texts” (p. 357). This new approach to genre studies puts more emphasis on the rhetorical strategy, or to echo Coe et al. (2002b), on “the functional/motivated relation between form and situation” (p. 4). Genres in this view are defined as historical conventions that regulate discourse production and consumption. To be specific, Hanks (1987) continues: “genres consist of orienting frameworks, interpretive procedures, and sets of expectations that are not part of discourse structure, but of the ways actors relate to and use language” (p. 670).

Rather than concentrating primarily on literature, rhetorical studies of genre have focussed on the social dynamics and social constitution of nonliterary forms of writing and

speaking. The RGS scholars turned their attention to such texts as the experimental article (e.g., Bazerman, 1988), reports by tax accountants (Devitt, 1991), student writing in content areas (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993, 1995; Giltrow, 2002), engineering documents (e.g., Artemeva, 1998; 2000b; Beer, 2000; Paradis, Dobrin & Miller, 1995), business memoranda (Yates, 1989), financial documents and social workers' records (Paré & Smart, 1994), and so on (for further discussion, see Dias & Paré, 2000; Freedman & Medway, 1994a). In other words, the main interest of the scholars conducting enquiry from the premises of RGS is to explore how and why non-literary "typified texts reflect and reproduce social situations and activities . . . how and why texts as cultural artifacts are produced; how they in turn reflect and help enact social actions; and how, finally, they can serve as sites for cultural critique and change" (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 336).

Genre as Social Action

The new view of genre is based on Miller's seminal article "Genre as social action" (1984/1994a), which, in turn, is grounded in Burke's New Rhetoric (1957), especially in his claim that discourse is action.

The New Rhetorical approach to genre studies allows researchers to concentrate on the ways "particular discourses are socially motivated, generated, and constrained" (Coe & Freedman, 1998, p. 137) and assists us in defining "the possibilities of meaning in discourse" (Hanks, 1987, p. 670). The distinguishing feature of the New Rhetorical inquiry is its focus on what discourse does. The New Rhetoric emphasizes discourse as primarily action—that is, its significance should be judged on the basis of what it does—and shifts emphasis away from discourse as representation, which is considered secondary (Coe & Freedman, 1998; Coe, Lingard, & Teslenko, 2002a). In other words, the New Rhetorical perspective on genre treats genre "as typified social action rather than as conventional formulas" (Devitt, 2000, p. 697).

Rhetorical Situation

Reconceptualizing genre as a social action, Miller (1984/1994a) explores "how a [social] understanding of genre

can help account for the ways we encounter, interpret, react to, and create particular texts" (p. 151) within a recurrent rhetorical situation, described by Bitzer (1968) as "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character" (p. 5). While Bitzer identified a rhetorical situation as recurrent through the recognition of its similar material and perceptual components, Miller (1984/1994a) went *beyond the material dimensions* of this explanation and provided a social interpretation of "how genre represents 'typified rhetorical action' based on recurrent rhetorical situations" (p.151). In 1979, Campbell and Jamieson posed a question, "do comparable situations ever exist?" (p. 15). Miller's (1984/1994a) response to this question was as follows:

What recurs is not a material situation (a real objective factual event) but our construal of a type. The typified situation, including typifications of participants, underlies typification in rhetoric. Successful communication would require that the participants share common types; this is possible insofar as types are socially created. (p. 29)

Miller argued that exigence is located in the social and is "a form of social knowledge—a mutual construing of objects, events, interests and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objective social need It provides an occasion, and thus a form, for making public our private versions of things" (p. 30). In other words, claimed Miller, exigence is nothing else but "a socially objectified motive" (p. 31), and "to comprehend an exigence is to have a motive" (p. 30). Exigence is seen as a defining factor for a rhetorical situation, as the factor that shapes our recognitions of a social situation and the one that helps us reproduce it. Exigence becomes not only part of our experience and our concept of a recurring situation but also *part of our response to the situation* (Bawarshi, 2000).

Miller (1984/1994a) notes that situations are "social constructs that are the result, not of 'perception,' but of

‘definition.’ Because human action is based on and guided by meaning, not by material causes, at the centre of action is a *process of interpretation* [italics added]” (p. 29). Genre, in Miller's view, is a conductor of both social and private: it provides a rhetor with a rhetorical means “for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with recurrent” (p. 37). By situating exigencies within the social, Miller's definition allows researchers to consider genre as extending beyond regularities in textual features. Genres in this interpretation are considered *both* rhetorical actions *and* recurrent situations (Paré & Smart, 1994), or, to repeat after Bawarshi (2000), genres allow us to “rhetorically recognize and respond to particular situations . . . because genres are how we socially construct these situations by defining and treating them as particular exigencies” (p. 357).

Genres as Textual Instantiations of Rhetorical Situations

In other words, while recognizing that genres can be characterized by regularities in textual form and substance, current thinking perceives these regularities as surface reflections of an underlying regularity. Genres play a key role in reproducing the very situations to which they respond. As Bawarshi (2000) puts it, genres constitute “their own social semiotic, a semiotic that rhetorically shapes and enables social actions and in turn is constituted by the very action which it enables. This is why genres shape our social realities and us as we give shape to them” (p. 353). In this new perspective, genres are seen as less defined by their formal features than by “their purposes, participants, and subjects: by their rhetorical actions. Genre . . . is defined by its situation and function in a social context” (Devitt, 2000, p. 698). Paré and Smart (1994) define genre as “a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles performed by writers and readers” (p. 147). Bawarshi (2000) sums up the new, rhetorical view of genre: “Genre *is* [italics in original] what it allows us to do, the potential that makes the actual possible, the ‘con’ and the ‘text’ at the same time” (p. 357).

Anne Freadman (2002) expressed the essence of the new

understanding of genre in the following words: "Genre is the capacity of human discourse that makes it different, say, from the language of the bees; that is what makes 'culture' a different matter from programmed instinct" (p. 41). Fundamental for the rhetorical view of genre is the work of Russian literary theorist, M. M. Bakhtin.

Flexibility of Genres

Bakhtin's ideas have enhanced our understanding of the social embeddedness of genres (both oral and written) within communities of language users and, therefore, are central for understanding social aspects of writing process. Bakhtin (1986a) defines speech genres as "relatively stable types" (p. 60) of utterances, providing two useful concepts for understanding the nature of genre: the responsive utterance as the analyzable unit of speech (rather than the word or sentence) and the addressive nature of speech. For Bakhtin, the "responsive utterance" is the fundamental unit of analysis of human communication because it "occupies a particular *definite* [italics in original] position in a given sphere of communication" (1986a, p. 91). Words and sentences acquire meaning through the utterance. Describing an individual's speech (both oral and written) as always situated within the speech of others, he stresses the importance of recognizing the plurality of speakers in order to examine language use as communication (Hunt, 1994).

Utterance. Bakhtin sees an utterance as a link in a chain of discourse and points to its dual nature: any utterance simultaneously responds to past utterances while also anticipating future utterances. Bakhtin (1986a) highlights the importance of the presence of "the other" in language as well as the more specific awareness of a respondent in a communicative situation: "from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake, in essence, it is actually created." He goes on to insist: "From the very beginning the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response" (p. 94).

In Bakhtin's view, words and sentences acquire meaning

through the utterance, and speakers choose the generic form of the utterance that best meets their "speech plan or speech will" (p. 77).

Dialogism and addressivity. The dialogical principle of language that Bakhtin (1986a) advocates presupposes the importance of addressivity; that is, "the quality of being directed to someone" (p. 95). Without an addressee to whom an utterance is directed, it loses its dialogic context and turns into a separate statement belonging to nobody. Bakhtin suggests that addressivity is a constitutive feature of genre, noting that each genre "has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it as a genre" (p. 95).

Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and the addressivity of speech indicate the degree to which individual texts act as links between previous texts and the inevitable response of others. Miller (1994b) notes that addressivity allows an "individual communicative action and social system . . . [to] interact with each other" (p. 71). Bawarshi (2000) responds to the Bakhtinian notion of addressivity by asserting that "the speaker's very conception of the addressee is mediated by genre, because each genre embodies its own typical conception of the addressee. In fact, the very word and its relation to other words is also mediated by speech genres"

(p. 348). The dialogic nature of speech, the necessity for a change of speaking subjects and respondents, and the process of utterance exchange, all reveal the communicative sense of oral language, and, according to Flower (1994) and others, "much the same thing is said to happen in writing"

(p. 60).

Flexibility of genres. Foreseeing the critics' reaction to his theory of speech genres as limiting a rhetor's creativity, Bakhtin asserts that the better our command of genres, the more flexibility and freedom we can apply in using genres and the more fully we can express our creativity in the them (1986a). Thus, when acting recurrently in a recurrent situation, one can still express one's individuality when using a fully mastered genre (Freedman & Medway, 1994c).

Bakhtin (1986a) stresses that "genres are subject to free creative reformulation . . . [but] to use a genre freely and

creatively is not the same as to create a genre from the beginning” (p. 80). As Adam and Artemeva (2002) observe, redefinitions of genre based on Bakhtin’s and Miller’s views “recognize the plasticity and flexibility of texts and the rhetor’s ability to reshape and manipulate genres to suit certain rhetorical situations” (p. 181). Rhetors learn genres while being immersed in the situational context (Miller, 1992). Genres, thus, can be “expertly used by speakers even though they may be unaware of generic parameters” (Hanks, 1987, p. 681). The central premise of Bakhtin’s theory of genre as reiterated by Hanks is that “human consciousness . . . comes into contact with reality only through the mediation of ideology . . . and every genre has its own value-laden orientation” (p. 671). Hanks stresses that this “value-laden” quality of genre doesn’t allow it to be viewed as a finished product; genres “remain partial and transitional. The actuality of discourse changes with its reception, and social evaluation is always subject to revision” (p. 681).

Genres involve both form and content, which are inseparable (Giltrow, 2002). The form of discourse in a discipline or profession changes along with the changing intellectual content. As Freedman and Medway (1994c) state, “particularly significant for North American genre studies has been Bakhtin’s insistence that . . . generic forms ‘are much more flexible, plastic and free’ [1986a, p. 79] than grammatical or other linguistic patterns” (p. 6). Far from being rigid templates, genres can be modified according to rhetorical circumstances (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). In Miller’s (1984/1994a) words, “genres change, evolve, and decay” (p. 36). Miller (1994b) observes that the shared knowledge that allows individuals to be engaged in a competent communication “includes structures of interaction, of exigence, of participant roles, and of other rules and resources. Genres . . . help do our rhetorical thinking for us”

(p. 72). This view of genre provides a lens for the analysis of novices’ ability to modify genres of their profession and use them successfully (see “A Time to Speak,” this volume).

The reconception of genre has led to the changes in the focus of genre studies, which in turn has led to further development of the field of Rhetorical Genre Studies. Within the RGS framework, genres are viewed as *situational expectations*. A complete description of a genre from the RGS perspectives

“requires attention to how the form is rhetorical, to how it embodies the type of recurring situation that evokes it, and how it provides a strategic response to that situation” (Coe et. al., 2002b, p. 6). In other words, genre is a concept that accounts for the ways all types of discourse function in the world, for the social roles assigned to various discourses, and for “the mode of being of those who participate in the discourse” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 339). Within the framework of Rhetorical Genre Studies, genres are seen as types of discourse originating from “the interplay between systems of social value, linguistic convention, and the world portrayed. They derive their practical reality from their relation to particular linguistic acts, of which they are both the products and the primary resources” (Hanks, 1987, p. 671).

Schryer's Revised Definition of Genre

It is necessary to acknowledge and keep in mind that genres are both enabling and constraining (cf. Giddens, 1984; Katz, 1998). In this respect, Katz (1998) observes that genre "conventions *constrain* [italics in original] writers by limiting the form, style, language, and content that are appropriate in particular situations. Conversely, conventions *enable* [italics in original] by supplying templates, genres, and topics which can be useful to the writer at all stages of the writing process" (p. 13). Katz further notes that both these aspects of conventions "are forms of control: Both aspects tell the writer what is appropriate and acceptable" (p. 13).

Continuing Bakhtin's argument about the *relative* stability and flexibility of genres (1986a), Schryer makes an important observation that genres are only "stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action" (1993, p. 204) and asserts that genres have a capacity to change in response to changing exigencies. Genres, therefore, are not simple tools that rhetors use to deal with the situations that they are already familiar with; “rather, situations and their participants are always in the process of reproducing each other within genre” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 354). Schryer, following Jamieson (1975), finds that "genres have complex sets of relations with past and present text-types: genres come from somewhere and are transforming into something else" (Schryer, 1999, p. 81). Users

who are affected by genres are, in turn, transforming genres used within their discourse communities. It is worth noting that, though rhetors do have the ability to choose appropriate generic responses to rhetorical situations from the available genres, the flexibility of genres varies and, at particular moments in time, some genres or some aspects of genres are stabilized (if only "for now"), deeply ingrained, closely regulated, and thus, recognizable, predictable, reproducible, and, indeed, constraining (A. Paré, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Schryer (1995, 2002) further develops her argument about the temporary stability of genres by proposing to use "genre" as a verb: we genre our way through social interactions, choosing the correct form in response to each communicative situation we encounter—and we are doing it with varying degrees of mastery. At the same time "we are genred" (2002, p. 95), that is, we are socialized into particular situations through genres. This view of genre as stabilized only *for now*, allowing for change, and forming the rhetor's behaviour, is particularly useful for researchers who study the school-to-work transition process during which novices learn to "genre" their way through academic and workplace situations. Such a view not only provides insights into novices' learning trajectories but also illuminates how these novices are "genred" into the rhetorical situations they encounter in various settings.

Based on her interpretation of the theoretical construct of rhetorical genre, Schryer (2000, 2002) proposed a revised definition of genre grounded in Campbell and Jamieson (1979).¹ Campbell and Jamieson used a *constellation* metaphor as the basis of their view of rhetorical genre: "a genre is composed of a constellation of recognizable forms bound together by an internal dynamic" (p. 21). They asserted that "an understanding of the genre as a fusion of elements, formed from a constellation of forms, permits one to distinguish between classification and generic analysis" (p. 23).

Building upon this and drawing on Bourdieu's social theory of practice (1972), Schryer (2000) redefines genres as "constellations of regulated, improvisational strategies triggered by the interaction between individual socialization . . . and an organization" (p. 450).² Schryer (2000) explains that the term *constellation* allows her "to conceptualize genres as flexible sets of reoccurring practices (textual and nontextual)" (p. 450), while

the term *strategies* allows her “to reconceptualize rules and conventions (terms that seem to preclude choice) as strategies (a term that connotes choice) and thus explore questions related to agency” (p. 451). According to Schryer (2002), “agency refers to the capacity for freedom of action in the light of or despite social structures.” By structure she means “the social forces and constraints that affect so much of our social lives.” She adds that workplace communicators can use genre for “strategic action and even resistance to certain textual requirements” (pp. 64, 65). This reconceived perspective on genre allows us to see writing within a genre not as it was viewed traditionally—as constraining creativity and individuality—but rather as sites of tensions between creativity and convention that may allow for individual expression. In other words, genres are seen as both constraining and enabling.

Sets and Systems of Genres

Recently, attention of genre researchers has shifted from the analysis of single genres to groups of connected genres and to “the relationships among genres within a community” (Yates & Orlikowski, 2002, p. 103), what Spinuzzi (2004) calls genre “assemblages” (n.p.). Genre theorists have acknowledged that, even though analyses of individual genres provide us with information necessary for the understanding of community norms, practices, and ideologies, it is impossible to unpack complex communicative phenomena without studying *interactions* among genres (Devitt, 2000; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002). Bazerman (1994) suggested that within each specific setting, a limited range of interrelated genres “may appropriately follow upon another” (p. 98), affecting other genres that follow in response to a specific situation. He stated that in response to a typified situation, rhetors must act generically in order for others to recognize and accept their act, which would not be possible “without a shared sense of genre” (p. 100). However, considering only singular texts produced in response to a rhetorical context may limit our understanding of the complexity of generic interaction and the ways in which some genres call for other genres (Devitt, 2000). In one and the same social situation, usually, more than one genre is used, and “each genre within a situation type constitutes its own . . . particular social activity, its

own subject roles as well as relations between these roles, and its own rhetorical and formal features” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 351). Devitt (2000) observed that in order to understand how a genre functions, it is necessary to understand all the other genres that surround and interact with the one under consideration, both the ones that act explicitly and the ones whose existence is only implied.

Over the past ten to fifteen years, various concepts that describe interaction among genres have been proposed. Thus, in her study of tax accountants’ work, Devitt (1991) introduced the notion of a “genre set” (p. 339). A genre set represents all types of texts produced by a person in a particular occupation in the process of his/her work. Orlikowski and Yates (1994) suggested that sets of genres overlap and introduce the notion of *genre repertoire* (p. 541) to describe these sets. Spinuzzi (2004) observed that “this repertoire changes over time as new genres are improvised or otherwise introduced, and . . . that explicating these changes over time can help us to understand changes in the community’s communicative practices”(p. 4). Devitt’s *genre set*, as well as the notion of genre repertoire used by Orlikowski and Yates (1994), refer to the groups of genres routinely used by members of a particular community.

However, according to Bazerman (1994), it is crucial to understand that generic texts “have highly patterned relationships with the texts of others The genre set represents . . . only the work of one side of a multiple person interaction” (p. 98). Bazerman (1994) extended the notion of genre sets, proposing to overcome its limitations by introducing the concept of *genre systems*: the full set of “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (p. 97), and attends to the way that all the intertext is instantiated in generic form establishing the current act in relation to prior acts” (p. 99).

Bazerman’s concept of genre systems³ (1994) goes beyond the local community or professional organizational context and addresses connected genres produced as a result of consequential social action within the same activity “enacted by all parties involved” (Yates & Orlikowski, 2002, p. 103), from both within and outside a particular organization or community. Bazerman (1994) suggested that members of the communities involved in an activity create “a complex web of interrelated genres where each participant makes a recognizable

act or move in some recognizable genre, which then may be followed by a certain range of appropriate generic responses by others” (pp. 96-97). This concept reflects a complete communicative interaction including all social relations and the history of the interaction.⁴

Bakhtinian Notion of Chronotope

In 1979, Campbell and Jamieson observed that a rhetorical genre theory would allow researchers to move beyond separate individual events limited by time and place and explore similarities of rhetorical actions across time. The concept of *chronotope* developed by Bakhtin (1981) and absorbed into RGS provides us with this opportunity.

Bakhtin introduces the dimension of time-space, which he calls the *chronotope*. He developed this notion "to characterize the typical ways in which narrative genres move the scene of action from place to place, and less focally, the pacing of this movement and of typical scenes within it" (Lemke, 2004). Bakhtin stressed that in his definition of chronotope, time is inseparable from space; that is, temporal and spatial relationships are intrinsically connected.

Lemke (2004) observes that "Bakhtin's interest lies in how spatiality and temporality are constructed and used in narrative discourse, and particularly in how these constructions and uses are conventionalized differently by different authors, epochs, genres, etc."(n.p.).⁵ Bakhtin (1981) explains that "it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions" and adds that "the primary category in the chronotope is time" (p. 85). He says, "everything—from an abstract idea to a piece of rock on the bank of a stream—bears the stamp of time, is saturated with time, and assumes its form and meaning in time Everything in this world is a *time-space*, a true *chronotope* [italics in original]" (1986b, p. 42), or, in other words, genres regulate how readers and writers "spatially negotiate . . . [their] way through time" (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 346).

When Bakhtin analyzes chronotopes of various types of novels, he demonstrates that in some chronotopes (for example, in the literary chronotope of the Greek Romance "adventure novel of ordeal"), "an individual can be nothing other than

completely *passive*, completely *unchanging* to such an individual things can merely *happen* [italics in original]. He himself [*sic*] is deprived of any initiative” (1981, p. 105), while in other chronotopes (as in the Greek “adventure novel of everyday life”), the primary initiative belongs to the individual character.

The Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope is important for a study of genre learning by novices entering the workplace as it describes “the typical trajectories and paces of our traversals through and across places. Our traversals are activities seen in relation to space and time, place and pace” (Lemke, 2004). Schryer (1999, 2002) further extends Bakhtin’s discussion of the chronotope by stressing its axiological quality and stating that the notion of the chronotope expresses the connectedness not only of place and time but also of human values and current social beliefs. She stresses that in different chronotopes, differing sets of values are attributed to individual agents, resulting in individuals in some chronotopes having more access to meaningful action and power than in other chronotopes. Schryer insists that when we explore the relationship between genre and power, we need “to explore its relationship to time, not just in form of its relationship to the past, present, or future . . . [but also] in terms of a genre’s attempt to control time/space by defining what categories of time/space are at work within specific genres and accepted as just common sense” (1999, p. 81, 84). To understand the rules of genres and use them properly means “to know when and where it is appropriate to do and say certain things, and to know that to do and say them at inappropriate *places and times* [emphasis added] is to run the risk of having them ruled out” (Freadman, 1994, p. 59). In other words, our knowledge of genres is inseparable from our understanding of the chronotope. Schryer (2003) also asserts the need to explore “the possibilities for human action” in different chronotopes and “genre’s relationship to time and space” (p. 76) within these chronotopes.

Schryer (1999) notes that Bakhtin’s view of “the relationship of discourse to space and time” is characterized by the three key terms that he has introduced: dialogism, genre, and the chronotope (p. 82). Bakhtin (1981) asserts the representational importance of the chronotope. He states that time is materialized in space through the chronotope and thus,

“the chronotope [is] . . . a centre for concretizing representation” (p. 250). He restates the crucial role of the chronotope as a “conductor” of meanings through which they enter humans’ social experiences, or, in Freadman’s words (1994), “meaning is not content; it is place and function” (p. 59).

Schryer (1999) further explains that the exchange of meaning, “or point of temporary stability is possible only if the participants have access to shared categories or concepts. So *the other* [italics added] must be present either metaphorically or actually for events and for the participants to acquire meaning” (p. 82). In other words, “communication is, ultimately, about creating shared time” (Fabian, as cited in Schryer, 1999, p. 85). Or, as Miller (1994b) proposed, genre should be seen as a “constituent of society” that largely defines its communicative structure and “as that aspect of situated communication that is *capable of reproduction* [italics in original], that can be manifested in more than one situation, more than one concrete *space-time* [italics added]” (p. 71).

The view of genre that includes the understanding of its chronotopic qualities highlights its dynamic nature that is both constraining and enabling for a rhetor. This rhetorical view of genre allows us to uncover the recursive nature of the connection between genre and exigence within a particular chronotope. However, this view may lead to certain oversimplifications if we define genres “only as the typified rhetorical ways in which individuals function within socially defined and a priori recurrent situations” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 356) within a particular time/space. To avoid this simplification, Anne Freadman in her articles “Anyone for tennis?” (1994) and “Uptake” (2002) introduces the notion of *uptake*.

Uptake

Freadman (1994, 2002) applies to the study of genres the notion of uptake, borrowed from speech act theory. She defines uptake after Austin (1962/1994) as something that “happens when you accept an invitation to a conference, or agree to rewrite a paper for publication, . . . or disagree with, or explore, a proposition in theory” (Freadman, 2002, p. 39). Freadman proposes to use the concept of a game to facilitate our understanding of genres and suggests the game of tennis as an example. She says that we do not learn “the content” of a game

first and then learn its rules; rather “a game—and likewise a genre—is *constituted* [italics in original] by its rules and the techniques for implementing them” (1994, p. 46). A text in this view is considered a move in a game, and each move expects an uptake. In Freadman’s view, the *playing* of a game constitutes what she calls “a ceremony” (1994, p. 46), with the ceremony including not only the game but all activities surrounding it: preparation, the choice of partners, occasion, location, timing, the warm-up, the declaration of a winner, and closing rituals (1994).

Continuing with the tennis metaphor, Freadman notes that it is useful to consider each game, that is, each genre, as consisting, minimally, either of two texts, or of a text and a nontextual response, in a dialogical relation⁶. In other words, “genre is governed by a ceremonial sequence in a formalized *space and time* [italics added]” (Coe et al., 2002b, p. 7); that is, enacted by appropriate persons to cause a specified outcome. It is important, however, to bear in mind that the two texts constituting one genre in Freadman’s view, or a text and its nontextual uptake, will have different properties. It is important for our understanding of the notion of uptake that we realize the equal importance of the textual and nontextual parts of the utterance and accept that a textual “tennis shot” (Freadman, 1994) may be taken up non-textually.

Freadman proclaims that what is most important about our knowledge of genres is our knowledge of the difference between genres, or, as Devitt (2000) puts it, genres need to be understood in terms of what they are and what they are not. We never occupy a chronotope that is devoid of genres. As Freadman puts it, “we never leave the space of rituals for a space of non-rituals: we choose one ritual instead of another” (p. 61). Freadman continues by saying that “knowing a genre [that is, being able to carry out a task effectively] is also knowing how to take it up” (p. 63) and understanding its *time* and *place* (the chronotope). However, it also includes the understanding that genres do not exist independently. A genre “arises to complete or to contrast with other genres, to complement, augment, interrelate with other genres A genre, therefore, is to be understood in relation to other genres, so that its aims and purposes at a particular time are defined by its interrelation with and differentiation from others genres” (Devitt, 2000, p. 700).

In addition to the concepts reviewed above, the concept

of *agency* (agent, social actor) has recently become central to RGS research. Schryer (2002), for example, insists that when analyzing genres, researchers should bear in mind that the recurrence of the construal of a rhetorical situation (Miller, 1984/1994a) might be identified *only* by “the social actors involved in that social setting” (Schryer, 2002, p. 77). If we accept this view, then understanding relationships among social actors becomes one of the key issues of RGS research. In this respect, it is important to note that lately, RGS has been used in conjunction with other rhetorical, psychological, and social theories. At present, it is difficult to find a study that would rely on RGS as its sole theoretical framework as it has been successfully demonstrated that complementary theories provide further insight into the questions RGS attempts but is not able to answer fully (e.g., Artemeva & Freedman, 2001; Dias et al., 1999; Le Maistre & Paré, 2004; Russell, 1997; Winsor, 1996, 2001, 2003).

In the following sections, I review Activity Theory and situated learning as they relate to the study of genre learning and provide examples of their creative combination with RGS.

KEY CONCEPTS OF ACTIVITY THEORY AND SITUATED LEARNING

Although RGS recognizes and celebrates dynamism, the unpacking of the precise mechanisms through which genre learning and execution occur requires additional compatible theoretical perspectives, as has been demonstrated in a number of studies. Theories of activity and situated learning have proved to successfully expand and complement the RGS framework (e.g., Artemeva & Freedman, 2001; Dias et al., 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Le Maistre & Paré, 2004; Russell, 1997; Winsor, 2001). According to Artemeva and Freedman (2001), when compared to RGS, “AT provides a higher level of theorization to account for change as well as resistance and conflict” (p. 170) and offers a complementary perspective on “social motive, and on the action aspect of genre” (Dias et al., 1999, p. 23). The theory of situated learning seems to be congruent with the situated view of genre/writing/communication as developed within RGS and the central role of social context for genre learning and use.

AT (Engeström, 1987, 1999a, 1999b; Leont’ev, 1981;

Wertsch, 1981, 1985, 1991) and theories of situated learning and communities of practice (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Wenger, 1998b) share common origins in the cultural-historical theory of the development of human psychological functions proposed by Vygotsky (1978) in the 1920s - 1930s (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). The important aspects of Vygotsky's theory that served as the starting points for the development of AT and theories of situated learning are the concept of the mediating role of tools, signs, and symbols in human development and Vygotsky's understanding of "the mechanism of individual developmental change [as] rooted in society and culture" (Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 7). Another important aspect of Vygotsky's theory is "the centrality of the active construction of knowledge" (Cole & Wertsch, n.d.); this view is equally important for both AT and situated learning.

Both theories of activity and situated learning consider the *social context* in which human activity takes place as an *integral* part of human activity rather than just the surrounding environment. Activity and situated learning theorists agree that "every cognitive act must be viewed as a specific response to a specific set of circumstances. Only by understanding the circumstances and the participants' construal of the situation can a valid interpretation of the cognitive activity be made" (Resnick, 1991, p. 4). This view of human activity is close to the current RGS perspective on the reciprocal relationship between genre and its social context.

This section reviews, compares, and contrasts the two analytical perspectives on learning as presented in the literature on activity theory and situated learning. Within the situated learning perspective, I focus particularly on the concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the theoretical construct of communities of practice (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b). These theoretical notions are directly relevant to the study of novices learning genres of, and integrating into, professional workplace communities. I conclude by discussing the compatibility and complementarity of these two theoretical perspectives.

Activity Theory

In his work on the role of tools and signs in human psychological development, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that the relationship between a human individual and objects of the environment is mediated by cultural means, tools, and signs. Vygotsky claimed that only elementary forms of behaviour occur

through a direct reaction (the so-called stimulus-response reaction, usually depicted as $S \longrightarrow R$), while higher psychological processes require mediated organization, depicted as a triad or triangle (Cole & Scribner, 1978) of stimulus, response, and a mediating artifact (a tool or sign). The introduction of a mediating artifact permits humans “*to control their behavior from the outside* [italics in original]” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 40).⁸

Generations of Activity Theory

As is often claimed (e.g., Leont’ev, A. N., 1981; Leont’ev, A. A.,⁹ 1995; Wertsch, 1981, 1991), activity theory was developed by Vygotsky’s students, A. N. Leont’ev and

A. Luria, *directly*¹¹ from the ideas conceived by Vygotsky (see Kozulin, 1990; Davydov & Radzikhovski, 1980, 1981, 1985; and A.A. Leont’ev, 2003 for further discussion of the accuracy of this view). The name of Alexey Nikolaevich Leont’ev is the one most closely associated with the development of the theory of meaningful object oriented activity (1989) in the Soviet Union.

It is possible to trace three generations of activity theory (Cultural-historical, n.d.; Engeström, 1999b):

The first generation of AT. The first generation of the theory was developed around Vygotsky’s idea of mediated human action. In this first generation of AT, “the unit of analysis was object-oriented action mediated by cultural tools and signs” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4). The first generation marks the first step in the development of activity theory.

The second generation of AT. The second generation of the theory is rooted in Leont’ev’s view of human activity. A. N. Leont’ev based his theory on Marx’s concept of labour, or production of use values. Leont’ev saw work as mediated by tools and performed in conditions of *collective* activity. He introduced a representation of mediated human activity as a triad—depicted as a triangle—consisting of the subject, the object, and the mediating artifact, a culturally constructed tool, or instrument (including signs).

However, “mediation by other human beings and social relations was not theoretically integrated into the triangular model Such an integration required a breakthrough to the

concept of activity by distinguishing between collective activity and individual action” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 4). Leont'ev (1981) defined activity as

the nonadditive, molar unit of life for the material, corporeal subject. In a narrower sense (i.e., on the psychological level) it is the unit of life that is mediated by mental reflection. The real function of this unit is to orient the subject in the world of objects. In other words, activity is not a reaction or aggregate of reactions, but a *system*¹¹ [italics added] with its own structure, its own internal transformations, but a system with its own development. (p. 46)

The three-level model of activity proposed by Leont'ev provides distinction between collective *activity*, individual *action*, and *operation*. The uppermost level of collective activity is driven by an object-related motive; the middle level of individual (or group) action is driven by a conscious goal, and the bottom level of automatic operations is driven by the conditions and available tools (Cultural-historical, n.d.; Engeström, 1987; Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Leont'ev, 1981; Wertsch, 1981).

Activity in the three-level model can be represented as consisting of “the following constituents: need<=>motive<=>goal<=>conditions for achieving the goal . . . and, correlated with these components, activity<=>action <=>operation . . . an activity can lose its motive and become an act[ion], and an act[ion] can become an operation when the goal changes” (Davydov, Zinchenko, & Talyzina, 1983, p. 35). Double arrows indicate that mutual transformations are constantly taking place. Some actions “may be broken down into a series of successive acts, and correspondingly, a goal may be broken down into subgoals” (p. 36).

Engeström, (1999a), Davydov & Zinchenko (1989), Davydov & Radzikhovski (1980, 1981, 1985), Kozulin (1990), Witte (1992, 1999) and others criticized Leont'ev's theory for a major contradiction that lies at its heart: the use of object-oriented activity *both* as an explanatory principle of the psychological theory *and* the object of the study.

These ambiguities of the three-level model have been overcome to some extent in the second generation of AT with the

introduction of a new unit of analysis, “the concept of *object-oriented, collective, and culturally mediated human activity, or activity system* [italics in original]” (Minnis & John-Steiner, n.d.). Minimum elements of an activity system "include the object, subject, mediating artifacts (signs and tools), rules, community, and division of labor” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 9). Engeström (1987) proposed to expand Leont'ev's basic mediational triangle to represent an activity system.¹¹ He

suggested that the triadic structure of the basic mediational triangle, subject-tool-object, should be extended to account for the socially distributed and interactive nature of human activity (see Figure).

The essence of the expanded view of human activity was expressed by Engeström (1989) as follows: "Activity is realized in the form of individual goal-oriented actions. But it is not reducible to the sum total of the constitutive actions. Actions are discrete; they have a beginning and an end. An activity is a complex and relatively enduring system of collective practice" (p. 34). An activity unites competing and conflicting individual and collective views on its object and motive. Engeström's expanded view of AT may be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the dualism of collective and individual units of analysis. Presenting human activity as a systemic function is one way to overcome this dualism. This approach to modeling human activity is

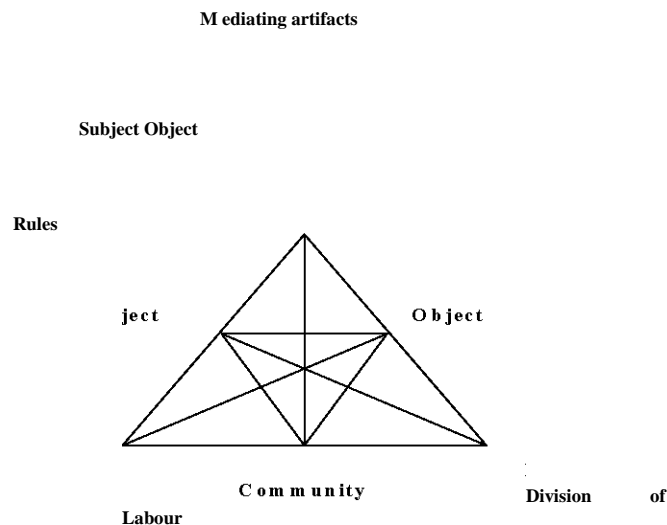


Figure. Engeström's "expanded triangle" (rules – mediating artifacts – division of labour) depicting a human activity system (based on Engeström, 1987, p.78).

depicted as the expanded triangle that represents an activity system, wherein individual actions become "embedded in collective activity systems" (Engeström, 1997, p. 304), and the bottom part of the triangle represents the collective aspect of activity. In other words, the expanded triangle "calls attention to both the personal perspective of the subject—any given subject involved in the collaborative activity may be selected—and its relationship to the systems perspective that views the activity from the outside" (p. 304). In this perspective, action can be understood only if considered "in the context of an activity system; that is, an open system that is in constant exchange with other systems" (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 38). In addition, Engeström (1996) asserts that an activity system always includes "the object-oriented productive aspect and the person-oriented communicative aspect of the human conduct. Production and communication are inseparable" (p. 67). This aspect of AT is in close agreement with the treatment that the tension between individual and social receives within the RGS framework.

The third generation of AT. As Engeström and Miettinen (1999) observe, "according to activity theory, any local activity resorts to some historically formed mediating artifacts, cultural resources that are common to the society at large. Networks between activity systems provide for movement of artifacts" (p. 8). The goal of the third generation of activity theory is to develop conceptual tools that would allow researchers to understand interactions between two or more activity systems¹¹ with multiple perspectives and voices. In the third generation of AT, the basic model is expanded to include at least two interacting activity systems (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999).

The contemporary version of AT is based on a set of six general interrelated defining principles (see Kaptelinin, 1996; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 1997; Wertsch, 1981 for details):

(a) unity of consciousness, that is, the human mind, and activity; (Kaptelinin, 1996); (b) activity's "object-orientedness" (Leont'ev, 1981, p. 48); (c) the hierarchical (threelevel) structure of activity; (d) Vygotsky's (1978) principle of internalization-externalization which describes the mechanisms underlying the originating of mental processes;

(e) mediation of human activity by external (hammer, or scissors, or computer) and internal (conceptual or heuristic) tools; and (f) the principle of development, in other words, a possibility of a detailed analysis of complex situations without simplifying them (Kaptelinin, 1996).

Zone of Proximal Development

The study of the role of tools, signs, and symbols in the process of learning served as the basis for Vygotsky's theory of interaction between learning and development. A child's development is necessarily social according to Vygotsky: for a child, "activities acquire meaning of their own in the system of social behavior The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person" (1978, p. 30). Vygotsky and his colleagues were the first psychologists who considered the notion of what children can do today in collaboration with others as an indicator of what they will be able to do tomorrow alone (Leont'ev, A.A., 2003). One of the revolutionary concepts introduced by Vygotsky (1935/2003) was the concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) based on the notions of the actual and potential levels of child development. Vygotsky defined the *actual developmental level* of children as "the level of development of a child's mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already *completed* [italics in the original] developmental cycles" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). This *actual developmental level* is determined by the difficulty of the tasks that children are able to complete alone. Vygotsky observed that with the help of an adult or a more capable peer, the same children were able to solve tasks that only older children could solve alone. On the basis of these observations, Vygotsky suggested that instead of using the *actual developmental level* as a determinant of a child's mental development, one should use the *potential* level, determined by the difficulty of the tasks that the child can solve in collaboration with an adult or a more capable peer. In other words, he defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through the problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.

86; 1935/2003, p. 379).¹¹

From this perspective, individual cognitive change is seen as effected by the social. Vygotsky claims that "the actual developmental level characterizes the success of [the child's] development, the result of [the child's] development as of yesterday, while the zone of proximal development characterizes [her] mental development as of tomorrow" (1935/2003a, p. 379). That is, "the state of the child's mental development can be determined only by clarifying its two levels: the actual developmental level and the zone of proximal development" (1978, p. 87). On this basis, Vygotsky's followers proposed that an essential feature of learning is the creation of the zone of proximal development.

According to Vygotsky, the notion of ZPD leads us to conclude that "the only 'good learning' is that which is in advance of development" (1978, p. 80). Learning triggers in a child the developmental processes that become active only "when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with peers" (p. 90). Vygotsky observed that learning and development cannot be equated and that learning leads development. One of the developmental outcomes of learning leading development in the ZPD¹¹ is that the learner becomes able to engage in developmental activity with conscious awareness rather than merely spontaneously. As Parks and Maguire (1999) express it, "the zone of proximal development . . . is the result of individual change that connects the individual to the social environment" (p. 169). Rogoff (1990) adds, "with Vygotsky, the cognitive process is shared between people" (p. 192).

The concept of the ZPD allows us to observe how participants in the interaction acknowledge and respond to each other's knowledge and how their individual levels of knowledge change in the process and affect the goal of the interaction (Wells, 1999). In other words, both Vygotsky's "approach and findings are evidence for the social nature of volition and conscious awareness" (Newman & Holzman, 1993, p. 60).

Internalization¹¹ and externalization. In his discussion of mediational tools and signs, Vygotsky (1978) notes that tools are externally oriented. Signs, on the other hand, are internally oriented. Based on this observation, activity theory differentiates between internal and external activities (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 1997). The term *internalization*¹¹ was introduced (Vygotsky, 1978) to describe the transition from joint collective activity to

an individual performance or, in other words, the conversion of external actions into internal, mental ones (Tolman, 1988). The process of internalization, according to Vygotsky (1978), consists of a series of transformations: initially, an operation or concept must be presented to a child as an external one; afterwards, the concept is gradually internalized. The transformation occurs over time through a series of what Vygotsky calls "*developmental events*"¹¹ (pp. 56-57, italics in original). According to Engeström (1999a), "internalization is the key psychological mechanism discovered by the cultural-historical school" (p. 26).

The process opposite to internalization is externalization: externalization transforms internal activities into external ones. Davydov and Zinchenko (1989) note that complete internalization of a joint activity "requires that this activity be mediated by signs whose content fully captures the history of the culture the child is assimilating" (p. 34). According to Kaptelinin and Nardi (1997), externalization is often necessary when an internalized action needs to be verified and corrected. It is also important when collaboration between several people requires their activities to be performed externally in order to be coordinated. To put it in

A. A. Leont'ev's (1995) words, "My cognition is a process of internalization. My being is a process of externalization, embedded in an endless dialogue with persons and things"²² (p. 45).

Internalization is social by its nature (Vygotsky, 1978). The notion of internalization is closely linked to the notion of the zone of proximal development, as only under the conditions provided by the ZPD do learners acquire new abilities that gradually change from inter-subjective mental actions to intra-subjective ones (Kaptelinin, 1996). Determination of individual consciousness in Vygotsky's view occurs in the following order: "collective (social) activity —culture —signs—individual activity—individual consciousness" (Davydov & Zinchenko, 1989, p. 34).

Activity theory recognizes internalization and externalization as two basic inseparable processes operating continuously at every level of human activity. Internal activities cannot be understood if they are analyzed in isolation from external activities because they are connected through mutual transformations, that is, through internalization and

externalization (Bannon, 1997). In the past, the focus of activity theorists was mainly on internalization (Davydov & Radzikhovski, 1980, 1981; Davydov & Zinchenko, 1989). Currently, equal attention is being paid to the internalization of cultural means and “externalization, the transformative construction of new instruments and forms of activity at *collective* and *individual* [italics added] levels” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 11).

Inner Contradictions in Activity Systems

Engeström (1987, 1996) observed that activity systems are not stable and harmonious systems and noted that they are characterized by inner contradictions. These internal tensions and contradictions “are the motive force of change and development” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 9) in activity systems.

An activity system comes into existence when there is a certain need in the community that can be satisfied by a certain activity. However, while the activity system is functioning within a larger social context, contradictions arise within and among the components (nodes) of an activity system, between it and other systems, or between an old system and an emerging new activity system. When a need that brought an activity system into existence cannot be satisfied any longer, need states develop, and the development of such a state is inevitable, or, in other words, any activity system “incessantly reconstructs itself” (Engeström, 1992, p. 12).

Inner contradictions account for the dynamism and change within activity systems: contradictions are brought to a boil, and the dynamic tension in the system leads to the destruction of constraints and, further, to the construction of a new system for the subsequent activity (Holt & Morris, 1993). The new forms of activity emerge as solutions to the contradictions of the earlier, or preceding, stage (cf. Freedman & Smart, 1997). Cole and Engeström (1993) suggest that a new activity structure does not emerge “out of the blue.” The creation of such activity systems requires “the reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools that offer ways out of the internal contradictions” (p. 40).

The following subsections of this chapter continue the discussion, focussing on the key principles, unit of analysis, and

analytical viewpoints on learning as developed in the theory of situated learning (Lave, 1988, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1988b).

Situated Learning

Theories of situated learning (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990) are based on the view of learning and knowing as social, rooted in the experiences of daily life. Lave (1996a) uses “historical, dialectical social practice theory” (p. 150) as the source for the development of the theory of situated learning. She specifies three different theories of situated experience:²² cognition plus, interpretive, and situated practice or situated learning (1991). Two distinct perspectives developed within the situated learning framework are Rogoff’s (1990) *guided participation* (p. 8) and Lave and Wenger’s (1991) analytical perspective (p. 39) that places in the centre the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. This chapter focuses on Lave and Wenger’s version of situated learning as the one directly relevant to the study of school-to-work transition.

Sharing its origins with activity theory, the view of learning as situated in the social is based on the Vygotskian understanding of higher mental functions in the individual as being derived from social life (Wertsch, 1991) and on his recognition of the social as primary. Theorists of situated learning (e.g., Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) see all knowledge as situated. Central to the literature on situated learning, therefore, are the notions that learning and knowing are context-specific, that learning is active and accomplished through coparticipation, and that cognition is socially shared (Freedman & Adam, 1996, 2000b; Freedman & Artemeva, 1998). The emphasis that Vygotsky and his followers placed on activity, on person-in-activity, and on mediation through socio-cultural tools such as language, is central for the concept of situated learning, as is Vygotsky’s understanding of higher mental functions as internalized social relationships. Vygotsky developed his theories “on the premise that individual intellectual development of higher mental processes cannot be understood without reference to the social milieu in which the individual is embedded” and without consideration of “the social roots of both

the tools for thinking that . . . [novices] are learning to use and the social interactions that guide" their use of these tools (Rogoff, 1990, p. 35).

The situated activity perspective developed on the basis of Vygotsky's theories "meant that there is no activity that is not situated" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). Or, learning is part of the changing participation and practices of people engaged in an on-going activity, in which individual activities are interdependent (Lave, 1996a). The unit of analysis in Lave and Wenger's (1991) version of the theory of situated learning is *community of practice* (Lave, 1991, 1996a, 1996b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Smith, 2003; Wenger, 1998a, 1998b) and the central analytical viewpoint on learning is "*legitimate peripheral participation*" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 34).

Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) observed that the development of one's ability to engage in situated learning occurs through participation in a community of practice (COP).

Wenger (2005a) defines a community of practice as a group of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better" (n.p.). His expanded definition of COP (1998b) includes the following requirements that such group of people must meet to be considered a COP: they must a) "have a sustainable history of mutual engagement"; b) "negotiate with one another what they are doing, how they should behave, their relation with" a larger institution, and "the meanings of the artifacts they use"; c) "have developed local routines and artifacts to support their work together"; d) "know who to ask when they need help," and e) "introduce into their community new trainees who want to become proficient at their practice" (p. 123). In other words, a COP is a group of "peers in the execution of real work. What holds them together is a common sense of purpose and a real need to know what each other knows" (Brown, as cited in Allee [2000]). COPs cannot be equated with teams because communities of practice are defined by knowledge. Dias et al. (1999) assert that the term communities of practice "covers activity beyond language . . . [and] centers on what groups of people *do* [italics in the original]" (p. 29). For communities of

practice, “learning . . . is not a separate activity. It is not something we do when we do nothing else or stop doing when we do something else” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 8). In fact, as seen from this perspective, learning in COPs is “most personally transformative” (p. 6). Each community of practice is constituted by distinct intellectual and social conventions. A community of practice defines itself along the following three dimensions: a) The domain. People organize around a domain of knowledge that gives members a sense of joint enterprise and brings them together. Members identify with the domain of knowledge and a joint undertaking that emerges from shared understanding of their situation; b) The community. People function as a community through relationships of mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity. They interact regularly and engage in joint activities that build relationships and trust; c) The practice. Members of the community are practitioners. They share a repertoire of stories and resources such as tools, documents, routines, vocabulary, symbols, artifacts, etc., that embody the accumulated knowledge of the community. This shared repertoire serves as a foundation for future learning (Allee, 2000; Wenger, 2005a). According to Wenger (2005a), there is a certain set of activities that defines the shared practice in which a COP is involved. Such activities may include problem solving, requests for information, seeking experience, reusing assets, coordinating and synergy, discussing developments, documenting projects/problems, visiting sites of practice, mapping knowledge, and identifying gaps.

As situated learning theorists (e.g., Lave, 1996a, 1996b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b) note, a primary, and most effective, form of the development of one’s increasing engagement in situated learning is apprenticeship.²² By apprenticeship they understand a process in which newcomers to a community of practice learn the expert practices used in that community by being actively engaged in these expert practices and by taking “an active part in authentic but ancillary community tasks, under the guidance of more experienced ‘oldtimers’ and with only limited responsibility for the outcome” (Smart & Brown, 2002, p. 119). Wenger (2005a) refers to a COP as “a living curriculum for the apprentice” (n.p.) where the notion of apprenticeship includes so-called *cognitive apprenticeship* (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, p. 32), a way of students’

enculturation into authentic practices of disciplines through a process similar to craft apprenticeship.

The situated learning perspective allows researchers to investigate practical, object-oriented work along with interactions and sign-mediated communication both within the workplace and educational contexts.²² The concept of COP as a unit of analysis acknowledges the importance of mediational means, as does the concept of activity system.

Below, I continue the discussion by presenting the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the principles of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998b), and the movement from peripheral to full participation in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b) as developed within the framework of situated learning.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the concept legitimate peripheral participation as an analytical perspective on, or a descriptor of, situated learning that focuses on the action itself and on its social outcome. Legitimate peripheral participation describes a range of social practices that situated learning theorists refer to as apprenticeships. LPP views learning—as a characteristic of all communities of practice—as taking place in the process of creation or action and as accomplished through coparticipation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). Participation in this framework “refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 4). Legitimate peripheral participation “refers both to the development of knowledgeably skilled identities in practice and to the reproduction and transformation of communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 55). Newcomers and oldtimers in a community of practice learn during their cooperative activities, which they both want to finish successfully. The LPP model describes the situation of newcomers trained by oldtimers in the process of cooperative activity.

Legitimate peripheral participation implies “emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather

than 'receiving' a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). Under the condition of LPP, apprentices are initiated into the communities of practice by participating in authentic tasks that are *not* invented as opportunities for getting them to learn (Freedman & Adam, 2000b; Hanks, 1991). Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning often contrasts learning that occurs as a process of social participation in communities of practice and the classroom, or curriculum; learning that is expected to occur as a result of teaching²²: "learning through legitimate peripheral participation takes place no matter which educational form provides a context for learning, or whether there is any intentional education at all" (p. 40). Some innovations based on theories of situated learning have been recently introduced into school settings (e.g., Artemeva, Logie, & St. Martin, 1999; Rogoff, Turkonis, & Bartlett, 2001).

The focus in LPP is on "person-in-the-world, as member of a sociocultural community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52). Lave and Wenger unpack the term legitimate peripheral participation by stating that the term should be considered as a whole and not as an opposition to some "illegitimated peripheral participation." They continue by saying that "with regard to 'peripherality' there may well be no such thing as 'central participation' in a community of practice Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world As a place in which one moves toward more-intensive participation, peripherality is an empowering position" (pp. 35-36). Peripheral participation in this view gradually leads to full participation and full membership in a community of practice.

Participation and reification. By *participation* Wenger (1998b) understands a broader category than "mere engagement in practice" (p. 57). According to him, participation "places the negotiation of meaning in the context of our forms of membership in various communities. It is a constituent of [our] identities. As such, participation is not something we turn on or off" (p. 57). Wenger has proposed to use the concepts of participation and reification in conjunction in order to describe the engagement of humans with the world in a process of

meaning production.

Considering these two concepts together also allows one to investigate the social-individual tension as introduced within the RGS framework. Participation allows members of a community of practice to “recognize [themselves] in each other” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 58); in other words, it reflects “mutuality.” Reification refers to “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58) and to the ability of humans “to project [themselves] onto the world and . . . attribute to [their] meanings an independent existence” (p. 58), or, in other words, it refers to *projection*. Reification, according to Wenger, is central to every practice. Wenger views reification as both process and product that is always incomplete and ongoing and states that for reification to be meaningful, it must “be reappropriated in a local process” (p. 60).

Participation and reification are two intrinsic and inseparable constituents of negotiation of meaning, which, in turn, is one of the major constituents of the definition of COP. Wenger speaks of the duality of meaning, in which both participation and reification are distinct and complementary—they form a unity in their complementarity and cannot be considered in isolation. He warns against a possible interpretation of the duality of participation and reification as a simple opposition: “a duality is a single conceptual unit that is formed by two inseparable and mutually constitutive elements whose inherent tension and complementarity give the concept richness and dynamism” (p. 66). In this complementarity, participation and reification make up for each other’s inherent limitations. This view of negotiation of meaning as constituted by a dual process allows researchers to investigate the distribution of the meaning production, “that is, what is reified and what is left to participation” (p. 64). Wenger compares a computer program as an example of extreme reification and a poem as largely relying on participation. The computer is incapable of any participation in its meaning, while the poem’s inherent ambiguity depends on the negotiation of meaning with the reader.

This duality of participation and reification is seen by Wenger as fundamental to the constitution of communities of

practice. Wenger warns against too much reliance being placed on one component of the duality at the expense of the other. He explains that "if participation prevails . . . then there may be not enough material to anchor the specificities of coordination and to uncover diverging assumptions," and continues to observe that "if reification prevails . . . then there may be not enough overlap in participation to recover a coordinated, relevant, or generative meaning" (p. 65). In other words, participation and reification are seen as two sides of the same coin.

Movement from peripheral to full participation in a community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) see learning as one of the primary characteristics of social practice. Learning in the framework of their theory is viewed as gradually increasing participation in a community of practice. Through their engagement in practice, peripheral participants (newcomers) can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning is, therefore, seen as an improvised practice. In order for learning to be particularly effective, COP participants need to a) have broad access to different parts of the activity and eventually proceed to full participation in core tasks; b) be engaged in abundant interaction with other participants, "mediated . . . by stories of problematic situations and their solutions" (Engeström, 1991, p. 252), or "war stories" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 109); c) have a direct access to the technologies and structures of the community of practice, so that "their inner workings can become available for the learner's inspection" (Engeström, 1991, p. 252).

Lave and Wenger (1996) describe communities of practice as constantly "engaged in the generative process of producing their own future" (p. 149). In this respect, Lave's (1991) suggestion to see learning as the process of gaining membership in a COP becomes particularly important for the understanding of learning within COPs. The proposed key mechanism of learning within communities of practice is a gradual *movement* of a newcomer from peripheral to full participation (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b). Lave (1991) sees the development of "an identity as a member of a community and becoming knowledgeably skillful [as] part of the same process, with the former motivating, shaping, and giving meaning to the latter, which it subsumes" (p.

65). She notes that the process of moving from peripheral to full participation is a process that allows for the development of *knowledgeably skilled identities* (p. 65). Under the conditions of LPP, Lave and Wenger (1991) consider this process as being accomplished through apprenticeship.

Moving from peripheral toward full participation in practice requires from a newcomer a deeper involvement in the life of the community, an increased commitment of time, gradually intensified efforts, and most importantly, a developing identity as a master practitioner (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998b) observes that the process of the development of master identities and movement from peripheral to full participation creates generational discontinuities in communities of practice as relative newcomers are gradually becoming oldtimers. In other words, while members of a COP are dependant on each other (i.e., newcomers will not be able to learn without oldtimers, while oldtimers will not be able to carry on the practice through time without newcomers), “the success of both new and old members depends on the eventual replacement of oldtimers by newcomers-become-oldtimers themselves. The tensions this introduces into processes of learning are fundamental” (p. 74), and the unpacking of these tensions becomes crucial for the complete understanding of the process of situated learning.

The review of the situated learning perspective presented above provides an additional lens to combine with the RGS perspective on genre learning. It allows the researcher to explore genre learning in a COP as a component of the novice's movement from peripheral to full participation, accomplished under the mentorship of oldtimers.

Having reviewed the key notions of the theories of activity and situated learning, I will now proceed to a critical discussion of the main premises and concepts of both theoretical perspectives.

Critical Discussion of Theories of Activity and Situated Learning

While the review presented above demonstrates that activity theory and situated learning are different in their choice of units of analysis and treatment of the individual and social, these theoretical perspectives share some major concepts that

make them particularly useful for the study of genre learning, the most important of these concepts being that of placing *joint activity* or *practice* in the centre of the theoretical consideration.

Comparison of Activity Theory and Situated Learning

As I have noted above, the AT and situated learning perspectives draw, in varying degrees, upon the concept of activity developed by the cultural-historical school of psychology (Leont'ev, 1981; Wertsch, 1981)²² and put a heavy emphasis on the role of mediating artifacts in human cognition and learning (Engeström, 1991). Both theoretical frameworks highlight the need to study real activity in real situations and allow the researchers to unpack "the conflux of multifaceted, shifting, intertwining processes that comprise human thought and behavior" (Nardi, 1996, p. 79).

As Nardi (1996) notes in her detailed discussion of AT and theories of situated practice (*situated action model* [p. 71] in her terminology), the unit of analysis in AT is an activity system, and this activity system itself constitutes the context; that is, what takes place within an activity system is the context (Engeström, 1996). This view is remarkably close to the RGS perspective on the co-construction of genre and rhetorical situation (e.g., see Paré & Smart, 1994).

In the situated learning model, the unit of analysis is an informal community of practice which is neither the individual nor the social institution. Lave and Wenger (1991) originally defined COP as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). This temporal dimension of COP makes the concept particularly attractive as it complements the chronotopic view of genre learning. Lave and Wenger's unit of analysis allows researchers to focus on the unfolding of real activity in a real setting. The situated model emphasizes responsiveness to the environment and the improvisatory nature of human activity (Lave, 1988). It is notable that Engeström (1996), who uses the notion of *community* as a node in an activity system, defines community in a somewhat different way than do Lave and Wenger (1991): community for Engeström (1996) "comprises multiple individuals and/or subgroups who share the same

general object," where object "refers to 'raw material' or 'problem space' at which the activity is directed" (p. 67).

The notion of community of practice was criticized by Eraut (2002) for its narrowness. He described five archetypal workplace learning scenarios that ranged from learning in a fully democratic learning community with a high status of novices, high commitment to learning, and participation as the dominant form of learning, to the scenario in which the organizational commitment to learning is never meant to be transformed into action. According to Eraut, only one out of these five scenarios corresponds to Lave and Wenger's definition of a COP, that in which novices "have lower status, but are seen as starting on trajectories that raise their status over time. A clear characteristic of such communities is their acceptance of clear progression models developed as part of their tradition of practice" (p. 10). As Eraut notes, "a profession is a much larger and more diverse community than any community of practice" (p. 13). He leans more toward Engeström's (1996) definition of community as a group of people who pursue a common goal.

Nardi (1996), who is a proponent of activity theory, claims that the major difference between AT and situated learning is that in AT an object-goal motivates the activity and, therefore, precedes it. The object-goal becomes the beginning point of analysis. Nardi sees the strength of AT in that "the structuring of activity is determined in part, and in important ways, by human intentionality before the unfolding in a particular situation; in situated action, activity can be known only as it plays out in situ" (p. 82). In contrast, in the situated perspective, says Nardi, "goals and plans cannot even be realized until after the activity has taken place, at which time they become constructed rationalizations for activity that is wholly created in the crucible of a particular situation" (p. 83). Lave (1996b), in turn, questions the activity theory view "that social activity is its own context"

(p. 20) and notes that activity theorists argue that—unlike the arguments made in the situated model—"the concrete connectedness and meaning of activity cannot be accounted for by analysis of the immediate situation" (p. 20).

In addition to the concepts of the unit of analysis and context, the treatment of the concept of *expertise* within the frameworks of activity theory and situated learning deserves

attention. Engeström (1992) proposes that expertise should be interpreted within the framework of AT as an “interactive accomplishment, constructed in encounters and exchanges *between people and their artifacts* [italics added]” (p. i), while Lave (1996b) views knowledge “as engagement in changing processes of human activity” (p. 12). Even though Lave does not explicitly consider the role of artifacts in the development of expertise, the two views seem to be more complementary than oppositional. As Engeström and Miettinen (1999) observe, the two perspectives are currently in the state of *dialogue*, to borrow the Bakhtinian notion, and “a dialogue between such different but closely related approaches . . . is a sign of vital development in the field” (p. 12).

Analytical perspectives on learning: ZPD and LPP. In his work, Vygotsky focused his attention on a process of learning as it occurred in an individual child. This tendency sometimes creates an impression that the focus of his explorations is on an individual. It is not so. In Vygotsky’s (1978) view, for the learning process to trigger developmental processes in a child—that is, for the child to act within the zone of proximal development—the child *must* interact with a partner. This important condition of learning and development is central to activity theory. However, when comparing and contrasting the processes of learning as described in the theories of activity and situated learning, it is particularly important to note that subsequent development of the concept of the ZPD has made it clear that the ZPD is not necessarily confined to *dyads* of a child and a more knowledgeable partner in a face-to-face interaction but includes *all participants* in collaborative communities of practice (Wells, 1999). Engeström (1987) developed the idea that the ZPD is a *collective* rather than *individual* phenomenon ; Lave (1996b) noted “that ‘the new’ is a collective invention in the face of felt dilemmas and contradictions that impeded ongoing activity” (p. 13). The learner (not necessarily a child) must participate in and, therefore, become a part of, the community line whose practices he or she is learning (Rogoff, 1990).²²

A reformulated view of the ZPD proposed by Engeström (1987) within the framework of activity theory (a so-called *collectivist*, or *societal*, view) defines the zone of proximal

development as the “distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated” (p. 174). This view allows researchers to concentrate on processes of social transformation. Compared to Leont’ev’s (1981) original perspective, this view is closer to the situated learning perspective that attempts to include “the structure of the social world in the analysis, and . . . [take] into account in a central way the conflictual nature of social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). Even though LPP places more emphasis on “connecting issues of sociocultural transformation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49) than the AT perspective does, the reconceptualized view of the ZPD brings both theories closer and allows researchers to consider the ZPD and LPP as complementary rather than oppositional.

Internalization/externalization vs. reification and participation. The notions of internalization and participation developed within the framework of AT and situated learning, respectively, express the social nature of the institutions, while the concepts of externalization and reification express the individual response to the social structure. In other words, a contrastive and comparative analysis of these notions as developed within the two theoretical frameworks allows me to focus closer on the tension between social and individual.

The concept of *internalization* was central to Vygotsky's theory of learning. As Vygotsky (1981) put it, “all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships” (p. 164). However, the concept of *internalization* is the one aspect of Vygotsky’s theory that has often been contested. One of the major objections that the concept raises is that it implies mind/body dualism and a sharp distinction between internal and external and between social (intermental) and individual (intramental) functioning.

Thus, Lektorsky (1999) described a severe criticism of Leont’ev’s AT that was provided by Rubinstein, who “stressed that human activity cannot be understood as simple internalization of ready-made standards” and “wrote about the creative character of human activity and the self-realization of human beings in this process” (p. 66). In this respect, it is

important to note that it is the concept of *internalization* that received most attention in Leont'ev's version of activity theory. Davydov and Radzikhovski (1980, 1985), Davydov and Zinchenko (1989), and others observed that the concept of *externalization* had remained in a relative obscurity for years after Vygotsky's death, and "concrete research and experimentation inspired by activity theory have been strongly dominated by the paradigm of internalization" (Engeström, 1999a, p. 27). Lave (1996b) noted that an assumption that internalization provides an adequate description for the creation and circulation of knowledge in society "faces the difficulty that . . . [it implies] *uniformity* [italics in original] of knowledge" (p. 12).

Engeström (1989) claimed that because the study of the internalization cycle dominated the AT research, "the parallel cycles of externalization and expansion are less well known. In terms of development, the latter are of crucial importance" (p. 39). Engeström (1999a) further observed that in the research that reduces understanding of internalization to children's learning in interaction with adults and more experienced peers (as an earlier version of A. N. Leont'ev's activity theory does), "it seems to be all but forgotten that the early studies led by Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria not only examined the role of *given* [italics in original] artifacts as mediators of cognition but were also interested in how children *created* [italics in original] artifacts of their own in order to facilitate their performance" (p. 26). In other words, a limited focus on internalization accepted within certain versions of activity theory removed creativity and the social nature of learning from the scope of activity theory research, in sharp contrast to the situated view of unified mechanisms of practice and reification in the COP model. To draw a parallel with the rhetorical genre theory here, the early AT studies concentrated on the learning of constraining features of genres.

As Lektorsky (1999) put it, "humans not only internalize ready-made standards and rules of activity but externalize themselves as well, creating new standards and rules. Human beings determine themselves through the objects they create" (p. 66). Engeström (1992) insisted that a clear distinction should be drawn between the *internalization* of the culturally given and *externalization* of novel ideas, artifacts, and patterns of interaction. He stated, "both belong to experience and practice—

when practice is understood as meaningful collective activity, or *praxis* [italics in original], not only as individual rehearsing of discrete skills” (p. 15).

Lave (1996b) claimed that part of what it means to be engaged in a practical learning activity “is extending what one knows beyond the immediate situation” (p. 12). In this respect, the reconceptualized view of the unity of internalization and externalization is somewhat related to the view of inherent and inseparable duality of participation and reification in communities of practice and, therefore, brings the activity and situated perspectives closer to each other. In particular, Engeström’s idea of expansive cycles (1987, 1992, 1999a) provides a link between AT, situated learning, and the RGS view that includes both constraining and enabling feature of genres. Expansion is Engeström’s metaphor for transformative processes and outcomes (Minnis & John-Steiner, n.d.). The concept of expansive cycles sheds a new light on the seeming opposition between internalization and creative externalization: an “expansive cycle is a developmental process that contains both internalization and externalization” (Engeström, 1999a, p. 33). Engeström (1987, 1992, 1999a; Cole & Engeström, 1993) proposes an expansive cycle as a model of development that consists of the parallel processes of internalization and externalization involved in a developmental cycle of expert activity. Engeström (1992) provides the following description of the cycle:

a developmental cycle of . . . activity begins with an almost exclusive emphasis on internalization, on socialization and training the novices to become competent members of the activity as it is routinely carried out. Creative externalization occurs first in the form of discrete individual innovation. As the disruptions and contradictions of the activity become more demanding, internalization increasingly takes the form of critical self-reflection—and externalization, a search for solution, increases. Externalization reaches its peak when a new model for the activity is designed and implemented. As the new model stabilizes itself, internalization of its inherent

ways and means again becomes the dominant form of learning and development. (p. 16)

According to Engeström (1989), “in an expansive cycle, development proceeds from initial *individual* [italics added] actions to the formation of a qualitatively new mode of *joint* [italics added] activity The decisive actions that set the expansive cycle in motion . . . emerge as a result of and a solution to deep internal contradictions in the old activity” (p. 39). Engeström (1999a) observed that at the level of collective activity, expansive cycles may be considered equivalent to the zone of proximal development that was introduced by Vygotsky (1978) at the level of individual learning.

In this respect, it is necessary to note that the theory of situated learning claims that “in practice, structure and experience together generate each other” (p. 80), as has been demonstrated in the discussion of the processes of participation and reification presented above. The situated perspective and the concept of communities of practice allow for replacing the “unproblematic notion of cultural transmission/internalization with a historically situated analysis of relations among activity, the social world, and persons in practice” (Lave, 1991, p. 81). The notion of expansive cycles and the related notion of *expansive learning* or *learning-by-expanding*, developed by Engeström (1987), provides a bridge between these two perspectives.

In addition, the concept of expansion, introduced by Engeström (1987, 1992, 1999a) within the framework of activity theory, provides a means for addressing the limitations of the apprenticeship model used in the situated perspective. As Russell (1998) observed, the notion of apprenticeship appears to be limited at least in three ways in its capacity to explain how newcomers learn genres of communities of practice. According to Russell, the apprenticeship model has difficulty accounting for a) the effects of formal education, which is a central part of preparation for work; b) the complex intertextual environment of workplaces that continues to problematize the dyadic master/apprentice relationship; c) the dialectical contradictions that arise when institutions hire newcomers (i.e., apprentices) who possess a greater expertise in certain areas (e.g., computers) than the oldtimers (i.e., “masters”) (e.g., “A Time to Speak,” this

volume; Artemeva & Freedman, 2001). Russell (1998) noted that a situation that involves masters learning from apprentices “specifically encouraged by some institutions is impossible to explain using traditional apprenticeship models that do not take into account complex division of labor (and cognition)” (n.p). At the same time, in his discussion of distributed learning environments, Russell (2002) also addressed some limitations of activity theory, for example, the difficulties the theory faces in a) addressing motivation in such activity systems where participants may not have face-to-face contact with more experienced peers, thus not being explicitly involved in zones of proximal development (e.g., virtual communities); b) identifying tools that participants may bring to the activity from “their previous involvements in other activity systems” (p. 80) and use in addition to the tools intended for use in the current activity system, thus making it difficult to identify “what tools . . . subjects bring to bear on the object of the learning” (p. 80); c) spotting other activity systems that participants may be involved in concurrently with the one under study (Such concurrent involvement in several activity systems may create contradictions that will affect learning.). Russell (1998) argues that the expansive model developed by Engeström in the context of activity theory allows for retaining the essence of the apprenticeship model and provides researchers with the opportunity to focus on actions and motives.

Inner contradictions in activity systems and movement from peripheral to full participation in communities of practice.

According to Russell (1998), the model of expansive learning allows researchers to develop new models of activity systems based on the analysis of inner contradictions in the existing activity systems. Engeström (1999a), however, stresses that it is crucial to keep in mind that, once the inner contradictions, present in the activity system in its given state, are identified and a new model of activity is being developed, it is necessary to address all contradictions found in the original activity system (cf. Artemeva & Freedman, 2001). Engeström (1999a) points out that “any model for the future that does not address and eliminate those contradictions will eventually turn out to be non-expansive” (p. 34) and, therefore, will not have a potential for further development.

In their discussion of community of practice as a unit of analysis in the theory of situated learning, Engeström and Miettinen (1999) admit that a COP may be viewed as a more encompassing unit of analysis than mediated activity. However, when they consider the concept of inner contradictions within activity systems and their role in change and development, they see the treatment of the temporal aspect of a COP as a drawback of the situated perspective as compared to the AT treatment of the unit of activity (Engeström, 1997; Eraut, 2002). In their view, unlike activity theory, the situated learning perspective seems to depict learning and development as happening primarily as a one-way movement of the novices from peripheral toward full participation bringing novices closer to well-established masters. Engeström and Miettinen (1999) note that “what seems to be missing [in the situated perspective] is movement outward and in unexpected directions; questioning of authority, criticism, innovation, initiation of change” (p. 12). Engeström (1997) claims that, in the situated perspective as opposed to activity theory, practice is depicted as stable and relatively unchanging; instability and inner contradictions are not included in the consideration (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999; Eraut, 2002). Engeström (1987) observes that within the AT framework, on the contrary, the development of collective activity systems is interwoven with the development of novel actions by individuals; that is, the analysis of inner contradictions in activity systems allows researchers to reveal and unpack zones of proximal development at both individual and collective levels.

Engeström and Miettinen (1999) mention that, ironically, Lave and Wenger (1991) themselves criticize Vygotskian notions of internalization for the absence of discussion of contradictions, instability, and change. However, Eraut's (2002) and Engeström and Miettinen's (1999) interpretation of situated learning appears to overlook some of its important aspects. In fact, the situated perspective does not only recognize that the dialectical development and reproduction of communities of practice include the displacement of the oldtimers' practice by newcomers, but it also recognizes that the heterogeneous character of situated practice “implies that conflict is a ubiquitous aspect of human existence” (Lave, 1996b, p. 15). Engeström (1997) does acknowledge that Lave and Wenger (1991) have identified the issue of contradictions between

continuity and displacement in a COP and recognized change as an intrinsic quality of practice, or, as Wenger (1998b) puts it, “change and learning . . . are in the very nature of practice” (p. 98). Engeström (1997) further observes that both AT and the situated learning perspective view disturbances and contradictions as indications of new possibilities in practice and activity. He, however, insists that the concept of noncooperation as manifesting inner contradictions has not been studied sufficiently in the situated learning field. The lack of research conducted in this direction leaves the questions of individual resistance and tensions between and within the individual and the collective unexplored.

Eraut (2002) in his work on informal learning in the workplace supports Engeström's view and provides illustrations of such tensions. Engeström (1997) continues by suggesting that, since it is more and more evident now that in both theoretical perspectives the analysis of discoordinations and contradictions has become a tool for unpacking complex relationships within activity systems and communities of practice, this new focus may lead to the development of a new methodology that, in a sense, brings the two theoretical perspectives together in what he calls “situated interventionism” (p. 308).

Summary of the Critical Discussion

I have reviewed and critically discussed both the differences and similarities of activity theory and the situated learning perspective. On one hand, the review has demonstrated that activity theory is masterful in the social domain; however, it is not as effective at the individual level. The situated learning perspective, on the other hand, directs our attention to local situations and individual participants and invites researchers “to take careful notice of what people are actually doing in the flux of real activity” (Nardi, 1996, p. 88-89).

The table summarizes the critical discussion of the key concepts of AT and situated learning and reflects that the revised, more recent versions of the theories seem to be closing the gap that existed between their earlier versions. Even though the reviewed theoretical viewpoints have different strengths and weaknesses and highlight different aspects of individual and collective action, activity, practice, learning, and development,

they both "expand the horizons of conventional analysis of situated activity, especially in temporal, historical terms. Rather than contrast them . . . it now seems more appropriate to sum them up, respectively, as exploring how it is that people live in *history* [italics in original] and how it is that people *live* [italics in original] in history" (Lave, 1996b, p. 21). Lave continues to say that AT explores the former, while the situated view focuses on the latter.

Table. A Summary of Key Concepts of the Theories of Activity and Situated Learning

Main differences and similarities		
Features	AT	Situated Learning
Goals	Goal (object) precedes activity	Goals and plans are not realized until after the activity has taken place: constructed rationalization for activity
Units of analysis	Mediated activity	COP (people-in-activity)
	<i>Difference: COP is a more encompassing unit of analysis than mediated activity</i>	
Analytical perspectives on learning	ZPD	LPP
	<i>Difference: ZPD was originally considered dyadic while LPP is collective; in Engeström's current societal model of ZPD, it is not necessarily dyadic any more (includes collective participation; social transformation => in this sense, draws closer to LPP)</i>	
Processes and mechanisms of learning	Internalization/ external-ization	Participation/reification
	<i>Different in principle: • 1st generation of AT – sole emphasis on internalization (sharp contrast with situated learning); • 2d and 3d generations of AT – focus on expansive cycle and indivisibility => closer to situated learning</i>	
	<i>Inner contradictions in activity systems</i>	<i>Movement from peripheral to full participation in a COP</i>

	<i>Criticism of situated learning as a one-way movement • Displacement of oldtimers by newcomers (and even “reverse mentoring,” as when newcomers are more knowledgeable than oldtimers) => possible conflict and contradictions in COP => brings situated learning closer to AT</i>	
Works well	<i>In the social domain; in crisis</i>	<i>At the individual level and in local situations</i>

From the critical discussion presented in this chapter it appears possible to interpret the two theoretical perspectives as complementary, rather than oppositional, views of human learning and development. As Nardi (1996) puts it, “A creative synthesis of activity theory as a backbone for analysis . . . and the commitment to grappling with the perplexing flux of everyday activity of the situated . . . perspective, would seem a likely path to success” (p. 96).

COMBINING RHETORICAL GENRE STUDIES, AC- TIVITY THEORY, AND SITUATED LEARNING

Below I discuss a few concepts that serve as sites for a productive combination of RGS and social theories of learning reviewed above. The purpose of this review is to demonstrate the nature of the complementarity of RGS and such theoretical approaches to learning as AT and situated learning. The nature of the compatibility and complementarity of selected notions has already been demonstrated throughout the chapter.

First of all, I would like to stress the inherent dialog-ism of both the third generation of AT and the concept of communities of practice used in the situated learning perspective. The third generation of AT attempts to understand interactions between several activity systems, each of them with multiple perspectives and voices, thus bringing the notion of dialogue to the centre of the analysis of human activity. Lave and Wenger's (1991; Wenger, 1998b) view of communities of practice, where newcomers, working on authentic activities with oldtimers gradually move towards the full participation state occupied by oldtimers and eventually displace them, reflects the dialogic

nature of the apprentice-master relationship in the context of an authentic activity. These dialogic features of both theories indicate their strong connection with the RGS central notions of dialogue and dialogism as conceived by Bakhtin (1986a, 1986c).

Some other concepts, which are addressed in RGS, can be successfully explored and expanded with the use of AT and situated learning. Examples of these concepts include the dynamics of the genre learning activity during a novice's transition from the classroom to workplace context, the concept of learning genres in communities of practice, and the concept of identity. Below, I discuss these notions from the combined *RGS-AT-situated learning* perspective.

Activity Theory Analysis of the School-to-Work Transition

When studying a novice's learning trajectory in his/her learning of domain-specific genres as s/he moves from the university context into workplace communities of practice, it is crucial to understand the process through which this learning occurs. Activity theory provides us with the lens necessary for such an analysis. In their study of interns in four professions, Le Maistre and Paré (2004) successfully combine RGS and AT in order to develop a model of different activities that their participants are involved in as students in a classroom setting and as novice members of a community of practice (interns working in the workplace). Le Maistre and Paré suggest that when a student becomes involved in professional practice, the objects of “the learning activity in the school (the theories, laws, methods, tools, and other artifacts of the profession) become ‘mediational means’ in the workplace” (p. 45). However, this view cannot be considered complete without being complemented by the analysis of the way that the learning of genres occurs within communities of practice.

Learning Genres in Communities of Practice

As the review of RGS presented above in this chapter has shown, genres can be fully mastered only by insiders of a particular community and are best understood in action. Within

RGS, this concept was originally considered as the basis for the emergence of the notion of discourse community (Swales, 1990), which later came under some criticism because of the difficulty of defining it in any precise way and because of certain implications it seemed to have accumulated (Dias et al., 1999; Harris, 1989).

The critics of the concept noted that the term *community* presupposed a kind of harmony that seldom exists in the real world and thus could prevent researchers from seeing that multiplicity and diversity must exist in any group (Williams, 1976). Moreover, the idea that disciplines might use language in ways unique to them suggested that sets of external rules existed that a newcomer was expected to simply study and learn (Dias et al., 1999). Thus the discourse community may be seen as replacing the grammar handbook as a source of guidelines for good writing. Swales himself (1993) admitted that he had been “too easily seduced by the concept of discourse community” (p. 694). He went on to observe that individuals could simultaneously belong to multiple communities which required command of distinct genres used in dissimilar situations and questioned the kind of discourse community that exists through membership and collectivity.

An alternative notion was proposed by Parks and Maguire (1999) in their study of acculturation of a francophone nurse at an Anglophone hospital: the notion of *community of discursive practice* (p. 152). However, this notion was not fully developed by the authors. Swales suggested that in the light of critique of the notion of discourse community, we might want to turn to another view of community. This view was introduced by Miller (1994b) as an entity internal to rhetoric, “a virtual entity, a discursive projection, a rhetorical construct. It is the community as invoked, represented, presupposed, or developed in rhetorical discourse” (p. 73).

Miller (1994b) asserted that many genre researchers had been looking for communities as groups either unified demographically or geographically (e.g., classrooms, civic task forces, hobby groups, academic conferences, and so on). The rhetorical community, as Miller (1994b) calls it, “works in part through genre . . . as the operational site of joint, reproducible social actions, the nexus between private and public, singular and recurrent, micro and macro” (p. 73) and “it is this inclusion of

sameness and difference, of us and them . . . that makes a community rhetorical, for rhetoric in essence requires both agreement and dissent, shared understanding and novelty In a paradoxical way, a rhetorical community includes ‘the other’” (p. 74). The rhetorical community does not have the same comfortable and homogeneous qualities as Swales’ discourse community—Miller characterizes it “as fundamentally heterogeneous and contentious” (p. 74).

Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger, 1998b) proposed a more refined concept of communities of practice. As Dias et al. (1999) claim, the term “‘communities of practice’ despite the problematic term ‘community’ . . . [is] both more general, in that it covers activity beyond language, and more precise, since it centers on what groups of people *do* [italics in original]” (p. 29). The notion of communities of practice allows researchers to analyze learning “that is most personally transformative” (Wenger, 1998b, p. 6). Each community of practice is constituted by distinct intellectual and social conventions. These conventions are shared assumptions about the roles of the audience and the rhetor and the social purposes for communicating, a fact which makes the notion of these conventions remarkably close to the notion of rhetorical genre.

This discussion of community as one of the central RGS notions would be incomplete without a discussion of the formation of a professional *identity* in novices entering professional communities of practice. In order to understand the role of the agent, it is important to investigate the notion of identity from the perspective of the proposed theoretical framework.

The Notion of Identity in RGS and Situated Learning

The notion of identity is particularly important for RGS because genre “is largely constitutive of the identities we assume within and in relation to discourse” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 343). Bazerman (2002) notes that over the past ten to fifteen years multiple studies of the development and formation of identities through participation in systems of genres have been conducted. These studies have demonstrated that social action and identity construction are both mediated through and constituted by genres (Hirsh, as cited in Bawarshi, 2000). Genres provide social codes

of behaviour for both interlocutors (the speaker and the listener, the writer and the reader) involved in a dialogic exchange (Bawarshi, 2000; Voloshinov, 1930/1983). Particularly important in the recent literature on RGS is the formation of a professional identity of a novice who moves into the workplace after years of academic and professional training. The development of professional identity is inextricably linked to participating in workplace genres and “learning one’s professional location in the power relations of institutional life” (Paré, 2002, p. 69). From this perspective, identity formation is linked to socialization into, the resistance to, or subversion by, local genres, which may occur either without one’s conscious involvement or through a critical analysis of a chronotope of an organization (see "A Time to Speak," this volume).

Bazerman (2002) discusses the interconnectedness of genre acquisition and the development of identity linked to a particular experience and activity. He observes that individuals become committed to the identities they develop through participation in genres of a particular community, and “in these ways genre shapes intentions, motives, expectations, attention, perception, affect, and interpretive frame” (p. 14). Smart and Brown (2002), drawing on Lave (1991) and Lave and Wenger (1996), address the notion of a *knowledgeably skilled identity* and observe that it is closely linked to a growing novice’s sense of professional competence. Learning to communicate in a particular professional situation is part of the process of becoming a legitimate member of a particular community of practice. As Dias et al. (1999) and Smart and Brown (2002) have observed, learning to become an accepted and functioning member of a particular workplace situation does not involve a simple transfer of knowledge and skills acquired in an academic setting directly to a professional setting. Smart and Brown note that a growing sense of a novice as a competent professional, that is, the development of the professional identity, contributes to the novice’s ability to act as an expert and enhances his/her capacity to learn in the workplace.

Conclusion

The discussion of the RGS, AT, and situated learning theoretical approaches to the analysis of the nature of activities in

the classroom and workplace communities, genre learning in COP, and the notion of identity has been presented above in order to demonstrate that these theoretical approaches are not only compatible with each other, but, in fact, can be used as complementary. In other words, to adopt an AT analogy, the theories reviewed in this chapter can be used as mediational tools in research activity. The proposed combined perspective allows researchers to see what cannot be seen otherwise; for example, the *RGS-ATsituated learning* perspective allows them to trace novices' learning of genres, seen as both constraining and enabling, as the novices move from one community of practice to another, from peripheral to full participation. The combined theoretical perspective provides scholars with the lens to view mediational artifacts that novices use as they move through time and space and through different activity systems. The proposed combined perspective also allows researchers to focus on the role of identity and individual agency and the tension between agency and the social forces acting in communities of practice and activity systems, wherein novices are learning to use workplace genres.

The main purpose of such a combined theoretical perspective is, to repeat after Wenger (2005b), to help practitioners see their practice with new eyes because "it is the eye of the practitioner that gives meaning to the theory"(n.p.).

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- In 1979, Campbell and Jamieson proposed the view of genre that opened the path to the rhetorical reconception of genre. They wrote,

if the recurrence of similar forms establishes a genre, then genres are groups of discourses which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics. Or, put differently, in the discourses that form a genre, similar substantive and stylistic strategies are used to encompass situations perceived as similar by the responding rhetors. A genre is a group of acts unified by a *constellation* [italics added] of forms that recurs in each of its members. These forms, *in isolation* [italics in original], appear in other discourses. What is distinctive about the acts in a genre is the recurrence of the forms *together* [italics in original] in constellation. (p. 20)

² More recently, Schryer (2005) has proposed a further revised definition of genre that, in addition to regulated rhetorical strategies, accommodates what she terms regularized resources. Schryer defines regularized resources as "more tacit strategies that emerge out of practical situations" (p. 260). The discussion of this definition of genre is beyond the scope of this chapter.

³ It is important to note that Russell (1997a) and Russell and Yañez (2002) use

the same term "genre systems" "to describe how genres function in activity systems" (Spinuzzi, 2004, p.3). A discussion of activity theory is presented later in this chapter.

⁴ In this chapter, I do not discuss concepts of genre ecologies, proposed by Freedman and Smart (1997) and, later, Spinuzzi (2004) or Swales's (2004) notion of genre networks.

⁵ Even though the notion of unified time-space (or spacetime) as a dimension of the human universe has been used in other disciplines (e.g., in mathematics by Minkowski; in biology by Ukhtomskyi, and; in physics, in relativity theory, by Einstein), Bakhtin (1981) makes a clear distinction between the use of the term in hard sciences and in his literary theory:

The special meaning [time-space] has in relativity theory is *not important* [italics added] for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature; we will not deal with the chronotope in other areas of culture. (p. 84)

As Lemke (2004) notes, the common connection between the notions of time-space as developed by Minkowski and Einstein, on the one hand, and Bakhtin, on the other, is that "it takes time to move from one place to another" (n.p.).

6

Please note that even though this view of genre is very close to Bakhtin's concept of addressivity, Freedman's definition of genre is not the same as Bakhtin's (1986a). Bakhtin defines genres as relatively stable types of utterances where each utterance is limited by its boundaries. The boundaries, in turn, are defined by the *change* of speaking subjects. Freedman's view (1994; 2002) of genre differs from Bakhtin's in that she sees *two* related utterances produced by *different* speaking subjects as *one genre*. I would like to thank Aviva Freedman for pointing out this distinction for me.

7

For a discussion of the Marxist roots of AT, see Engeström and Miettinen (1999) and A.A. Leont'ev, D.A. Leont'ev, and Sokolova (2003).

8

There is a significant controversy among Vygotsky scholars as to whether Vygotsky's theories are "truly" Marxist. According to Daniels (1993), some scholars "wish to exhume the body of Vygotsky's early writing in order to construct a modern Marxist psychology," and others, "such as Kozulin (1990),

. . . wish to purge his identity of all Marxist influence" (p. xxv). A. A. Leont'ev (2003) agrees that there are multiple different interpretations of Vygotsky's ideas and their links to Marxism. A discussion of possible Marxist origins of Vygotsky's concepts is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a detailed discussion, see Burgess (1993), Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamäki (1999), Kozulin (1986, 1990), and Leont'ev, A. A. (2003).

⁹ A. A. Leont'ev is A. N. Leont'ev's son.

¹⁰

In this view, activity theory is considered a direct continuation of Vygotsky's work on the role of tool and sign in child development, which contained all the ideas that constitute the basis of activity theory, that is, "the idea of an activity's purposefulness, the idea of its specific motivation (and even the 'objectness' of its motive), its specific 'composition' and 'structure,' the possibility of its being both 'practical' and 'symbolic'" (Leont'ev, A. A., 1995, p. 36). Even though Vygotsky himself never used the term *activity* in the same way as it is used in activity theory, A. A. Leont'ev (1995, 2003) insists that Vygotsky alternated this term with terms such as *action* and *operation*. This view has been contested both in Russian and Western literature on the subject (e.g., Davydov & Radzikhovski, 1980, 1981, 1985; Davydov & Zinchenko, 1989; Kozulin, 1990).

¹¹

The notion of human activity as a system was later developed by Engeström and his colleagues in the second and third generations of AT. This notion is discussed later in this chapter.

¹² See Witte (1992) for a discussion of the vagueness of the unit of analysis in Engeström's model, referred to as both a model of *activity* or a model of *mediation*. Witte (1992) proposed to consider this model as a theoretical model of *mediation* and claimed that this view allowed for the use of a more "appropriate unit of analysis while at the time creating a stronger link with the work of Vygotsky and Luria and creating a greater conceptual space between itself and the work of Leont'ev" (n.p.).

¹³

See Witte (1992) for a discussion of the problem of boundaries between separate but interconnected activities.

¹⁴ Vygotsky's concepts, developed as part of his study of a child's learning and psychological development, have been applied in various studies of adult learning (e.g., Engeström, 1987, 1999a; Lave, 1991, 1996a, 1996b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998b). In this chapter, I refer to a child *only* when discussing Vygotsky's original work.

¹⁵ See Gredler and Shields (2004) for a critique of another perspective on the ZPD that interprets the ZPD as a difference in the difficulty of the tasks that a child can perform alone and in collaboration.

16

See Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 48) for a discussion of various interpretations of the ZPD (e.g., *cultural* [Davydov & Markova, 1983] and *collectivist*, or *societal* [Engeström, 1987]). The societal perspective is discussed later in the section.

¹⁷ The transliteration of the original Russian term is *interiorizatsia*. It has been translated into English as both *interiorisation* and *internalization*, with *internalization* used more frequently.

¹⁸ To illustrate the process of internalization, Vygotsky (1978) uses an example of the development of a pointing gesture in a child, from an unsuccessful attempt to grasp an object, through an adult's help (the adult reaches for the object and passes it on to the child), through the internalization of the meaning of the gesture, to the intentional act of pointing.

19

This discussion is strikingly similar to the one on primary and secondary socialization, internalization, externalization, and objectivation provided by Berger and Luckmann (1967). While the historical and philosophical roots of these discussions are similar, Berger and Luckmann do not refer to Vygotsky, perhaps because his work was not yet available in the West in the 1960s.

²⁰ This view is very close to Berger and Luckmann's (1967).

21

Various versions of the theory are sometimes also referred to as *situated activity*, *situated action*, or *situated cognition*.

²² The limitations of the apprenticeship model are discussed later in the section. See Russell (1998) for details.

²³ When applying the notion of COP to the educational context, it is important to keep in mind that "in the education sector, learning is not only a means to an end: it [is] the end product" (Wenger, 2005a, n.p.).

24

On the basis of the concept of LPP, Freedman and Adam (1996, 2000b) have developed a concept of *attenuated authentic participation* that allows them to investigate a "specialized" context in which university students enter the workplace as interns.

25

The concept of human activity traces back to Marx (for further discussion see, for example, [Berger & Luckmann, 1967] and [Engeström & Miettinen, 1999]).

²⁶ Also see relevant discussions of enculturation presented by Bourdieu (1972) and Berger and Luckmann (1967).

2

Interaction Between Theory and Research: RGS and a Study of Students and Professionals Working “In Computers”

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Over the course of a series of research studies investigating discourse produced by university students and professionals in the workplace, my research colleagues and I have found the model of “Rhetorical Genre Studies”(RGS) to be an extremely powerful conceptual tool. (For an overview of RGS, see Artemeva’s “Approaches to Learning Genres,” in this volume, or Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Devitt, 1993; Freedman & Medway, 1994a, 1994b)

The relations between theory and the empirical data are complex. Theories help us to organize and understand data. When we discover a useful conceptual framework, so much more of what we have observed “makes sense.” The metaphors commonly used for this phenomenon are revealing: theories “illuminate,” “things fall into place.” These metaphors suggest the degree to which theory can clarify the connections among data and make salient patterns that seemed to be there all along. Further, the power of theory is such that, once espoused, it also influences and shapes further study. It affects the choice of questions and the sites to observe, and subsequently filters the data observed.

It is also true that the relationship between theory and empirical data is interactive. The data flesh out and specify the

theory, modifying, elaborating, and necessarily reshaping in the context of what is observed—whether the modification is made explicit by the researchers or not. Indeed, the researchers themselves are often not conscious of the degree to which their findings have reshaped the theory. In addition, sometimes the data force researchers to reconsider the theory—to modify, revise, or possibly even reject aspects or the whole of a theory that had been in use. My papers included in this volume focus on the relations between theory and research—in particular, the relations between RGS and research currently in progress on students and professionals working in computers. In this, the first paper, I focus on the way in which RGS has illuminated and continues to illuminate this and related research. The second essay focuses on the way in which empirical observations of students and professionals at work in these settings have forced a reconsideration of the theory (see “Pushing the Envelope”).

Selecting a Theory: Two Approaches

As suggested above, for the past ten years, my colleagues and I have been using RGS as a way of illuminating our empirical observations of the communicative practices of students and professionals. Rather than getting into the larger question of why genre theory at all (which goes beyond the individual choice of a specific researcher to the evolution of disciplinary paradigms), I would like to concentrate on a narrower question: why this version of genre theory?

As the name *Rhetorical Genre Studies* may already have suggested, there is more than one version of genre theory available for contemporary researchers. In the pages that follow, I contrast two versions of genre theory—with the goal of showing how, in the end, RGS provided a better fit with the phenomena we have been studying. The claim I am making here is that the data themselves predisposed us towards the selection of one theory over the other.

In a not-unusual form of intellectual confluence, redefinitions of the traditional notion of genre have taken place independently at roughly the same time in very different intellectual and geographical locales: in the US, growing out of the new rhetoric; and in Australia, deriving from the work of the systemic-functional linguistics of

M. A. K. Halliday. The redefinitions took place at the same time as the work of Bakhtin was becoming known in the West. Bakhtin's theory and the theories developed in the US have a startling congruence; there are important points of contrast, however, between Bakhtin's and North American work, on the one hand, and the Australian, on the other.

The theories developed by Bakhtin and by North American scholars are those which have been grouped together under the rubric of RGS. Some of the key figures associated with RGS are the following (the list is intended to be illustrative, rather than exhaustive): Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Bazerman, Carol Berkenkotter, Amy Devitt, Anne Freadman, Tom Huckin, Carolyn Miller, Catherine Schryer, Jo-Anne Yates, and my own colleagues, Patrick Dias, Peter Medway, Anthony Paré, and Graham Smart. All except Bakhtin and Freadman are North American, and all are associated primarily with literary and/or rhetorical disciplinary orientations. This stands in contrast to the disciplinary background in applied linguistics and education that characterizes the work of the Sydney School genre scholars or those whose work derives from English for Specific Purposes (ESP). These initial disciplinary orientations have their consequences.

As explicated in their theoretic formulations, these two approaches have much in common. Both insist on the limitations of traditional conceptions of genres which focused only on recurring textual features. Both stressed the need to recognize the social dimensions of genre: "genres are social actions," in RGS, to reframe the now famous title of Miller's seminal essay (1984/1994a); "genres are staged, goal-oriented social processes" (Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987, p. 59). Both approaches emphasize the addressee, the context, and the occasion. (For reviews of the work emerging from applied linguistics, see Richardson, 1994 for Sydney School work or Swales, 1991, 1993 for work in ESP and applied linguistics.) It is not so much in their theoretic formulations, but rather in their realization within research, that the differences between these two approaches are most salient.

Insights into Theory Provided by Research

For this reason, in the following pages I will look at

research undertaken using RGS theory—as a way of highlighting its distinctiveness. My intention is not to suggest that one approach is better, but rather to show how RGS differs. These are alternative ways of seeing and understanding; each illuminates different facets of the sociocultural dimensions of language in use.

Interactivity between Language and Life, Text and Context

One feature of RGS research which reveals its radical difference from other social versions of genre is the following: the focus in this research is NOT solely or primarily on the texts themselves. Instead, the focus is on the interactions between texts and actual concrete contexts. The goal of this research is to understand and account for what Bakhtin (1986) calls *concrete language* and *actual speech flow*. “Any research whose material is concrete language . . . inevitably deals with concrete utterances, written and oral, *belonging to various spheres of human activity* To ignore this leads to perfunctoriness and excessive abstractness, distorts the historicity of the research . . . and weakens the *link between language and life* [italics added]” (p.63). It is this “link between language and life,” between “concrete utterances” and the various spheres of human activity, that RGS scholars are concerned to explore.

For this reason, the research methods are largely qualitative, naturalistic, and ethnographic. This stands in sharp contrast with linguistic studies of genre whose objective is to develop systemic analyses of the formal properties of texts—albeit using socially-oriented linguistic frameworks such as Halliday’s systemic-functional grammar (e.g., Halliday, 1985).

RGS researchers “observe” texts and their authors within their very specific local socio-historical contexts with considerable specification of “lived experience.” Sometimes, the research is historical (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Yates, 1989). Other research takes the form of case studies, involving lengthy site visits and observations of a range of social and material phenomena (e.g., Devitt, 1991; Paré, 1993; Schryer, 1994; Smart, 1993). In both, there are detailed, richly-textured descriptions of the settings and the social activities engaged in within those settings, especially the range of interactions surrounding the production of texts. There is the material specificity of Yates’ (1989) accounts, as she describes the ways in which the material

environs of the business workplace shaped the genres elicited: from filing cabinets in the 19th century to the electronic technology of the late 20th. Or, there is Bazerman's (1994) detailed historical account of the legal and political-historical contexts for development of the patent as genre. See also Smart's (1993) descriptions of the social activities surrounding the production and reception of texts in the Bank of Canada, or Paré's parallel description of the contexts for production of social work genres (Paré & Smart, 1994, and in Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999). There are also the detailed discussions of material and organizational contexts in Yates (1989) or Artemeva and Freedman (2001), or Schryer's presentation of the political and ideological contexts for different genres in veterinary medicine (1994) or an insurance company (2000).

RGS research shows not only how genres are shaped by their context but also how genres themselves interact with and reshape their contexts. Genres are themselves sites which locate human endeavours and which organize social practices in professional fields as diverse as architecture (Dias et al., 1999) and tax practice (Devitt, 1991). And in an extreme example of impact on surrounding context, genres are also the sites at which the contradictions inherent in an activity system become manifest, thereby focusing the energies which can lead to institutional break-up (Artemeva & Freedman, 2001).

As illustrated by the Bakhtin quotation, there are many theoretical statements in the RGS literature that focus on "interaction;" it is the research, however, that dramatizes the degree to which this notion is an animating principle in the RGS perspective. In this, RGS differentiates itself from those branches of genre study based in applied linguistics. John Swales (1993), whose own work is based within this applied linguistics tradition, comments as follows:

context has been underappreciated in my field [i.e., applied linguistics]. Although important systemic work ostensibly lays much emphasis on the need to incorporate factors such as the context of situation and the context of culture into discourse analysis, in practice connecting linguistic form and linguistic function has predominated, leaving contextualization as

undifferentiated background Throughout, and with relatively few exceptions, this short history describes a field where “context” has been thinly accounted for. (p.110)

Blurred and Anti-Taxonomic

Concomitant with this emphasis on unpacking the relations between text and context is the following negative fact: there is little attempt at the more abstract work of classifying genres. This stands in contrast to the Sydney school, which began its research project with an attempt to classify types of student writing. In fact, embedded within RGS is the sense that genre boundaries are not neat nor clearly defined. Geertz (1983) on blurred genres is often cited, as is Bakhtin’s (1986) statement that the rules of genre “are . . . more flexible, plastic, and free” (p. 79) than those of syntax. As Miller (1994b) writes, we “look to ethno-categories of discourse rather than to the theoretically neat classification” (p.67).

While there are no taxonomies and classifications in which abstract formal attributes of texts are specified, there are descriptive attempts to reveal the empirical relations between kinds of genres. Rather than taxonomies, there are discussions of “genre sets” (Devitt, 1991) and “genre systems” (Bazerman, 1994). Genre sets refer to the range of genres that are likely to be found in a specific context; Devitt (1991) specifies the set found in a tax accountant’s office. Bazerman’s genre system refers to the “interrelated genres that interact with each other in specific settings” (1994, p.97). A genre system includes the generic responses.

Dynamism

Throughout RGS, there is a recognition of dynamism. “Genres change, evolve, and decay,” according to Miller (1984/1994a, p.36). Genres respond to the exigencies of the socio-historical moment. And the socio-historical moment is just that: a moment in the flux of time. For this reason, researchers within this tradition have been interested in showing the evolution of specific genres: Yates (1989) has traced the origin and development of the memo in response to changes in the

management philosophy, organization, and material conditions of business; Bazerman (1988) has described the evolution of the research article in response to changes in scientific knowledge. A different kind of change is captured in other studies that investigate the acquisition of genres by individuals. A number of researchers focus on students' learning (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Freedman & Adam, 1996, 2000); others investigate how workplace figures go about acquiring the local genres (Freedman & Adam, 2000; Paré, 1993; Smart, 1993).

Sense of Agency

It would be possible, in the light of a social theory of genre, to take a more deterministic or social constructionist position: to see genres as entirely constraining choice; indeed, to see genres (and discourse) as ultimately forming/creating whatever self exists.

RGS, however, operates from a sense of the potential interaction between agency and structure. (The social theorist of choice is Giddens (1984). Both Bakhtin (1986) and Miller (1984/1994a), in theory, point to the difference between private plan and social motive, or the individual's speech plan and the genres available. To quote Bazerman (1994), "by using these typified texts we are able to advance our own interests and shape our meanings in relation to complex social systems" (p.79). The research shows instances of the "invention" of genres or their reaccentuation. Bazerman examines the cases of particularly forceful, creative individuals—focusing on the moments in which they create new genres (Sir Isaac Newton) or reshape extant genres to their ends. But even lesser figures are presented as exercising a capacity for choice (see, for example, Artemeva & Freedman, 2001). This contrasts with research, such as that of Green and Lee (1994), which focuses on how students are forced to take on inimical subject positions as a result of the genres available to them. An example is the research undertaken by Steinberg (1999). She showed how a group of young offenders drew on very different genres when confronted with what seemed to be the same rhetorical exigence: a request that they write an essay as part of their sentencing. Some wrote "traditional school expository essays," others drew on evangelical sermons and confessional monologues drawn from TV models.

Two Views of Genre: Particle vs. Wave

By looking at the research conducted using RGS as a prism, other dimensions of the theory emerge. In contrast to other social theories of genre, RGS attends more to the dynamic, the interactive, the active, the creative, and the inventive. It is a view that privileges the verb over the noun, the process over the product.

It is possible to take a different perspective and to get at different dimensions of genre. That is what is accomplished in the studies of EAP or in the analyses of systemic grammar. RGS has given up this kind of precision and formal satisfaction in favour of an attempt to sort out the complex dynamics between the social and the textual, as well as between the individual and the communal.

To put it another way, and picking up on an analogy from the world of physics, RGS focuses on the “wave” as opposed to the “particle.” The point is this: with due acknowledgment of the distortion implicit in this domestication of the analogy, it is possible to look at a phenomenon either as a discrete particle or as a wave. (See Young, Becker and Pike, 1970, for an earlier use of this distinction, in another context.) However, we cannot do both at the same time.

On the one hand, we can either try to taxonomize and categorize. In other words, we can look at a situation as timeless—as an eternal present—and attempt to categorize and classify and define its features. We can look at genres as reified entities, frozen in time, in order to categorize, classify, and develop complex and abstract rule systems to describe their features. Scholars working with other models of genre (other than RGS) do this very effectively. Think of the work of Biber (1988), Bhatia (1993), and sometimes Swales, or the Halladayans, and the Sydney School.

On the other hand, we can take the perspective that Bakhtin (1986) valorizes, focusing instead on concrete language in use, the actual speech (or discourse) flow. In other words, we can look at, and try to capture, the energy of the dynamic, vital, interactive present. What Rhetorical Genre Studies allows for is a focus on genres as wave: we look at genres as they change and evolve; we study them in their very moment of emergence into being. We try to understand the range of shifting complex inter-

actions between texts and their eliciting rhetorical exigencies and contexts; we see the way in which genres are captured for a moment, but ready to fly apart. To quote Schryer (1994), “Genres are . . . stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action. All genres . . . come from somewhere and are transforming into something else. Because they exist before their users, genres shape their users, yet users and their discourse communities constantly remake and reshape them” (p. 108). The following Table summarizes the points of difference.

Table: Two Social Theories of Genre

Particle	Wave
Snapshot	Movie
Synchronic	Diachronic
Frozen in time	Dynamic
Lateral View	Vertical View
Noun	Verb
Reified/Solid	Fragile
Taxonomies	Related sets/systems (as empirically connected and interacting)
	Focus on genre as site of centripetal and centrifugal forces

But, to quote Kenneth Burke (1935), “a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” (p. 49). The downside is that this perspective does not allow us to look at the reified entities, does not allow us to use taxonomies that focus only on the texts (except insofar as these exist in the context and exert pressure on the invention/or creation of new genres). In other words, it does not allow this research to have the neatness, the quantifiability, of the Sydney research. To return to my earlier point, each perspective illuminates the object observed in a different way.

Why RGS? Catching the Wave

These contrasts help to explain why my colleagues and I

have selected RGS as the theoretic prism through which to view our data. In my own recent research, my colleagues and I have been attempting to “catch the wave.” In much of our work, we have been repeatedly confronted with change and with the need to account for that change, and nowhere is this more true than in current research-in-progress, focusing on learning and working in high-tech environments.

More than any other, the high-tech world embraces and celebrates change. “Fast learning” and “fast learners” are the mantras. Furthermore, both the industry and the university disciplines are still in the process of establishing themselves. Their worlds have the momentum of early acceleration before institutional structures take shape and weigh down progress.

At the university, in many cases courses change and the programs change on an annual basis. As one instructor explained, the anticipated shelf-life of each new course is two years. As for the workplaces, physical and institutional transformation has been taking place before our eyes. We see businesses moving from the garage (or basement) to rented apartments, to small-business settings in strip malls, to posh offices in industrial parks. The physical and geographic shifts have been mirrored by organizational shifts: from small, two-people casual interactions to formalized hierarchies shaped by newly-hired Vice Presidents with MBA backgrounds. We have seen, too, the changes and shifts that have occurred during the high-tech economic “boom” of the late 1990s to the “bust” of the early 2000s.

RGS has provided us with a theoretic lens through which we can capture some of this change. It has allowed us to see and understand:

- 1 genres in the process of formation (in response to rhetorical exigencies which themselves continually shift);
- 2 the constraints of extant genres, already familiar to the players, and the ways in which these are drawn on and reshaped, and;
- 3 the ways in which these genres themselves help to stabilize the shifting world, so that these genres become the situations.

I want to make the point that we are observing sites in the process of the most profound change. We cannot pin them

down. So lenses which allow us to observe the changes in process are particularly powerful. RGS has provided us with such a lens.

Here is one small example from our research looking at workers in the IT industry. Sam is one such subject, working initially in a two-person operation for a boss who was operating the business end. Early on, the boss secured a small contract, and Sam was expected, among other tasks, to pinpoint errors in some coding and to correct these errors. To report on this to the contracting company, Sam “invented” a genre; that is, he figured out quite deliberately a “useful” way to report on: a) the errors he had discovered, and b) their revisions. To do so, of course, he drew on “genres” in the ambient culture; his genre was shaped by the “table” templates offered by the word-processing program he was using (and ultimately by the computer technology itself), and the set-up was necessarily affected by the nature of his rhetorical goal: to lay out the problems and their solutions in juxtaposition to each other. In this case, it is only sensible to conclude that the rhetorical goal, and communicative or social action, preceded, in a sense, and shaped the nature of the genre.

However, as our observations revealed, the contract cited above became the first of many contracts. And the “error-correction report genre” became the capital G “Genre,” the “Way” of responding to such tasks. Sam’s future reports all took this form, as did the other reports of employees who were hired into the organization. From this point on, the “error correction report” shaped the very way that employees approached the problems. It became the standard way of doing such tasks within his company.

This is a very nice illustration of the point suggested by Paré and Smart (1994), and developed more recently by Bawarshi (2000) in an article on “The Genre Function.” Bawarshi argues that genres *are* the situations. Rather than being rhetorical actions “based” in recursive situations, genres are both rhetorical actions and recurrent situations. That is, “genres help communicants construct the very recurrent situations to which they rhetorically respond We rhetorically recognize and respond to particular situations through genres because genres are how we socially construct these situations by defining and treating them as particular exigencies. A genre is thus both the situation and the textual instantiation of the situation” (p. 357). In

other words, the genre invented by Sam subsequently became the “occasion” or “situation” or “function,” in Bawarshi’s terms.

Conclusion

Miller’s (1984) famous definition of genre as recurrent responses to recurrent situations or situation-types allows for a focus on the relations between language and life (Bakhtin), and phenomena such as “uptake” and “play” (Freadman, 1994), enabling theorists and researchers to fix on the act of responding; that is, to move away from a study of genres as fixed reified entities and instead to study the moment of coming-into-being: the complicated social invention of genres as ways of acting (understood most broadly) in response to socially interpreted/constructed situation-types. To extend (and distort), RGS has allowed for a focus on the “wave” rather than the “particle”: the dynamism, interplay, interactivity as genres are created or evolve, as they themselves reshaped and/or reconstitute their rhetorical contexts. Furthermore, RGS has focused on the interactions between language and life, as well as on the centrifugal and centripetal forces captured in a moment of tension—such that we understand as well the nature and potential directions of the move away from stability.

To conclude, the perspective provided by RGS allows us to “catch the wave,” to understand the evolution of genres within disciplines and workplaces which are themselves changing as we watch. To quote Burke (1935) again, “a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing” (p.49). By choosing the wave perspective, RGS is denied the clarity, the neatness, the elegance, and the quantifiability available in text-based studies. Each perspective illuminates the object observed in a different way. For the furtherance of our discipline, both perspectives are necessary.

For those of us researching students and professionals working in computers, RGS has proved to be powerful tool. The dynamism, the interactivity, and the power of agency are all features of the theory, which helped to illuminate what has been observed and what we need to understand. There is a way, then, in which some observations or empirical data seem to privilege certain theories. On the other hand, as I will argue later in this volume, not all data fit so neatly. These too require a response. Sometimes the theory needs to be reconsidered, even radically

altered.

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3

Pushing the Envelope: Expanding the Model of RGS Theory

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Empirical research is messy. Some observations don't seem to fit neatly into the specific theory that accounts for the rest; specific data seem to demand further or other explanation. This paper presents a provisional response to just such phenomena. It is an account of some data uncovered in our study of students and professionals working with computers; data which should have fit Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) but seemed not to; instances where discourse was in use but in ways that seemed to worry at the outlines of rhetorical genre theory.

The pages that follow present an exploration, not a conclusion. The complicating examples are presented first. They are followed by some discussion of theories of discourse which do a better job of explaining the wayward data. The final steps, however, have yet to be taken. The paper does not end with an overarching theory. Its goal is more modest and provisional: to present the wayward data and to point to theories of discourse that can account for them—without attempting, at this point, to reconceptualize RGS to accommodate such data and such theory.

Reconsidering the Model

The model of RGS, as applied in recent RGS research,

has focused largely, if not entirely, on written and oral productions in the fields of work, school and public affairs. To use the language of earlier theorists (Britton, Burgess, Martin, Mcleod & Rosen, 1975), the data analysed in the RGS tradition have been “transactional texts”—that is, oral and written texts whose goal was to get things done in the world. To draw further on Britton’s (1970) taxonomy, omitted from these discussions has been “poetic” (or literary) texts and “expressive” (or personal) writing (pp.8892).

I will not be arguing in this paper for an extension of the scope of empirical study, in an RGS framework, to include literary texts and personal writing. (Others can take up that argument elsewhere.) My concern here is different: I will argue that, because we have excluded literary genres and personal writing from theoretic discussions, we are not able to account for some impulses that find expression in the production of even workaday texts.

Genre analysis has already shown more than one “social motive” at work in specific texts. (See, for example, the discussion of the dual motives of university writing described in Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999/2001.) My claim here will be that the nature of the secondary or subsidiary motives in workaday discourse is of a kind that is distinct from that which is dominant in typical genres of the workplace and public affairs. For this reason, we need to expand the scope of RGS to include such impulses and motives.

Worrying Data

Let us turn, then, to the troubling data. Here are some specific examples drawn from our research focusing on the discourse and genres involved in academic and professional work in high technology. The first example involves students working on coding assignments for their Computer Science course. The phenomenon that seemed inconsistent with our RGS perspective was this: In a number of instances, after the students had completed the coding task in a way that they believed would assure them of a perfect grade, they continued to work on the coding assignment—often for many hours. The rhetorical exigence within their school context had been met, yet they continued to work on the texts.

The second set of examples is drawn from the workplace.

There we saw several instances of programmers, working on coding or error correction and smiling slyly to themselves, or even laughing out loud, as they worked. What they were doing was inserting jokes into their coding; jokes that quite possibly nobody else would ever see. As one Computer Science student explained to us about her new workplace:

The people [in this new workplace are] very friendly. They are not like machines, or like robots in front of their computers. People are trying to do things [that are] much more interesting They are very good at the computer, but they are also trying to do something more. Some other interesting things Even in their programming, in their code, they are *trying to make some jokes*. [italics added]

What was going on? In the first case, the students continued to work on the tasks to make them, in their words, more “beautiful, neater, more theirs”— i.e., wearing more of their signature. In the second, programmers inserted completely irrelevant jokes, clever puns, outside allusions into their work— jokes or allusions that a user would certainly never recognize. The only possible real audience was another programmer who, at some distant time and place, might be called in to debug the program. In each case, the activities noticed were superfluous and irrelevant with respect to the essential social action entailed by the task. In both cases, hypothetical audiences were invoked— audiences who, if they existed at all, were extraneous to and removed from the rhetorical and social contexts of the tasks.

A third and quite different example involved Sam. At the time he was observed, Sam was the sole employee working in a very small start-up firm. Sam spoke freely to the researcher on site, describing all the different writing and coding tasks in which he was engaged as a writer or reader. There was one activity, however, that he never mentioned. As he worked, the observer noted that Sam regularly wrote on and consulted a small piece of paper at the back of a notebook. When asked directly what he was doing, Sam was flustered and taken aback. The activity seemed to him to be irrelevant to his official work. When he was finally cajoled into showing the investigator the paper, it turned out to be something that resembled the logs that workers in other

sites are required to keep: a list of his various tasks, broken down by subtask, with indications as to where he was in each task. Sam's log was never shown to his boss or clients; it was intended only for his eyes, to guide his own work.

One could argue (and we were tempted to do so) that his writing was itself part of the larger activity, that it contributed to other genres and larger social actions. Yet something niggled. These notes were different in an important way. For one thing, they were never seen by anyone else; they were self-directed in a way that RGS did not seem easily to account for.

While all these examples could have been swept away or ignored amidst the wealth of other data that we were collecting, they seemed to fit in with a growing sense that there were gaps in RGS that needed to be accounted for.

Expanding the Scope of RGS

In expanding its scope, much that is central to RGS will remain: the emphasis on the social, for example, and the recognition that genres are typified responses to socially defined or interpreted "situation-types" (to paraphrase Miller, 1984/1994a, including her reference to Schutz, 1984). Some distinctions need to be made, and these are best understood by turning to Bakhtin's (1986) discussions of speech genres and to a distinction one can make between "responsiveness" and "addressivity." Bakhtin shows how texts always respond to previous texts as well as to the semiotically-mediated, socially-constructed world: texts ventriloquate, qualify, and respond to pre-existing texts. One can barely imagine a text that does not do so; to paraphrase Bakhtin, no one can be Adam again. The exceptions we observed are not exceptions to this rule.

Our aberrant examples seem to differ not with respect to their responsiveness but rather with respect to their "addressee." The troubling instances described at the outset all involve texts that were directed less to outside listeners or readers than to internal or imagined audiences. They seem to reveal actions directed less towards practical outcomes than towards enhancement of the texts-as-objects or, in the case of Sam, towards regulating some inner activity.

Such impulses and such orientations are often alluded to by professional writers. For example, in a recent interview with

de Bertodano (2003), Amy Tan explained: “When I write I try not to think of the reader [*italics added*]. I think of my reader as a very intimate part of me ...” (de Bertodano, 2003, ¶9). Or, as she says later, “I feel I am conversing with my grandmother who, of course, I never met. By looking at why she did this and her sense of both anger and despair in not having a voice, I’m saying to her: we have a voice now ...” (¶17).

Earlier, in this same article, after describing the terrifying personal histories of the women in her family, Tan concludes: “legacies can be fateful unless you’re aware of how that stream has maintained itself. By understanding that sense of fate and writing about it, I feel that I have broken it [*italics added*]” (¶17).

If questioned, Tan would undoubtedly acknowledge the degree to which her work is fundamentally social and “responsive”—in the sense that she builds on and responds to literary and other texts (and undoubtedly knows that her own texts will be responded to in the same way, whether she herself has envisioned the potential responses of writers/readers out there or not). Her claim in this article, though, is that her work is not “addressive” in its composing: She does not orient herself to the actual literal readers who will buy her books; instead, she orients herself to the reader as an “intimate part” of herself, or the “grandmother she never met.”

In other words, even though it would be naive to think that, at some level of awareness, the editor, the publisher, and the reading public did not shape Tan’s writing to some extent, we must also recognize that, with respect to its orientation to a real readership, her writing is fundamentally different from that of tax accountants, students, and writers in the public forum who focus on their addressees in a very direct way.

These insights of Tan’s represent nothing startling or new; her description of her composing process finds resonance in the self-reflective commentary of many professional writers and in the accounts of many closet writers. (See the Paris Review series, *Writers at Work* [e.g. Plimpton, 1988].) This kind of writing, however, and these impulses for writing, are not typically taken into account, or possibly given credibility, in RGS discussions.

To summarize then, on the basis of the aberrant examples cited above and on the basis of Tan’s reflections on her processes, we can discriminate two motives or activities

underlying the writing of texts that have been insufficiently dealt with in RGS: The first is the impulse to create an object; the second is the impulse to clarify something for oneself.

While RGS appears unable to account neatly for these phenomena, other theories of discourse seem able to do so—theories that were widely drawn on in the early years of the revival of rhetorical studies in the 20th century. I am thinking of the work of Roman Jakobson, James Britton, and Susanne Langer—all of whose work was extremely influential from the 1960s to the 1990s in composition and rhetorical studies. (See discussion in Emig, 1977.) These theories were not so much rejected, in the turn to genre studies, as put aside. As we shall see below, there are important elements in these models of discourse that can account for the wayward phenomena we observed. Perhaps it is time to attempt to reconcile RGS with these theories.

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Aviva Freedman

Finding Consonant Theories

Jakobson

Roman Jakobson (1960) developed the notion of speech functions. He identified features common in any speech situation and suggested that function consists of a focus upon one of these features. The features of any utterance, as he names them, are these: 1) the addressor; 2) the context/message/contact/code, and; 3) the addressee. The corresponding foci, within texts, are as follows: 1) the emotive (p.354); 2) the referential /poetic/phatic/metalingual (p.354-357), and; 3) the conative (p.355). Utterances may shift in focus or involve more than one focus. However, for each utterance, there is a hierarchy of functions, such that one is dominant.

Britton

James Britton's work (e.g., Britton, 1970, and Britton et al., 1976) is based on Jakobson's. He begins by distinguishing two basic roles or stances in language use: the role of "participant" and that of "spectator." (e.g., pp. 79–81.) Participant uses of language are geared towards acting on or in

the world. In contrast, spectator uses of language do not seek practical outcomes in the world.

The functions that match these stances he calls the “transactional” and the “poetic.” The transactional is drawn on “to get things done (to inform, advise, instruct)” (Britton et al., 1975, p. 88). The “poetic” involves the use of language as artifact. Its focus is on the text itself, and on multiple layers of patterning.

Britton goes on to distinguish yet a third function: “the expressive,” language that is very close to the self or to the mind thinking (pp. 10, 88ff). Expressive writing is intended solely for the self.

Langer

Underlying Britton’s work, and that of many compositionists and rhetoricians (Emig, 1977) is the philosophy of Susanne Langer. She, along with other symbolistic philosophers, argues that a prime impulse in human use of language is the impulse to symbolize: to make/see/discover patterns (1942). She claims that this impulse, far more than the urge to satisfy basic human needs, is what lies behind the development of human language—for the individual and the species. This need is so basic that it finds expression in our dreams and in the incessant mind chatter of our waking hours. It finds expression in myth, religion, and ritual, as well as the use of symbolic systems, such as language, music, and art.

As Langer points out, when children begin to talk, their words are not intended solely, or even primarily, to satisfy basic physical needs. Their words primarily satisfy the basic need to name, to hold an object in contemplation.

Summary

In different ways, Jakobson, Britton, and Langer all refer to an underlying impulse in language, which is simply to create/make/discover patterns, and to take pleasure in that patterning for its own sake. My interest in making this argument is not so much to point to literary or poetic texts as a neglected area of study but rather to make a separate point. While a text performs, and indeed is, a social action, responding to a

rhetorical exigence, that same text also is, in the end, an object or artifact in itself.

Once we begin to use words to create texts, there is at least the possibility that we will become engaged by our sheer pleasure in the aural/graphic patterns. Words and texts provide us with an aesthetic pleasure in their own right—sometimes luring us, willy-nilly, into a focus on the text as artefact, whether that focus relates to the rhetorical exigence at hand or not. The term “aesthetic” is being used here in its broadest sense to refer to a sense of delight in a phenomenon or artefact for its own sake. No earnestness is implied. On the contrary, as we shall see, it is by a sense of the playful that this aesthetic sense is most often characterized in everyday discourse.

On the basis of all this, I would like to argue that our understanding of social actions can and should be expanded to include a wider range of texts whose social actions are not only different, but different in kind. A poetic text implies a very different kind of audience and a very different kind of social action. Devitt (2000) recently argued: “A common quality of some literature is that it is read by multiple audiences at different times and places apart from its initial situation and community” (p. 709). “Transcendence or universality” (p. 709) are part of the function and the audience for literature.

Furthermore, one needs to take into account these very different kinds of social action and social motives even when studying workplace and everyday discourse. For these very different kinds of social action are often drawn on within the genres of everyday discourse, complicating and/or enriching these everyday genres in ways that need to be acknowledged.

I am making two separate points. In everyday discourse, an utterance can draw on more than one genre, although as Jakobson (1960) argues, generally one is dominant; in the world of everyday discourse, it is the “practical” one that dominates. Secondly, sometimes the other genres drawn on are of a different kind, implying a radically distinct kind of function, audience, and context. With respect to the dominant function, context and audience, these typically seem excessive and superfluous. The phenomena of excess and superfluity are the ones that caught our attention.

Accounting for the Examples

Sam, the young man described in the third example, uses writing in a way described by Britton et. al (1975) as writing for the self; he produced the same kind of running account of his activities that is often used in other workplaces and referred to there as a “log.” Logs are intended to allow others to know exactly what has taken place not only as a way of accounting for time (and money) but also as a way of enabling someone else to take over the task. Logs allow for and facilitate the distribution of labour, and the distribution of cognition.

In the case of Sam, we have an example of a written text doing this kind of work—internally. The writing is used by the writer to regulate his own future activities; it functions as his externalized memory and organizes his future tasks.

This is a useful example because it shows us how we can begin to extend the notion of “social action” to include the kind of writing that people do which is intended only for themselves: logs certainly, but also journals. Actions are performed through writing in response to internal rhetorical exigences. Although the exigences are internal, the actions remain social, in the sense that all our words are dialogic and part of an extended communication chain (Bakhtin, 1986). Drawing on both Vygotsky (1962) and Bakhtin (1986), we can see that thinking in language is a way of acting within the confines of one’s skull, once one’s skull is re-conceived to be the locus of ongoing conversations that predate the birth of the thinker. Writing a journal is a social action in that other voices are inevitably ventriloquated in the composing. Each text is situated intertextually. Furthermore, each implies or invents an audience and even a “rhetorical community” (Miller, 1994b).

So, while Sam’s notes can be defined as social in the sense suggested by the preceding paragraph, we need to acknowledge an important distinction. While a memo, for example, is intended for, and sent to, a real reader and an ordinary work-log is passed on to the manager and/or relevant colleagues, Sam’s texts remain private. That material reality needs to be recognized if we are to fully understand the genre. There is a radical difference between texts that are sent to other readers and those that are not (i.e., those that were never intended for others’ eyes). Any theory of discourse, such as RGS, must be able to take such instances into account.

In turning to the other exceptions, another kind of

explanation is necessary. First, let us look at the students who continued working, sometimes for many hours, on coding projects which they knew would get full grades “as they were.” Why did they keep working? Their answers all pointed, in different ways, to their desire to achieve something beyond what was sufficient for the grade: elegance, neatness, simplicity, “personal style.” The students were responding to an exigence beyond the classroom exigence; they had selected or invented exigences and contexts other than those which existed in the classroom. In this invention or selection of other contexts, the enactment was clearly in excess of, and superfluous to, the actual rhetorical exigence.

Consider, for example, the coders in the workplace who inserted jokes into their coding or error correction. The insinuation of jokes into coding is done sometimes with the expectation that a debugger whom they know, or more likely don’t know, in a different workplace, will read and respond to the humour. Sometimes, however, jokes are insinuated without any clear expectation of anyone else seeing them or responding. Here, too, is an activity that is superfluous to the social action; one in which a potential audience is invented or imagined and one where not only the audience but also the social exigence exists entirely in the writer’s own head. There is an appeal to the kind of universal or transcendent audience that one associates with literature, but as suggested above, with none of the earnestness normally associated with literature.

This urge toward playfulness itself is not specific to the contexts we observed. A recent article by Friedman and Friedman (2003) focuses on the wide range of humour found in computer-oriented settings. Many other examples come to mind from the world of science. Think of the serious quest to discover a new particle which ended with Murray Gell-Mann’s announcement of the discovery of the “quark” (a name taken from *Finnegan’s Wake*). Think of the act of naming the specific quarks. They seemed to come in pairs, so the first two were “up” and “down.” Then the puzzling third one named “charm” and its belatedly discovered companion, “strange.” The last two were named “top” and “bottom,” or by others, “truth” and “beauty.” (See Gell-Mann & Ne’Eman, 1964.) Beauty, charm, strange. Indeed. All this points to a kind of playfulness and delight that seem to exceed, that seem to be superfluous to, the serious

scientific work of discovering and naming new particles. The physicists help to remind us of the drive in people to find patterns that do more than satisfy epistemic/economic/ political needs.

Indeed, this urge toward the playful has been an oft-noted phenomenon in the world of computer sciences. Some might argue that the playful is here associated with the youth culture of the high-tech world; others see it as an instance of the social deviance or anarchism that we find elsewhere in the computer world. Perhaps such playfulness comes only as a surprise to those of us trained in the more sober arts and social sciences where such impulses have been more effectively silenced. But a walk on the wilder side, within the world of “geek chic” (home to applied mathematicians, physicists, and computer scientists), reveals the degree to which the playful exists in a way that exceeds the practical needs of the situation.

In addition to playfulness, beauty and elegance are valued. “Elegant code” is a desideratum that implies a level of grace that exceeds the necessity of use. “Beauty,” “charm,” and “elegance” are the words with which scientists remind us of the drive in people to find patterns that do more than satisfy economic or political or even epistemic needs.

Changing Places

Before concluding, I’d like to point to a different but related phenomenon. This example is drawn from the world of advertising. A few years ago, a major beer company in Canada released an ad that gained an enormous amount of attention. This text began as a TV advertisement and then changed “places” to use Anne Freadman’s (1987/1994) term; that is, it created for itself a different social situation and became a different genre. I bring up this example because it is an instance in which the poetic impulse, which initially represented a superfluous excess, ended by becoming dominant so that the text actually was transformed into a different genre.

The ad was for a brand of beer put out by Molson’s brewery, called “Molson Canadian.” The ad was complex from the outset since it used the genre of the rant to do the selling. The actual genre was that of a TV ad, but it was presented using the discourse form of rant.

A rant is a peculiarly, if not specifically Canadian, form of satire. It consists of an extended monologue, humourously taking aim at some political or social ill. The rant always builds visibly and audibly to a climax; on TV, this is sometimes signalled by having the camera zoom in on the face of the “ranter” so that it becomes larger and larger, and more distorted.

The rant is a comedic genre. According to the functions specified by the theorists cited earlier, it is “poetic” or literary, and in the spectator mode. The goal is not to get things done (even, I would argue, in political satire) but to stand back, appreciate, reflect on some reality uncovered/created by the creator of the rant. As Devitt (2000) points out in her article, distinguishing literary approaches from rhetorical approaches to genres, the expectation for literary genres is that the audience is transcendent (i.e., not specific to a particular context). While the original playing of any rant is to a specific audience—on TV, on radio, in a comedy club, to friend—there is an expectation that the rant can be replayed in a range of contexts to a range of audiences.

This advertisement first appeared as part of a series of ads, focusing on a not-so-latent, popular anti-Americanism to highlight the word “Canadian” in Molson’s Canadian. As suggested earlier, the rant on the accompanying page was intended as one of this series. But the ad got away from them. In fact, very soon Molson’s pulled the ad; it stopped being shown on TV as part of their campaign.

Molson Advertisement: I AM CANADIAN!

I'm not a lumberjack or a fur trader.
I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber or own a dog

sled. And I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Suzy from
Canada, although I'm certain they're really, really nice.

I have a Prime Minister, not a President.
I speak English and French, not American.
And I pronounce it about, not aboot.

I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack.

I believe in peacekeeping, not policing.
Diversity, not assimilation.
And that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.

A tuque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch.
And it is pronounced zed, not zee, zed.

Canada is the second largest landmass,
the first nation of hockey
and the best part of North America.
My name is Joe, and
I am Canadian!

The ad was an instant success, but its success was paradoxical: As public attention grew, its function as an ad diminished. The logo at the end receded from consciousness as people began reciting and enacting the rant themselves in a range of other contexts where the logo disappeared, and where “Canadian” came to lose any association with the beer.

What caught Canadians' attention was the brilliance of the rant itself. It is a precise, witty rendering of that peculiarly Canadian self-deprecating sense of superiority; our need to differentiate ourselves (on the trivial as well as on the lofty level) as well as our simultaneous recognition of the humour entailed by that need.

The ad, then, was a great success in that it was noticed, but the upshot of its being noticed was that, to use Anne Freedman's (1987/1994) terms, it changed places and became a very different genre. The craft and wit were, in effect, such that the text was catapulted from its place as an ad to a different place.

People started chanting the ad at games initially when Canadian teams were playing American teams so that it functioned as a cheer. Soon, it was chanted no matter who was playing so that it became sheer entertainment, a break from the intensity of the game. And almost simultaneously, people began to play out the rant themselves in a range of settings where it

functioned as a “rant” in its pure form but, in this case, a complex rant in which a vein of anti-Americanism came to be used as a way of celebrating a very Canadian, self-deprecating form of nationalism.

“I Am Canadian” was acted out in comic clubs, with the audiences chanting along. It functioned sometimes as political satire and sometimes simply as comic entertainment. There was delight in the playfulness, a delight in the ways in which it commented on American views of Canada, but well beyond that, it was an insightful representation of Canadians’ views of themselves. Comic and playful, it reflects on the complex ways in which Canadians view their own patriotism– with a sense of irony, and a further layer of pride in that very irony. Thus, on Canada Day, there were “Joes” across the country, reciting the rant, or rather leading the assembled groups in choruses of “I Am Canadian!”

The text still has the potential to function as an ad, but from the beginning, it also revealed a superfluity, an excess which allowed for the expression and creation of a very different genre (which invoked a radically different rhetorical situation).

The dialogic reverberations have also been revealing. The American Ambassador, for example, delivered his own “rant” in his affectionate, humorous goodbye speech; it was called “I Am American!” On Boston’s National Public Radio station, a columnist performed “I Am from Massachusetts.” My own university recently carried a piece written by a staff employee entitled “I Am From Carleton.” In each case, the imitation/parody points to the nature of the “new place” that the ad came to occupy: a place in which one is expected to reflect humorously on the nature of a certain kind of loyalty/affiliation in the light of a bemused awareness of being surrounded by those who misunderstand.

This little history of the “I Am Canadian!” ad shows how the transactional function can use the poetic—in this case, how an ad can use a rant. But it also shows the danger of so doing. The aesthetic/poetic/literary/playful impulses are powerful. They can get away, dominate, subvert and triumph.

Conclusions

The goal of this essay has been to point to some

discursive phenomena that RGS has not yet accounted for and to make a case for extending the provenance of the notions of genre and social action to incorporate such phenomena. Others have pointed to limits in the perspective offered by RGS. Luke (1994), Freedman & Medway (1994a, 19994b), and Schryer (2000) have all pointed to a general absence of critical analysis, due undoubtedly to the ethnographic orientation of RGS. Devitt (2000) has pointed to what RGS scholars can learn from those contemporary literary scholars who have also reconceptualized the notion of genre: for example, to attend to what differentiates the outstanding text rather than just specifying what is common to all instances of the genre. My concern here has been to point to another kind of lacuna or gap.

I have argued for an expansion of the notion of “genre” in RGS to include literary texts, but more importantly to include everyday texts characterized by multiple, complicated social actions. In the process of creating those texts that function as social actions in response to rhetorical contexts, we are also creating verbal artifacts. As we do so, very often the impulse to craft, to refine, and to create an aesthetically appropriate object is also drawn on such that what is created often contains elements in excess of and superfluous to the dominant social action.

Recently, as suggested above, Devitt (2000) has encouraged rhetorical genre scholars to incorporate the perspectives of literary genre scholars, and I intend to push that argument further. My concern is not so much to account for literary texts but rather to account for a range of impulses and actions operating within the genres of everyday discourse—impulses and actions whose operation must be accounted for by a richer understanding of genre.

Let me close by saying that it was chastening to us, as researchers, as well as illuminating, that it was a “bunch of geeks” who taught us about the poetic, the aesthetic, and playful. In many of their activities, including their discursive practices, we discovered (and recognized) a kind of anarchic exuberance and a playfulness that complicated and enriched the genres they produced while complicating and enriching our understanding of rhetorical genre studies.

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4

You Are How You Cite: Citing Patient Information In 1 Healthcare Settings

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Voices

A medical student reporting to her supervisor and team on the case of a sick child with developmental disabilities:

In terms of social, he smiles, he can recognize his mother, so mother says And he does cry if the mother or father . . . leaves the room In terms of what I observed . . . when I was [with] him alone, he was fine. And he was able to smile and follow and do all those things that [his] mother said as well.

A social work student reporting to her supervisor on the case of a woman experiencing post-partum depression:

She talked about how she got a big scare when the baby arrested She was a little bit resistant in terms of her husband being there and then I asked her would you like to go to the family conference room and we can chat there and she said I'd really like to hold my baby and her husband was kind of standing over her so I didn't really want to probe too much because I didn't know what the dynamics were. . . My hunch just told me that she has all the supports in place and I think she's doing okay.

The voices above are those of novice healthcare providers involved in patient care, and both are caught up in parallel activities—transforming patient or client information into professional data that has relevance for their fields. This process of transformation has particular importance because these novices are learning the communication strategies that are shaping their sense of professional identities as physicians or social workers. Even more importantly, this process of

transformation allows glimpses into the processes wherein patients are turned into cases or discursively constructed entities. The transformation of patient information into these textual objects is a central activity for professional fields. Physicians and social workers, however, do not completely share the same strategies in terms of case construction. Consequently, what a case is or means can vary between these professions and could be a source of confusion and miscommunication.

Using a subset of data from a larger study² of case presentations conducted by healthcare students (Lingard, Garwood, Schryer, & Spafford, 2003; Lingard, Schryer, Spafford, & Garwood, 2003; Schryer, Lingard, & Spafford, 2005; Schryer, Lingard, Spafford, & Garwood, 2003; Schryer, Lingard & Spafford, in press; Schryer & Spoel, 2005; Spafford, Lingard, Schryer, & Hrynychak, 2004; Spafford, Schryer, Mian, & Lingard, in press), this paper focuses on how physicians and social workers learn to use patient or client information in the context of case presentations and how these ways of using language shape their professional identities. Specifically, we focus on the linguistic strategies used to present cited information or language that is purported to be that of the patient or client. Our analysis suggests that many salient differences regarding the use of patient/client information exist between physicians and social workers and that these differences could cause interprofessional tensions. At the same time, however, we also found some areas of similarity that could provide some common ground between these two healthcare professions.

This paper begins by providing some context as to the role of case presentations in healthcare settings. Then we provide an overview of genre theory because we conceptualize discursive tools such as the case presentation as genres or text types that offer participants a repertoire of strategies. We next offer a review of several rhetorical and linguistic perspectives necessary for the close analysis of patient information. After we have presented our two case studies of the novice use of case presentations in medical and social work settings, we conclude with an exploration of the implications of our study.

Context

Although healthcare settings are moving towards systems that require collaboration between healthcare practitioners,

research from numerous perspectives still indicates that such collaboration is difficult. And nowhere is that difficulty more deeply experienced than in the communication between social workers and other health-care providers. Social work researchers seem acutely attuned to these communication difficulties. For instance, social work research (Lowe & Herranen, 1978; Sands, Stafford, & McClelland, 1990) indicates that conflict can disrupt healthcare collaborative efforts. Reasons for such conflict range from “role competition, role confusion, and turf issues” (Abramson & Mizrahi, 1996, p. 271) to differences in professional socialization processes (Mizrahi & Abramson, 1985; Sands, 1989). The different values and goals associated with medical and social work training (Abramson & Mizrahi, 1986; Cowles & Lefcowitz, 1992; Huntington, 1981) can result in communication difficulties which, as Abramson and Mizrahi (1996) report, can be “ascribed to interpersonal dynamics rather than recognized as interprofessional in nature” (p. 271).

One of the sets of practices involved in novice training for both medical and social work students is the case presentation. During a case presentation in educational settings, novices who have assumed partial responsibility for a patient or client present their findings and receive feedback from experienced practitioners about potential diagnoses (medical) or assessments (social work) and treatment or management plans. Medical students typically present their cases orally to their medical team during rounds in locations such as hospital corridors or in small rooms close to the wards. As is common with institutional genres, the structural features of the oral presentation are standardized and constitute shared knowledge among users of the genre. In the medical case presentation, data from the interview and physical exam are selected, ordered, inter-related, and emphasized according to medicine's two controlling goals: the identification and the treatment of disease.

Social work students, on the other hand, typically discuss their cases with their supervisors in their offices during what are called “supervision” sessions. During supervision sessions, a student might discuss specific cases and seek clarification and guidance around issues related to assessment and management but might also use the occasion to discuss interpersonal or inter-professional issues. Social work presentations also often reflect a set of recording and teaching practices called “process

recording.” Urbanowski and Dwyer (1988) describe process recording as “the written account of the dynamic interaction that occurs during an interview or in other forms of client contact” (p. 53). According to Fox and Gutheil (2000), process recording techniques have a long history in social work practice. In the 1920s, in reaction to records that were perceived as biased, Burgess (1928) urged practitioners to write more objective verbatim accounts of clients’ statements. Various models of process recording have evolved, all of which contain sections devoted towards observing clients and sections advocating self-reflection on the practitioner’s part. As Fox and Gutheil (2000) explain, this combination of client observation and self-evaluation has made process recording an excellent teaching tool. They explain that “it compels students to carefully listen . . . and teaches them to recall what they hear . . . and promotes organized and disciplined thinking . . . and foster[s] reflection” (p. 2). Although process recording is a written genre, as we shall see, its influence extends to the spoken genre of the case presentation. In particular, within supervision sessions when students are presenting their cases, they are articulating the disciplined and disciplinary thinking that underlies their interactions with their clients.

The case presentation also exists outside both these educational settings. Conducted by physicians for physicians, medical case presentations occur primarily on hospital rounds and rapidly communicate the presenter’s argument about what ails the patient and how to address this ailment. Throughout their careers, practicing social workers are routinely in supervisory relationships with other social workers wherein they discuss case details. The case presentation thus appears to be a recognizable language event or text type that facilitates and mediates the professional work of these practitioners.

Genre Theory

In their assessment of current research in health-care communication, Sarangi and Roberts (1999) observed that the most salient research reflects the fact that “workplaces are held together by communicative practices” (p.1). To research such contexts they suggested (quoting Clifford Geertz) that we need “thick description” that “reaches down to the level of fine-

grained linguistic analysis and up and out to broader ethnographic description and wider political and ideological accounts” (p. 1). Researchers in professional communication and, in particular, genre researchers, are well positioned to provide this type of research. Typically, such studies explore texts in their social contexts; thus, they often (a) develop the theoretical resources needed to conceptualize social contexts, and (b) access the kinds of close language analysis that Sarangi and Roberts point to as necessary. Rhetorical Genre Studies provides an especially useful framework for understanding the connections between specific health-care communication practices and the symbolic activity of professional identity formation in health fields.

Social Context

North American researchers into non-academic or professional communication settings such as Doheny-Farina (1986) have long advocated ethnographic or qualitative research that investigates the social context of workplace settings. Genre researchers have participated in developing social theories necessary to conceptualize social settings as existing in a dialectical relationship with workplace oral or written language practices. For instance, several areas of inquiry have profited from Giddens’s (1984) work on structuration and from activity theory (Engeström, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978). Yates and Orlikowski (1992), for example, draw on Giddens’s concept of “structuration” to explain how organizational genres such as memos are the result of embedded social processes rather than “isolated rational actions” (p. 299). For Giddens (1984), social structures, such as already-existing text types, provide sets of resources and constraints that shape the behaviour of workplace participants. Activity system theory as developed from Vygotsky’s ideas (1978) and then refined by Engeström (1999) further contributes to current conceptualizations of social context. From Vygotsky’s work (1978), activity theory emerged as a counterbalance to simplistic notions of socialization that either envision individual agents as self-contained, pre-formed entities (psychological model) or as unformed entities at the mercy of their environments (behaviorist model). Instead, Vygotsky envisioned agents as learning through using tools in

purposeful, goal-directed activities. According to Vygotsky, these tools pre-exist their users and mediate the interaction between agents and their social environments. By using tools, human agents internalize the values, practices, and beliefs associated with their social worlds. As Russell and Yañez (2003) observe, from an activity theory perspective, social context is not “what *contains* the interaction.” Rather context is constituted by “a weaving together of people and their tools [including genre tools] in complex networks.” As they succinctly put it, “The network *is* the context” (p. 336, emphasis in the original)

This configuration of social theories has allowed genre researchers to investigate workplace settings as overlapping fields or networks whose sets of social practices profoundly influence social agents. At the same time, genre researchers do not conceptualize workplace agents as mindless dupes at the mercy of their social environments. Instead, reflecting the work of structuration theorists such as Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), some researchers argue that, based on their prior socialization or “habitus”

(p. 126), agents possess an ability to strategize and adjust their practices to current situations. For Bourdieu, habitus, especially linguistic habitus, affects perception, classification systems, and prepares individuals for more or fewer opportunities as they encounter distinctive fields or linguistic markets (such as disciplines or specific organizations). In other words, agents are structured by their experiences within a field. At the same time they also structure or reproduce those fields but not in purely reductive ways. Rather, because agents occupy different positions within their fields (and thus have different access to power), and because fields themselves occupy different positions in relation to each other, agents enact different strategies. Bourdieu suggests that these improvisational strategies, triggered by the interaction between habitus and field, constitute “the logic of practice” (as cited in Robbins, 1991,

p. 112). Bourdieu further contends that researchers should always consult with workplace agents in order to articulate these improvisational strategies so as to understand the

logic of practice or what passes for common sense or decorum. In fact, many genre projects (Artemeva, 1998; Paré & Smart, 1994; Schryer, 1993; Winsor, 2000) use qualitative methods to collect and analyze interview and observational data regarding

social context. In healthcare settings, projects such as those conducted by Barton (2004), Dautermann (1997), Dunmire (2000), Lingard and Haber (1999), McCarthy (1991), Schryer (1993, 1994), and Spafford et al. (2004) have clearly consulted their participants in order to enrich their accounts of healthcare communicative practices.

Language Analysis

Insights from rhetorical and linguistic perspectives are providing genre researchers in healthcare settings with useful tools to conduct the close reading types of analysis that relate texts to their social contexts and allow an understanding of the strategies that participants use in their genre interactions. Miller's (1984) fundamental observation that genres are forms of social action and not simply classification systems has encouraged genre researchers to explore the rhetorical strategies wherein reoccurring text types accomplish the work of their organizations. Both applied and critical linguists have also turned their attention to the linguistic resources and constraints within specific genres. Swales (1990), for example, has provided in-depth descriptions of some of the introductory strategies characteristic of academic articles, and Connor and Mauranen (1999) have identified many of the organizational features of grant proposals.

Most importantly for the purposes of our study, some linguists have turned their attention to the strategic use of *cited information* within specific narrative frames. Volosinov (1929/1986) pointed to the importance of *reported speech* as a common feature of written and spoken language. He observed that reported utterance remains only partially assimilated so that "voices" of other speakers remain in texts in an "active relation" to the spoken or written text (p. 116). Mayes (1990) provides a useful way to recognize the difference between *direct* and *indirect quotations* and an explanation as to the different purposes of these forms of reported speech. She identifies three central features that distinguish direct and indirect quotation: pronominalization (e.g., *he/she*, *his/hers*), deictic words indicating the quoted speaker's specific place and time (e.g., *here*, *now*), and verb tense. For example, in the following excerpt taken from our social work data, these tools identify the

sections of indirect (in italics) and direct quotation (underlined):

She talked about how *she got a big scare when the baby arrested . . .* She was a little bit resistant in terms of her husband being there and then I asked her would you like to go to the family conference room and we can chat there and she said I'd really like to hold my baby and her husband was kind of standing over her so I didn't really want to probe too much because I didn't know what the dynamics were.

The use of the third person pronoun, the absence of deictic words (*there*, for example) and the past tense clearly announce *she got a big scare when the baby arrested* as an indirect quote. On the other hand, the presence of first and second person pronouns such as *you* and *I*, the deictic references such as *there*, as well as the use of the present tense, frame the other two examples as instances of directly quoted speech. In her study of reported speech, Mayes observes that speakers use direct citation, whether the quote is real or invented, to recreate the “affective aspects of meaning,” (p. 338) dramatize key elements in a narrative, and provide more credible evidence. In contrast, the discourse function of indirect citation is to clarify information or correct errors. Myers (1999), in his study of reported speech in focus groups, also provides a taxonomy for examining directly reported speech. He notes that speakers used reported speech to intensify an event, offer evidence, signify solidarity, or formulate a gist. He further observes that speakers can also use reported speech not just to reenact supposedly real citations but also hypothetical citations.

Clark and Gerrig (1990) provide further insights regarding the nature of direct quotation. Their analysis reveals that direct quotations, especially in oral situations, are demonstrations or performances rather than just descriptions. For example, Clark and Gerrig point out that an important distinction exists between Alice telling Ben that George was limping and Alice demonstrating to Ben the way that George was limping by a visual enactment of his gait. They explain that people demonstrate in order to recreate what “in part it looks, sounds, or feels like to a person for an event, state, process, or object to be

present”

(p. 766). These authors contend that the same distinction between description and demonstration occurs in normal spoken language and that direct quotation is a form of demonstration. Thus, there is a real difference between the ways the following two sentences would be presented:

- 1 She said that she really wanted to hold her baby.
- 2 She said, “I really want to hold my baby.”

In the second sentence the speaker would be trying to recreate the original feel and sense of the quoted speaker.

However, Clark and Gerrig contend that verbal demonstrations are never “verbatim.” In a study they conducted of 10 people listening to two tape-recorded exchanges (two sentences long), none of the participants in 720 reports were able to precisely quote the sentences verbatim. Empirical research into memory also supports their observation. According to Hjelmquist and Gidlund (1985) and Stafford and Daly (1984), people cannot remember an utterance even after a few seconds. In fact, instead of verbatim reporting, reporters depict only selected aspects of the original speaker’s language. Selection depends on what the reporter wishes to emphasize or attempt to preserve.

Hyland (1999, 2000) directly relates citation practices to professional identity formation. Hyland’s work focuses on the production of academic genres, but his work also clearly relates to professions that also use cited evidence in their oral genres. He notes that to demonstrate “disciplinary competence” the writer or speaker must create a “narrative that is perceived by the community as persuasive both in terms of the propositions . . . and the credibility of the *persona* he or she seeks to convey” (2000, p. 18). Central to persona management, according to Hyland, is the process of citation or the process of “attributing propositional content to another source” (p. 20). Hyland suggests that citation practices differ significantly between fields both in terms of quantity of citations and the rhetorical stance that writers or speakers take towards their citation. In his analysis of the ways different disciplines use citations, Hyland points to reporting verbs and suggests that a writer or speaker may represent reported information as:

- 1 True (acknowledge, point out, establish);
- 2 False (fail, overlook, exaggerate, ignore);
- 3 Non-factive (giving no clear signal). (p.28)

He further explains that this last option permits the writer “to ascribe a view to the source author, reporting him or her as positive (advocate, argue, hold, see); neutral (address, cite, comment, look at); tentative (allude to, believe, hypothesize, suggest), or critical (attack, condemn, object, refute)” (p. 28). By selecting these verbs, speakers or writers can modalize or nuance their reporting of sources. For instance, it really does make a difference if a healthcare practitioner reports that his or her patient “says” something versus “complains” about something.

Some research exists exploring the role of reported speech in various contexts; however, little research exists exploring how healthcare practitioners cite and use the information provided by their patients and how those citation practices are shaping their identities as practitioners. As the following study suggests, physicians and social workers both cite and use patient/client information, although they do so in ways that are both surprisingly similar and different.

Methods

Settings and Participants

The first case study³ was conducted within the context of a third-year pediatric clerkship at a North American urban teaching hospital. The three-week inpatient component of the clerkship involves medical students (clerks) in patient care activities where students function as part of a medical team. Clerks are responsible for admitting a new patient to the ward every three to four days during their “call” shifts and for interviewing and examining the patient and presenting their findings via case presentations to the team the next day on “rounds.” The case presentations usually occur at the nurse’s station, in the hallway outside the patient’s room, or in a small conference room, and typically last between 15 to 30 minutes.

The second case study occurred within the context of a graduate program in Social Work in a North American university. As is common in many social work programs, students are expected to complete a three-month clinical placement or internship in a hospital or in a counseling or community development setting. During their placements, these students are responsible for a client case load (less than a practicing social worker) and report regularly to their supervisor,

an in-house, accredited (by the university) social worker who functions as an advisor, mentor, and overseer for the student. Supervision sessions occur in the supervisor's office and usually last about an hour-and-a-half to two hours.

Study participants in the medical case study were a convenience sample of faculty pediatricians and third-year medical students participating in their three-week inpatient pediatric clerkship during the fall of 2000. Following ethical approval, students were contacted by a research assistant at a clerkship orientation, while faculty were contacted by mail prior to the start of the academic year. All eligible faculty agreed to participate, while 75% of eligible students consented to participate. Participants in the social work case study included students in a Master of Social Work program and social worker supervisors in settings including a traditional hospital, a community health centre, counseling agencies, and specialized programs for prison inmates and challenged children. Following ethical approval at various levels (university, hospital, and agencies), the social work students were contacted by one of the researchers (a nonsocial worker) while supervisors were contacted by another researcher (a social worker). If both parties agreed to participate in the study, then both were included. All participants were assigned code numbers for recording purposes so that field and interview data could be compiled both by group (students, faculty) and by individuals (e.g., observations of and interviews with a given participant) to allow for extensive triangulation.

Data Collection

For each case study, data were collected in two phases: field observations and interviews. In the medical case study, 16 oral case presentations (involving eleven clerks and ten faculty) and the teaching exchanges related to them were observed, audio-recorded, and transcribed by research assistants dressed in appropriate medical apparel. Eleven clerks and ten faculty were interviewed (most interview participants overlapped with observational participants). During the social work study, twelve case presentations (involving eight interns and eight social workers) were recorded, with some participants agreeing to record two sessions. In this study, one of the researchers was

present for one session and noted a high observer effect. Thereafter, the researchers gave the participants tape recorders and asked them to record their sessions. All participants agreed to be interviewed.

For each study, a 45-minute interview script was developed during the analysis of observational data. The script consisted of open-ended questions about the nature and purpose of case presentations in the clerkship or internship. Interviews were transcribed and identifying features removed to protect confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Using a modified grounded-theory approach, all observation transcripts were individually read by four researchers for emergent themes. Ongoing discussions were convened as the four researchers articulated the nature and boundaries of each emerging theme, individually sought instances of these themes in additional transcripts, and returned to the group to discuss discrepancies. Through this iterative process, a formal codebook consisting of thematic categories, definitions, and representative examples was produced. One researcher then applied this coding structure to the complete data set using QSR NVivo qualitative data analysis software, returning to the group at regular intervals to report on difficulties or additional emerging patterns.

Our grounded theory analysis was “modified” in that, as we accumulated data sets, we sought both to explore the applicability of the existing codebook and to attend to emergent themes not accounted for in this existing thematic structure. This modified approach was employed both at the level of individual case studies and across case studies. Within individual case studies, the codes arising from analysis of observational transcripts were applied to the interview transcripts and expanded as required to reflect emergent themes. To achieve our goal of articulating a grounded theory of case presentation capable of explaining key trends and distinctions across clinical teaching settings, we applied the coding structure from the preceding case study to the observational data from the next one, always with attention to the critical balance between refining existing thematic constructs and recognizing the emergence of new ones.

Analysis in the first study of medical students resulted in five major thematic nodes: (a) *strategizing as a student*, (b) *strategizing as a doctor*, (c) *strategies of case presentation or supervision/mentorship*, (d) *teaching strategies*, and (e) *identity formation* with each node having subcategories associated with it. As we applied these themes to the social work data, we noted that, although our major categories remained essentially the same, our subcategories changed substantially. For example, we had to add new subcategories such as *consulting* under teaching strategies.

Most importantly, however, subcategories under *identity formation* had to change radically to reflect the social work data. In the medical study, only one subcategory, *objectifying patients/family*, captured data about the student-patient relationship. In the social work data we had to invent a new subcategory called *relationship with client* and then create further subnodes to capture the rich data that fell into this category. Most importantly, we noted that data related to the patient's agenda were rarely ever present in the medical data (possibly, in part, because, if a patient arrives at a hospital, his or her agenda is simply assumed). The social work data, on the other hand, contained many references to the clients' stated desires.

In order to investigate the use of patient information, we analyzed the *identity formation* subcategories (*objectifying patients/family* in the medical study and *relationship with client/client declared agenda* in the social work study) as both contained specific references to patient information. The medical category was designed to capture references to patients and their parents as we noted many references to "the Mom" or "Mom says." The social work category collected references to instances where the social work students reported on their client's stated reasons for seeking assistance. This category contained many instances of directly reported client speech.

This subset of data was analyzed in three ways. Using Mayes's (1990) approach, we identified the actual presence of direct or indirect quotation; then using Mayes's (1990) and Myers's (1999) taxonomies, we explored the ways quotations were actually used, and finally, Hyland's work (2000) aided us in identifying the ways these quotes were framed and thus aspects of the rhetorical stance adopted by these novice healthcare

practitioners.

Results and Discussion

I. Direct versus Indirect Quotation

Medical students gathered information for their case presentations from a variety of sources: past patient records, patients or patients' families as the study occurred in a children's hospital, physical exam results, lab tests, and consultant reports. They then were required to shape this information into the following format: chief complaint (CC), history of present illness (HPI), past history, family history, social history, physical exam, diagnostic impression, and management plan. As might be expected, information gathered from the patient or his/her family appears mainly in the sections devoted towards history, of the child, family or current illness. However, what was interesting was the almost total absence of direct quotation. For example, in the following excerpt taken from a section devoted to HPI, the student is obviously quoting the child's mother in the case of a child with possible tremors:

Student 3: So with respect to the movements
Mom noticed them, since the baby was born but did not consider them abnormal until she went for a well-baby visit . . . and the physician was concerned about them and referred her here. There are two types of movements that Mom has since become aware of. The first occurs when the baby is awake, and when she's upset or crying, or cold, she starts trembling for 5-10 seconds, . . . and the second type of movements occur when she is asleep and those tremors tend to be smaller in duration

These kinds of indirect reporting of parent observations were present in every transcript, and it is clear in these instances that the information derives from the parent. However, our analysis also revealed another type of indirect quotation that occurred across the case presentations. In the following excerpt regarding a child with severe asthma, information could have been derived from the patient or her family but also could have come from previous records:

Student 5: Daycare 5 days. And actually not a lot of sick days from daycare. It is really just the asthma, otherwise she's been healthy. Immunizations are up to date, she hasn't had a flu shot. No problems with feeding Picky eater, but pretty full diet

Of note is the way this information is conveyed as factual whereas observations in the previous example are presented in a more guarded way through the use of verbs such as *notice* and *aware*.

Direct quotations, on the other hand, are exceedingly rare in this data set. On one occasion, student 5 quotes a mother of a seriously ill child as describing some of her child's illness episodes as "mini-crises." The strategy of directly quoting patients, however, seems risky for students. Student 5 is challenged by her physician instructor after she quotes a mother's description of her daughter's condition. The student explains: "Well, the mom being—the mom being an MD gave me some terms that I took at face value." And the doctor responds with: "But sometimes you have to step back and say, 'Well, Mom may not know'." In other words, the fact the mother is a physician has no relevance in this instance: her motherhood trumps her medical expertise. As the mother of a patient, she cannot be quoted with safety. The interview data support the students' wariness regarding direct quotation. Doctor 2 in this excerpt is explaining to the researcher an important difference between an effective and ineffective case presentation:

Dr. 2: [an ineffective student presentation] is, in terms of the history, it's a medical student who is taking everything in the words of the parents, but hasn't yet learned how to filter and interpret to make it, to make it sort of medically, um . . . correct. You know? Because we can all quote exactly what the parents or the patients said, but part of our job is to interpret it. So when it's presented, it's not just the words of the patient, it's . . . you know, couched in a true medical history.

Students also clearly recognized the imperative of transforming patient information into a true medical history not only in terms of the biomedical story that moves through Data, Analysis, and Plans but also in terms of using patient information. As Student 13 explains, she sees herself as interviewing patients in order to make an ordered and structured “movie” of their condition and that, as the physician, “you are not just taking what the patient tells you, but you should have the ability to see what they don’t see.”

The social work data, however, revealed a very different scenario regarding the use of direct and indirect quotation. Every transcript except one (an outlier transcript as the student was in a community development agency that had no individual clients) revealed an intricate mix of indirect and direct quotation. Social workers directly quoted their clients, important figures in their clients’ lives, and the student social workers themselves. As Mayes (1990) observed in her research, direct quotations could also be either real or hypothetical, and we found quotations that were intended to sound real as well as clearly hypothetical quotations.

Typically, social work case presentations begin with an indirect reporting style that somewhat resembles a medical presentation, as in the following example:

Student 1: Her story is she’s 33 years old,⁴ she’s working on her Ph.D. at (univer sity), she lives in (city) with her husband, she’s been married for 5 years and she’s being doing her Ph.D. for the last 3. But a year ago, about 10 months ago, she had a lot of problems and she came into emerg. And they found that her ovaries were covered with cysts and she had to go into emergency surgery and they had to remove both of her fallopian tubes and one of her ovaries.

Important background information was often provided using this indirect quotation style. However, once the novice social worker starts narrowing down to the most important difficulty this woman has experienced, her infertility, a different style of presenting emerges. In the following example, using Mayes’s scheme, we have underlined all direct quotations.

The biggest struggle that she has had . . . is that her husband doesn't seem to be able to react to the way she is to this loss, being like, 'It's okay, so what? We can't have our children, we can still get a surrogate, we can adopt, we can do this, we can do that. Let's get on with this'. Her whole issue was that, 'Well, we got married (#) years ago, and if we had planned having children a few years ago we would have been parents and now I'm never'. She said that, 'I felt like one of my choices has been taken from me. So what I took for granted that I would be a mom. I can't anymore. I have choices but not the choice that I want'.

Several strategies are present in this report. The social worker is attempting to demonstrate the voice of the client, especially with statements like "I felt like one of my choices has been taken from me." At the same time, we also see other voices being reconstructed—particularly that of her husband. In Mayes's terms, the husband's voice is hypothetical as the student was not present during the conversation between the client and her husband but rather the student is demonstrating the client's perception of her husband's comments. We also noted that social workers frequently reported their own comments to their clients using direct quotation. In the following example, the student is describing to his supervisor his interactions with a woman dealing with a difficult teenage daughter. The client has been separated from the daughter's father for many years and has just assumed custody of her daughter:

Student 7: And they've been separated for 15 years . . . and the daughter actually is really attached to his (the father's) girlfriend So we talked about issues, boundaries around that already. So anyways, I just sort of laid it on the line, 'You know you need to look at, what is of most importance right here. What's your focus? And where do you think you need to go from that?' And so I could just tell from the other end that she just was not happy and so I said, 'Obviously it's your choice in the matter but you

asked my opinion’.

The rich use of voices and reported conversations clearly points towards a very different perception regarding client information—a perception that values exactly what clients say. As we have noted, social work education programs teach their students the strategies of “process recording.” Process recording requires the detailed observation and reporting of client body language and word choice. The accuracy of process recording is a shared value among social work practitioners. However, it must also be acknowledged that neither the supervisor/mentor nor we as readers of the transcripts really know exactly what the client said. The student-practitioners have their notes from their interviews with their clients in front of them as memory aids. But as Clark and Gerrig (1990) suggest, from a linguistic perspective, the students cannot be providing a verbatim copy of their clients’ voices. Rather they are, in Clark and Gerrig’s terms, “demonstrating” (p. 765) their clients’ issues, concerns and triumphs.

Echoes of this valuing of client information also appeared in the social work interview data. Most of the students and faculty interviewed identified their “relationship with their clients” as central to social work. One student (4) identified listening as a central technique in social work. This same student also recognized that he had learned a more “collaborative language” after working with his supervisor and that he no longer used the formal medical model of presentation, i.e., “these are your presenting problems, and this is how you fix them.” In another interview with a social work supervisor (1) we asked her to explain the difference between an effective and ineffective case presentation. She explained that a good presentation zeroed in on problems and it did so by “looking beyond what’s being said.” “Looking beyond what’s being said,” however, meant attending to “content” or actual client language and then going beyond into “process” or explanations and analysis of the client’s situation. This distinction between content and process is central to social work practice.

II. Purposes of Reported Speech

Researchers (Giltrow, 2002; Hyland, 1999, 2000; Mayes,

1990; Myers, 1999) note that reported speech, whether oral or written, whether direct or indirect, is a common phenomenon. Mayes (1990) and Myers (1999) also identified the differences between direct and indirect citation—that direct citation attempts to demonstrate or reconstruct affective meaning. Clark and Gerrig (1990), Mayes (1990), Myers (1999), and Hyland (1999, 2000) also have been working towards taxonomies to explain the role of reported speech, especially with regards to the typical choices that seem to govern different professional fields.

In the medical case study, we observed novices using indirect quotations to signal their ability to sift and prioritize patient data. More specifically, indirect quotations were used to summarize a patient's background, indicate the perceived value of patient information, and blur potentially less-valued sources of patient information. As the following example (student 2) indicates, medical students used indirect quotation to efficiently summarize patient background information: "There are no major illnesses, no hospitalizations, and no other medications . . . and no operations or procedures." Across the transcripts, we also noted that students routinely quoted parental information in a way that indicated they had assessed the information's validity and thus distanced themselves from the information. In the following example, student 11 is assessing the value of the information he has received when he reports:

Her dad noticed some blood in her bowel movement, and the mom didn't see it, and I got the report from the mom, so this is a makeshift description of what she saw or the father saw. The blood was described as . . . mixed in with the stool, not streaked.

As we have reported elsewhere (Lingard, Garwood, et al., 2003; Lingard, Schryer, et al., 2003), medical students are trained rigorously to evaluate their sources of information. In fact, this strategy reflects a central tenet in medicine—the ontological difference between symptoms and signs (see also Schryer, 1993 on this point). Symptoms consist of what patients tell their doctors, while signs consist of what medical practitioners see through direct observations or tests. And signs simply have more ontological reality for medical practitioners.

The implications for this ontological distinction clearly relate to the value placed on patient language or information as evident in the excerpt that begins this paper. Student 6 reported on a developmentally delayed child and observed:

In terms of social, he smiles, he can recognize his mother, so mother says And he does cry if the mother or father . . . leaves the room In terms of what I observed . . . when I was [with] him alone, he was fine. And he was able to smile and follow and do all those things that [his] mother said as well.

The child's mother had reported to the student that her child had attained certain developmental milestones, but her report was not accepted as valid until the student had also observed these same abilities. Thus, patient information is used as evidence in these settings, but it is evidence that is often used in a guarded, evaluative way.

Further evidence of this ontological weighting of signs over symptoms occurred in some situations when patient information that could have derived either from direct observation or from the parents' observations was simply provided as factual as in the following description from Student 6: "So he has no rashes, he's had no swelling or any, you know, lack of movement in any of the joints." Without identifying the source of this information, the novice may hope that the supervisor will assume it has been gleaned from the more valued source of direct assessment.

As noted earlier, direct quotation rarely occurs in medical case presentations. When it does appear, it seems to be used in some of the ways that Myers suggests. For instance, when the student quotes a mother as saying her child experiences "mini-crises," she does seem to be attempting to add interest to her presentation. Also, in this case the mother was the chief caregiver for a very ill child with a complicated condition. In this transcript in particular, the mother's evidence seemed to be granted more credibility than in other transcripts. However, the fact remains that very few instances of direct quotation occur in these transcripts, an astonishing absence because as research (Giltrow, 2002; Hyland, 1999, 2000; Mayes, 1990; Myers, 1999) shows direct quotation is such a commonplace way to establish

credibility.

Indirect and especially direct quotation have a far wider range of purposes in the social work data. As in the medical work case presentations, indirect quotation is used as a form of evidence to summarize a client's background.

However, these students switched to direct quotations at key points in their presentation. Social work students use direct quotations to highlight key interventions with clients, underline central client issues for their supervisors, and convey emotional content in their client interactions. Both students and supervisors used direct quotations as a teaching tool for clients.

Most often, social work students use direct quotations when they are reporting on their interventions with their clients. In the following reconstructed conversation, Student 8 is describing a counseling session in which she attempted to get her client, a prison inmate, to deal constructively with confrontation:

I said, 'Well let's talk about it'. I wrote it down and I actually gave it to her I think with her she's very visual so I write stuff down and we look at it together and I said, 'Well why don't you tell me what you think about when you think about confronting people'. So I did, 'What usually happens?' Or I said, 'What do you think happens? I want you to just brainstorm'. She said, 'They get mad, they stop talking to me'.

The excerpt is too long to quote in its entirety but it provides a detailed account of the intervention and the client's response in direct quotation to that intervention. This trend towards direct quotation occurred across all the transcripts when students were reporting on direct interventions with their clients. In fact, these demonstrations or reconstructions appear to be one of the major ways that students solicit feedback on their interactions with clients. (Sometimes students also audio or video tape interactions for feedback purposes as well.) For instance, in the example above, after listening to this long account, the supervisor points out that, although the student attempted to provide the client with agency in terms of figuring out her own problems, the student might have structured the process too rigidly for this client who has history of dependency. Thus social work students' direct

quotations serve to highlight key interventions with clients and invite feedback on those interventions. This latter purpose departs from that of medical students who rarely solicit feedback in the case presentation and often assume a negative stance to supervisor feedback. For instance, we discovered in the interviews that most of our medical student participants interpreted their supervisors' questions as a sign of an ineffective case presentation.

In these transcripts we also found several instances where social work students used direct quotations to provide their clients with language to use to help them deal with their life dilemmas. In the following example, Student 5 is dealing with a deeply depressed man who has suicidal ideations. He is recovering from his depression and has told her that he might only consider killing himself if something terrible happened, like his house burning down. She reports to her supervisor that she intervened with:

And I said at this point, 'And do you think that, if something like that happened, if your house burnt down, would you be able to call a crisis line and say, *I need help*'. And he said, 'Yeah, I think I would do that'. 'Or go to the emergency room and say, *I need help, because I am going to*'

In this example we have underlined the student quoting herself and italicized the student giving the client language to use in case of an emergency. We also found several instances in the transcripts where the social work instructors suggested to the students direct quotations that they could use with their clients. Supervisor 2 for example suggests that the student ask his client "What would it take for you to be able to not tear apart your wife?" Reported speech is obviously a tool used by social workers as they assess and plan interventions with their clients.

Myers (1999) also suggests that direct quotations are useful to formulate gists or expressions that try to capture a salient point. We found many instances of direct quotations used this way. For example, in the earlier case of the client reacting to a diagnosis of infertility, the social work student reflects the client's central concern when he quotes her as saying, "I felt like one of my choices has been taken from me. So what I took for

granted that I would be a mom. I can't anymore. I have choices but not the choice that I want." We also found that sometimes these students created direct hypothetical quotations in order to express a key issue regarding their clients. In the following case, the student reports to his supervisor about a father who has been denigrating his former wife in front of their child. The student (2) has been trying to convince him to stop this behavior. The student explains:

He doesn't want to stop. That's the whole thing. He disagrees with that point. 'Why?', I think that's what I asked him. 'I want my child to know what a tramp his mother was'. That's my words of course, he wasn't using those words.

In this instance, the gisted quote is being used to demonstrate a central issue for this client. As Clark and Gerrig (1990) explain, the student is performing an important discursive function in this instance as he is also letting his audience know that the quote is a gist or an imagined summary of a key issue. In fact, we are catching a glimpse here of a key social work practice—the articulation of process—or what the social worker assesses is really going on. We found that social work students used this strategy to go beyond the clients' words and articulate for their supervisor the clients' central issues. This tendency to demonstrate these concerns and assessments in the constructed voices of their clients is consistent with Mayes (1990) who suggests that direct quotation also tends to reconstruct affect or emotional content and thus tends to increase the dramatic telling of a case. In the following excerpt, Student 7 is describing her client's reaction to her intervention:

Student 7: Yeah, she came back to that last week, and told me—she goes, '(Student 7), I just wanted to tell you to fuck right off on the phone.' (laughter). I said, 'You know what, I sensed it'. She said, 'And no matter what you said, I was thinking (Grrr)'. You know. It's always about how . . . 'Nobody's listening to me, nobody's listening to me'. Instructor 7: More teenaged stuff Student 7: Right.

The direct quotation clearly lends itself to a dramatic re-

enactment of this episode, but what is of even more interest is the conveying of an emotional perspective. The student has clearly constructed a scene which conveys her assessment that this client, the mother of a troubled teenaged girl, behaves like a teenager herself. This ability to demonstrate emotions is particularly important in cases of potential suicide. In those transcripts, we saw evidence of very careful attention to the exact language that clients were using in order to assess their clients' emotional state.

The importance of this aspect of social work practice was driven home in one interview transcript when a supervisor

(2) told the story of one of her students attempting to deal with a psychopath, a case that is usually unsuitable for a student. As the supervisor listened to her student's case she recognized from the way the student reported the conversation that this client was highly manipulative and dangerous and immediately ensured that the student transferred the case to her.

III. Stance or Attitude toward Client Information

Hyland (1999, 2000) notes that different disciplines adopt typical patterns of verb use in order to frame direct or indirect quotations and that these verbs suggest a stance or attitude towards the speech being reported. Journalists, for example, typically depend on forms of the verb *say* because other verbs such as *agree* or *deny* can shade the meaning of their reporting. Hyland observes that different professional groups use reporting verbs to assert their belief that the cited section is *true* (for example, *establish*) or *false* (for example, *lie* or *ignore*). Alternatively, they can adopt a nonfactive stance wherein the writer or speaker does not assert a judgment as to veracity (for example, *say* or *tell*). Thus, this kind of stance can be heavily nuanced as the writer-speaker can frame the quotation to indicate a positive, neutral, tentative, or critical assessment of the reported statement.

Medical and social work students avoided the use of verbs that characterized patient statements as true or false, preferring non-factive verbs that were usually neutral in stance. However, the data sets varied in two key ways. Only social work students included non-factive verbs that held either a positive or critical nuance and they preferred the first person reporting over

the third person reporting employed by medical students.

In the medical case presentations we found no examples of the students directly indicating whether they thought patient information was true or false. Instead, we found a decided tendency to non-factive verbs that fell into the tentative or neutral category. We found many instances of the neutral *say* or *tell* and *know* as in, “The mother also knows that she is negative for HIV.” However, we also noted many instances of more tentative verbs such as *think*, *mention*, *notice*, and *feels* (meaning *believe*), as in, “. . . the mother feels it was a drug reaction.” These verbs have a tentative sense to them because they seem to suggest that although the parents might think, mention, notice, or feel something, they could, in fact, be incorrect. Again this pattern is consistent with the traditional medical pattern of valuing medical observation ahead of patient observations.

In the social work data, we found a similar avoidance of verbs that indicated veracity. The social work students, like the medical students, did not find such framing useful. Most of the non-factive verbs used by social work students fell into the neutral category as in, *say*, *explain*, *describe*, *call*, *tell*, *talk*, and *ask*, with forms of the verb *say* being almost a default construction. However, unlike in the medical data set, we also saw social work students employ verbs such as *agree* that fall into the positive category and *disagree* or *admit* that appear in the critical category. This last verb, *admit*, fits into the critical category in social work terminology—for example, a client “admits” to wrongdoing. However, perhaps because of the reconstructed conversational quality of these presentations, we noted a definite difference in terms of the person who frames the reported speech. In medical case presentations, patient information is only reported in the third person and usually the parent is objectified as in “And the mother also thinks that.” In social work presentations, we found many references to first person singular and first person plural. In first person singular constructions, the social work student was reporting on what she or he had said as in: “So anyways, I just sort of laid it on the line. ‘You know you need to look at, what is of most importance right here’.” We also found many examples where the student reports on what “we,” the client and student, completed together as in, “She talked about how she got a big scare when the baby arrested, we talked about that.” Also in these transcripts, clients

are referred to by name or by pronoun and rarely, if ever, by their relationship (“mom”, “father”) to another client. Of course, the medical data set is complicated by the fact that information seldom comes from the child-patient but from their parents. Case presentations on adults would presumably have fewer objectifying features.

These results suggest that even in minor ways medical and social work students differ in the stance they take to patient or client language. Medical students are being trained to prefer the distance of the third-person reporting whereas social work students are being trained to demonstrate the dynamics of their relationships with their clients through first-person reporting strategies.

Conclusions and Implications

Similarities

On the level of accomplishing social action, case presentations enacted by medical and social work students are remarkably similar. These students collect patient/ client information, analyze that information, and develop treatment or management plans. Interview data from medical students and their supervisors as well as social work students and their supervisors recognize the fundamental operation of the genre. Social work Supervisor 4, for example, explained to us the basic structure of a social work presentation:

One of the first things you do when . . . giving a case presentation in social work is what is called a *process recording* [emphasis added] . . . you basically discuss what was happening in the session and then talk about your gut reaction as a therapist as to what was happening and then discuss what intervention you used . . .

Physician mentors do not use the language of “gut reaction” to describe medical thought processes, but in interviews they all asserted that case presentations were vehicles to develop and assess medical ways of thinking and communicating. And just like social worker case-based

discourse, the basic structure consists of presenting data (including history), analysis, diagnosis (medicine) or assessment (social work), and plans or treatment possibilities.

Both medical and social work personnel also deal with patient information, and, as we have demonstrated, some of their strategies for handling this information are similar. Both avoid the use of true/false reporting verbs, and both tend to use neutral reporting verbs. In addition, both medical and social work students use indirect quotation as a summarizing tool for evidence in the history sections of their reports. These strategies suggest that these professions have the basis for some shared communication practices.

Differences

As we have noted, some important differences exist between the ways physicians and social workers are trained to use reported information. The medical students in our study were being trained to use indirect quotation of their patients and their families and to treat such evidence as inherently suspect. A great deal of evidence exists to suggest that the biomedical way of structuring information and handling evidence creates a powerful diagnostic and teaching tool. However, as Donnelly (1988, 2005) and others (Atkinson, 1997) argue, this powerful system comes with associated costs. Management plans frequently depend on patient cooperation, but if physicians have failed to attend to the language that patients use to describe their conditions or to the affective content of their speech, physicians may not be able to create effective arguments to convince their patients to comply. Certainly a great deal of research (Connelly, 2005; Neuwirth, 1999; Travaline, Ruchinskias, & D'Alonzo, 2005) exists to support the claim that communication difficulties exist between physicians and their patients.

The social work students in our study, on the other hand, were taught to use direct quotation in a rich variety of ways and to value the language of their clients. In fact, direct quotation of their own interventions (management plans) is a central way in which social workers check with their supervisors to ensure that their plans are effective. However, this central practice also comes with costs. Outsiders to social work, especially medical personnel, might find the use of discursive demonstrations, hypothetical quotes, and gists suspect even though the practice

derives from a highly valued social work practice–process recording. In fact, our research suggests that social workers might want to examine the claim that process recording is verbatim recording. A more reasonable and interesting claim might be that process recordings could be deemed “accurate” according to disciplinary standards. Furthermore, by working outside the range of widely-known medical reporting techniques, social workers also tend to become less visible in healthcare settings. Their work looks too easy, too much like common sense. One supervisor vividly described this problem:

To them [physicians and nurses], it’s a mystery, and it looks like, well how many times do I get teased about schmoozing down there (in the clinics), when in fact I’m doing therapeutic work, but it doesn’t look that way because it’s comfortable.

His solution was to plan fully and carefully explain his work in writing. Certainly in his interactions with his student he expected the same planning and justification.

Physicians and social workers have historically misunderstood each other. Our research suggests that they do have some common ground—a shared practice of reporting cases. However, it is equally clear that their linguistic strategies regarding the use of patient or client derived evidence differ substantially. In our view, both sides need to understand this difference. Perhaps too, both sides could profit from these differences. For example, social workers with their trained capacity to reconstruct patient language and demonstrate their understanding of patient affect could facilitate communication between patients and their medical healthcare providers. Certainly, this is a role that many social work researchers see as valid and necessary, and of particular value when they are involved in interdisciplinary teams. Social workers could also reflect on and make more visible their own standards of disciplinary accuracy regarding the ways they process their interactions with their clients.

Other Implications

Our research also has implications for researchers in professional communication. It suggests that genres such as case presentations shape what seems like common sense for practitioners in our study and thus their sense of themselves as physicians or social workers. To these medical students, the absence of directly quoted patient language seems normal despite the current emphasis on patient-centredness in Evidence-Based Medicine research. For the social work students in our study, the fact that they reconstruct their clients' stories and nuance them as they reproduce them also seems like common sense. For social workers, the patient's words and the associated non-verbal cues are the data to be analyzed, while for physicians, the patient's words are one type of data to be analyzed and one that is suspect in the presence of the "gold standard" of physical findings. A comparative citation analysis of social work and psychiatry would be an interesting project to pursue as both rely heavily on what the patient says yet psychiatry is constrained by its biomedical perspective.

These medical and social work students are being trained to access a different range of resources and experience different constraints to accomplish their work. Unfortunately for social workers, the field of medicine is superior to social work in the hierarchy of healthcare, such that the resources and constraints associated with the medical case presentation hold more "cultural capital" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.14). Thus, our research suggests that the existing tensions between physicians and social workers make sense and can be aligned to different socialization patterns rather than just to individual interpersonal differences. Finally, our work suggests that genre theory can lend itself to explorations of the dynamic interactions of texts and social contexts in healthcare and other areas of professional communication.

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² The original, larger study also included a case study investigating case presentations conducted by optometry students.

³ In effect, we conducted research case studies of case presentations.

⁴ Our ethical protocol required that all identifying features such as age be rendered anonymous so references to age or place have been invented.

A Time to Speak, a Time to Act: A Rhetorical Genre Analysis of a Novice Engineer's Calculated Risk Taking¹

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Recipes are a genre; but genres are not recipes. (Freedman,
1987/1994, p. 49)

Researchers (e.g., Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Winsor, 1996) who have studied the university-to-workplace transition have revealed that novices typically go through a fairly slow process of organizational acculturation before they acquire and can successfully use workplace genres. Observations made by these and other researchers (e.g., Anson & Forsberg, 1990/2003; Freedman & Adam, 2000b; MacKinnon, 1993/2003) have also shown that the types of communication that university students are involved in at school and in the workplace are

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often “worlds apart” (Dias et al., 1999) and that traditional classroom-based professional communication education often fails to prepare students for the world of work (e.g., Freedman & Adam, 2000a; Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994). The case study presented here provides evidence that these conclusions may not always be accurate and thus require further study.

This case study examines a series of events that occurred in the life of a recent engineering graduate (with a bachelor's degree in engineering), Sami,¹ after he had joined an engineering

company. Sami was a student in my engineering communication course six years ago, and since then we have stayed in touch. About a year after his graduation, Sami e-mailed me about an important event that had happened in his professional career²:

Recently there was a project where the senior engineer had an implementation plan (this particular person has been in industry for 25 years, and he has told me before: “documentation and writing is a [waste] of my time and experience.”. . .). I had a different implementation in mind, but was having trouble getting my ideas heard by that person. And when he did, he told me: “no.” There was going to be a design meeting at which he was going to present the method we were to proceed with. After being advised by my boss [director of Sami’s division], I prepared a well thought out and organized presentation outlining my method and the alternative methods. The presentation was geared to the upper management (some engineers and some business people) as well as the director of [the division] and director [of] engineering (who would want to see a little more technical info).

. . . [The senior engineer] gave a five-minute presentation, which was so technical that I had a difficult time following all the information (I’m one of the original designers on the project). He had nothing prepared in the form of pros and cons of the method etc. Then I was given the floor to give my presentation. I had all the information on all methods from implementation time, to manpower and cost projections. My presentation lasted five minutes as well, but I gave them all the information necessary to make an intelligent decision as to why we should go with my method. They agreed. (October 29, 2002)

In other words, Sami, a recent newcomer to the company, took a calculated risk and presented his ideas in a way that was different from that of the senior engineer. The result of his risky

intervention was not a failure, as we might expect from conclusions in recent research publications, but a success for which Sami was almost immediately rewarded:

The director of [the division] let me give 3 more presentations to upper management after that. I also authored a document which had to outline different technologies and which ones we should use in our new product. . . . Then, I was promoted to [director of the division] 2 weeks later.³
(October 29, 2002)

Sami's account of the events and their successful outcome indicates that within a year of graduation, he was already able to take initiative and act rhetorically in response to a workplace situation. His story challenged my expectations of novices' gradual acculturation into workplace contexts and prompted me to investigate Sami's motives, actions, and their consequences. Sami's story provides evidence that novices can, in fact, successfully challenge genres of the workplace (cf. Katz, 1998): Sami's action, taken at the right time, led management to accept him as an expert and resulted in his rapid promotion. His case also offers evidence of the important connections that exist between his family background, a university course in engineering communication, other university and workplace experiences, and his successful response to the workplace situation. In addition, Sami's story indicates that specially designed domain-specific⁴ communication courses can provide novice professionals with a foundation for responding to rhetorical situations in the workplace.

This study focuses on the following two research questions, for which Sami's case provides both context and illustrations:

- 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?

The results of this case study prompted me to revisit and refine my understanding of what it means to master the genres of a profession. Theoretical constructs that highlight the roles of

timing and agency in Sami's story (i.e., constructs of rhetorical genre, uptake, *kairos*, and cultural capital) have been particularly helpful in my search for the ingredients of Sami's knowledge of engineering genres. First, I review these theoretical constructs as they apply to Sami's case; then I provide additional data, interpreting them in light of theoretical constructs; and finally I suggest possible implications of the study for further development of rhetorical genre theory and for domain-specific technical communication pedagogy.

Theoretical Constructs

The reconception of genre as social action that Miller (1984/1994) proposed 20 years ago provided a foundation for the development of a new discipline, rhetorical genre studies (RGS).⁵ Unlike traditional approaches that view genres as stable text types characterized by their textual regularities, RGS considers genres as typified symbolic actions in response to recognizable situation types. When using the term *genre* in analyzing Sami's story, I assume Schryer's (2000) definition of genre that is rooted in both RGS and Bourdieu's (1972) theory of social practice. Schryer defines genres as "constellations of regulated, improvisational strategies triggered by the interaction between individual socialization . . . and an organization" (p. 450). From Schryer's perspective, genres are both constraining and enabling for a rhetor. Genres much more than simply organize and regulate human social activity— they constitute human activity (see also Bawarshi, 2000; Devitt, 1996, 2000). This view of genre "allows for dynamism and change, given the inherent fluidity of the sociohistorical context to which genres respond" (Artemeva & Freedman, 2001, p. 166).

Freadman (1987/1994, 2001) provided an additional perspective on the dynamic nature of genre, applying to the study of genres the notion of uptake, borrowed from speech act theory. Freadman (2001) defined *uptake* after Austin (1962/1994) as something that "happens when you accept an invitation to a conference, or agree to rewrite a paper for publication . . . , or disagree with, or explore, a proposition in theory" (Freadman, 2001, p. 39). She considered a text as a move in a game—tennis, for example—with each move expecting an uptake. Freadman noted that it is useful to view each genre as consisting,

minimally, of either two texts or a text and a nontextual response that have a dialogical relationship. She observed (1987/1994) that genre knowledge includes knowing how to take up the genre and stressed that the most important part of genre knowledge is knowing the difference between genres. In other words, genres must be understood in terms of what they are and are not. But knowing a genre also includes understanding that genres do not exist independently. That is, genres must be understood in relation to other genres and their interplay at a particular time (Devitt, 2000).

Issues concerning time and timing considered within the RGS framework have recently become central to research into workplace communication (e.g., Yates & Orlikowski, 2002), particularly for studies of professional genre acquisition by students and recent graduates (e.g., Schryer, 2003; Schryer, Lingard, Spafford, & Garwood, 2002). Although these issues are directly relevant to the analysis of Sami's case, before being able to productively use the notion of *timing* within the RGS framework, we need to resolve this key question: Does a rhetor discover the right moment for her rhetorical action or does she create it?

In classical Greek rhetoric, two notions that reflect different qualities of time are *chronos* and *kairos*. *Kairos*, the qualitative aspect of time, is defined as the right moment, the opportune or due measure; *chronos*, the quantitative, measurable aspect of time, is defined as the continuous flux of time (Kinneavy, 2002; Miller, 1992, 2002; Sipiora, 2002). The concept of *kairos* was nearly forgotten until the mid20th century (Kinneavy, 1986, 2002; Miller, 1992, 2002; Sipiora, 2002), when it was revived in connection to the debate about situational context and rhetorical situation, which attracted rhetoricians' attention at that time. Miller (1992) described the notion of situational context as "the structural description of a moment in time" (p. 312), arguing that each rhetorical situation offers a different opportunity and, hence, different *kairos*. Some scholars (e.g., Glover, 1990; Krause, 1996) even equated the notion of *kairos* with the modern notion of rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation debate addressed the question about whether *kairos* is objectively given and then discovered or is constructed by humans.

This debate, which took place in the late 1960s to early

1970s, involved Bitzer (1968), Vatz (1973), and Consigny (1974) and was later continued by Miller (1992, 1984/1994). On one side of the debate, Bitzer (19658) defined rhetorical situation as a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence that invites utterance. This invited utterance takes part in the situational activity and thus “obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character” (p. 5). In Bitzer’s view, meaning resides in a situation and the situation prescribes a suitable response (p. 10). On the other side of the debate, Vatz (1973) argued that situations do not exist outside the rhetor’s mind: They are not discovered but arbitrarily created by the rhetor and communicated to the audience. In his attempt to synthesize Bitzer’s and Vatz’s conflicting views, Consigny (1974) suggested that Bitzer’s view of the situation as predetermining a fitting response was erroneous. Consigny also disagreed with Vatz’s view of the rhetor as a completely free agent who arbitrarily creates rhetorical situations. At the same time, Consigny noted that Bitzer had correctly viewed “the rhetorical situation as characterized by ‘particularities’” (p. 176) and that Vatz was right to treat the rhetor as creative. Consigny’s view was that rhetors cannot create exigencies arbitrarily but must take into account constraints on their engagement in a particular rhetorical situation. In his view, the rhetor, rather than looking for Bitzer’s “fitting response,” needs to possess “a repertoire of options and the freedom to select ways of making sense” (p. 179) of each new and indeterminate situation.

Following Consigny’s attempt to bring together the two opposing perspectives on *kairos* (i.e., rhetorical situation), Kinneavy (1986) and Miller (1992) proposed to view *kairos* as the unity of its temporal and spatial dimensions: both the right measure and the right timing, both discovered and constructed. Yates and Orlikowski (2001) also recognized the interplay between objective and subjective, and interpreted *kairotic* opportunities as both “emerging from the communicative activities of . . . rhetors and audiences . . . in specific situations (e.g., institutional context, task, place, and chronological time)” and “enacted, arising when socially situated rhetors choose and/or craft an opportune time to interact with a particular audience in a particular way within particular circumstances” (p. 108). Yates and Orlikowski further suggested that researchers

should turn their attention to the active shaping of kairotic moments. Following their suggestion, I focus here on one example in Sami's narrative of actively shaping a kairotic moment. This brief account of the modern development of the classical Greek notion of *kairos* indicates the importance of a human agent who seizes (or misses) the rhetorical opportunity and actively shapes it. No less important to this case study is the concept of *cultural capital*, which Bourdieu (1972) introduced.

Bourdieu's theory of social practice has been recently used by rhetorical genre researchers (e.g., Dias et al., 1999; Paré, 2001; Schryer, 2000, 2001, 2003; Winsor, 2003) to complement RGS and illuminate the role of social agents and texts within organizations that, according to Giddens (1984), represent complex social structures. One of the main categories in Bourdieu's theory is capital. As Winsor (2003) explained, for Bourdieu, capital existed in different forms that are not necessarily "reducible to money" (p.17). Bourdieu's capital may take both material and immaterial forms that can be converted into each other (e.g., monetary capital may be used to pay for, or be converted into, education). Among other forms of capital, Bourdieu (1972) introduced *social capital* (e.g., hierarchical positions within an organization) and *cultural capital* (i.e., particular cultural knowledge, such as engineering knowledge, or competency, such as professional engineering competency).

Cultural capital is the key form of capital in Bourdieu's theory; it also is the broadest. Cultural capital is defined as "a form of values associated with culturally authorized tastes, consumption patterns, attributes, skills and awards" (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. x) and thus includes, for example, the ways people communicate within particular situations or, in other words, use certain genres (e.g., engineering genres). People can acquire cultural capital unconsciously, from their family or social contexts (e.g., school, workplace apprenticeships); people then possess such capital for life. In Bourdieu's view, we would be wrong to think that by deliberately learning the ingredients of cultural capital, a person who was brought up in a family with limited cultural capital could acquire as much of it as a person brought up in a family with strong cultural capital. People's appropriation of this type of capital depends both on the sum of cultural capital that their family possesses and on when, how, and in what forms this capital is implicitly transmitted to them

from their family.⁶ Cultural capital can be converted into social capital: For example, people's education and background in a particular discipline can lead to, or be converted into, their higher positions within an organization. As such, the notions of cultural and social capital prove helpful in interpreting Sami's decision to act and his subsequent promotion.

In discussing various other notions integral to Bourdieu's theory, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) observed that an adequate theory of social practice requires a theory of social agents. Human agents and the notion of *agency*, defined as humans' capacity for freedom of action, understanding, and control of their own behavior (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Schryer, 2001; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002), thus play particularly important roles in Bourdieu's theory. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) illustrated the meaning of agency by explaining that "we exercise agency, for example, when we indicate our intention to vote one way or another, or make choices about what to eat from a restaurant menu" (p. ix). In other words, as Archer (2002) puts it, we need to conceptualize human agents as being both formed by their "sociality" (p. 11) and able to effect a change in society.

The concept of *kairos* is directly linked to the notion of agency. If we see *kairos* as objectively given and then discovered, and also as constructed by humans, then the capacity of the rhetor to select and/or create an opportune moment implies agency. Sami, for example, exercised his agency by: (a) selecting an appropriate moment, when the management was looking for a proposal for a new implementation (though it was expected to be submitted by the senior engineer), and; (b) creating an opportune moment by consulting with the division's director, proposing his own implementation plan, and preparing and delivering a presentation and written proposal.

Bourdieu's (1972) theory of social practice provides insights into the acquisition and effect of cultural capital (e.g., in Sami's case, knowledge of engineering and understanding of the engineering workplace and its hierarchy, principles of communication within the engineering profession, etc.) and the role of agency that are invaluable for analyzing individual rhetorical behavior within the context of the chosen discipline or profession.

The theoretical notions developed within RGS, coupled

with Bourdieu's theory of social practice, shed light on the search for the ingredients of Sami's genre knowledge. The case study presented here illustrates a successful— though risky— uptake on a particular workplace rhetorical situation. The uptake is undertaken by a novice who has developed sufficient understanding of professional genres and the hierarchy of the engineering workplace to be able to subvert local practices and to devise a new acceptable way to communicate. In the following section, I describe an engineering communication course that introduced Sami to some of the ingredients of his knowledge of engineering communication strategies.

Engineering Communication Course

In 1997, I was asked to design an introductory communication course for undergraduate engineering students at a Canadian university. In keeping with the principles of RGS (see, e.g., Freedman & Medway, 1994a, 1994b), I was planning to design a course that would provide students with an opportunity to learn rhetorical skills and strategies necessary for their successful integration into the engineering profession. The institutional limitations and requirements of the course design, however, did not allow me to link the course to students' workplace experiences, such as their co-op or internship terms, or to a service learning scenario. Nevertheless, I attempted to develop a course in which students could both acquire a rhetorical understanding of engineering communication extending beyond the traditional model of teaching and learning genres through "formats and templates" (Selber, 1998, p. 270) and develop a clear awareness of disciplinary purposes, contexts, and audience. In designing the course I assumed that the tasks students perform play an important role in their motivation (Bazerman, 1999) and, therefore, must be meaningful to them. To facilitate learning in their engineering courses and, hence, better serve their needs, I developed and sequenced assignments to situate the course within the engineering curriculum (for detailed discussions of the course design, see Artemeva, 2000; Artemeva, Logie, & St-Martin, 1999; Freedman & Artemeva, 1998).

Thus, in the engineering communication course, students are offered an opportunity to communicate the engineering

content through genres that such communication requires (e.g., memos, informative abstracts, executive summaries, various reports, formal oral presentations). Accuracy of engineering content is particularly important for the communication course because separating rhetorical process expertise from domain content expertise seems futile.⁷ In her study of academic expertise in modern academe, Geisler (1994) developed a model of academic expertise consisting of two interconnected dimensions, *domain content* and *rhetorical process*. The domain content dimension of expertise coupled with training and experience allows students to develop the ability to use abstractions and adapt them to particular cases, whereas the rhetorical process dimension coupled with training and experience allows students to “develop the reasoning structures” (p. 84) through which they become able to use abstractions in the contexts of their disciplinary tasks. According to Geisler, rhetorical expertise lags behind domain content expertise until later stages of the academic expertise development when expertise finally becomes an inseparable combination of knowing that and knowing how (p. 88) Thus, by being exposed to engineering content, even the simplified content⁸ provided in the introductory science and engineering courses,⁸ and engaging in appropriate rhetorical strategies, students begin to acquire engineering expertise.

Course work in the communication course revolves around a project based on an engineering course that students take concurrently with the communication course. Students form small groups so that each member of the group takes the same engineering course and wants to explore the same topic from that course. By consulting with each other, and through receiving feedback from other classmates via the electronic discussion group and in-class sessions and talking with the instructor (Artemeva, 2000; Artemeva & Logie, 2002), group members negotiate and later propose a chosen topic for the communication course project. Once the instructor approves topic proposals (the first major assignment of the course), students start working on their projects. They produce such major written assignments as progress and completion reports as well as orally present their interim and final findings to the class.

While working on a meaningful engineering task through multiple reviews and iterations, students become familiar with and somewhat proficient in such genres as the proposal, periodic

(or progress) report, completion report, formal oral progress presentation, formal oral results presentation, and other genres within the engineering genre system (cf. Bazerman, 1994). The interconnectedness of course assignments (project documents) provides students with the opportunity to develop engineering rhetorical strategies—inextricably linked to the engineering content—through the experience of “audience proximity” (Winsor, 1996). Students experience this “audience proximity” by interacting with their readers—peers and the instructor—and developing a clear understanding of their audience’s engineering background knowledge and needs.

Rather than using templates to fill in with the information related to their chosen topics, students develop and produce documents that suit the engineering content of their work and meet the demands of their audience. As students become comfortable with the content of their engineering courses, they also develop knowledge of their audience in the communication course. That is, they start to realize that their audience consists not only of the instructor but also of other students in the same engineering program, who, at a minimum, have taken the same common introductory and core engineering courses as well as high school science and math courses, and therefore, share their background knowledge. Students also develop knowledge and understanding of their instructor’s background and expectations through written comments, e-mail exchanges, and oral feedback that accompanies the written review. Thus, in the communication course, each student has to craft documents that are: (a) suitable for the content and purpose of the individual project (e.g., explain a theoretical approach to a particular phenomenon, present and explain a software application that solves a particular problem, describe and explain an experiment), and (b) accurate, clear, and informative to the classmates and instructor while remaining recognizable engineering documents that respond to the requirements of the course and instructor’s expectations.

The genres of the proposal, progress report, and completion report are introduced through class discussions. After that, students in the course have to use the genres so that they fit the purpose of their particular work. In other words, I expect students to develop the sense of engineering genres as situated and responding to the exigencies (Miller, 1984/1994) of a particular context, in which the content, purpose, and audience of

the communication are inextricably connected (as an example, see Appendix for a description of Sami's communication course project). One of my former engineering communication course students made the following observation five years after having completed the course:

It is the context of the course that provides success, not necessarily the content students . . . [start to] appreciate how important the communications course is, much more so than say, thermodynamics . . . (anyone can read and understand the laws of thermodynamics, however it is next to impossible to read and understand the laws of good communication . . . this must be mentored and practiced, and not learnt). (Personal communication, April 26, 2004)

Through communication that evolves throughout the course, students gradually grow into the communication practices that are dictated by the content and audience of their communication within the context of the course and at a particular time in their academic careers (as far as the limitations of the classroom setting permit). In other words, students learn to respond to rhetorical situations in a generic way and, at the same time, to adapt this generic response to the needs of a concrete situation.

From the beginning, I was interested whether the engineering communication course would have any long-term effects on students' acquisition of engineering genres. To answer this question, I integrated questionnaires into the course design and later proceeded with a longitudinal study, of which Sami's case is a part. To provide more context for Sami's case, I briefly introduce the larger study.

Longitudinal Research Study

The longitudinal study⁹ explores two aspects of the transition from university to workplace: (a) effects that the engineering communication course and other communication

experiences have on students' acquisition of engineering genres, and (b) changes in students' perceptions of themselves as engineering communicators. I followed ten former engineering communication course students, Sami among them, over a period of six years, starting with the term when they were enrolled in the communication course. The primary data for the study consist of questionnaires that students completed while they were enrolled in the course, student postings to the course electronic discussion group during the term, electronic questionnaires administered annually after the course completion, follow-up e-mail exchanges that served to clarify and/or complement responses to annual questionnaires provided by the study participants, audiotaped face-to-face interviews that I transcribed, field notes taken during interviews and other encounters with participants,¹⁰ and multiple informal e-mail exchanges. Secondary data include samples of participants' writing produced at different points in their academic and professional careers. To analyze and triangulate the data, I used multimethod, multicase qualitative methodology.

Preliminary results of the longitudinal study from analyzing data collected from participants at different stages of their academic and professional careers show that some participants do acquire basic knowledge of engineering genres and a sense of engineering audience and that this knowledge helps them find appropriate rhetorical responses to academic and workplace contexts (e.g., Artemeva, 2000; Artemeva & Fox, 1999; Artemeva et al., 1999; Fox, Artemeva, & Frise, 1999). For example, one study participant observed that when he realized that what "students were doing in the [communication] course [was] . . . what one must provide as a 'deliverable' in the 'real world'" (personal communication, April 26, 2004), his view of the course's usefulness changed dramatically. He started the engineering communication course by failing an oral presentation. But his failing grade was accompanied by what he later called "excellent feedback" from his instructor. At the end of the term, this participant used the feedback to achieve a much higher grade. At the end of his undergraduate program, he was nominated by his engineering department for a student oral presentation competition. Later in his career, when he came back to school to complete a Master's degree in engineering, he won a graduate student competition in oral presentations in his

specialty. Five years after having completed the communication course, he said in an interview, “I haven’t made a bad presentation since” (Communication matters, 2004, p. 5). In other words, in the communication course, this study participant began to develop the ability to “genre” (Schryer, 1995, 2001) his way through social interactions by choosing a rhetorically appropriate form in response to each communication situation he encountered.

Sami’s case provides another illustration of such development and serves as an example of a novice who managed to successfully “genre” through a workplace situation. In the following section I analyze the events as narrated by Sami in a series of e-mail messages and face-to-face interviews.

The Events as Narrated by Sami, or "Not Just Another Lab Rat"

I first met Sami in 1998, when he was a second year engineering student enrolled in my communication course. When the course was over, Sami agreed to participate in the longitudinal study, and we stayed in touch over the years. The data I collected from Sami consist of 34 documents (in-class questionnaires, e-mails, electronic discussion group postings, electronic questionnaires, interview transcripts, field notes, etc.) that total 144 pages of single-spaced text.

Growing up as a third-generation engineer, Sami was always surrounded by what Lave and Wenger (1991) call “war stories” (p. 109), which they found are integral to the way newcomers learn practices of a group they are joining. Throughout our conversations and e-mail exchanges over the years, Sami has often referred to his family and the knowledge he has accumulated from his family members— what Bourdieu (1972) defines as cultural capital:

I find that my [career] decisions are often influenced by those that I admire most I became an engineer because my father is one [He] is the one who taught me work ethics: how to handle my job, how to make myself an irreplaceable part of the team. How to think about making the company money. He taught me that there is no such thing as a 9-5 job. Everything

requires more time and more effort, if you want to shine.

Much of my dad's business and professional knowledge comes from my grandfathers (both my dad's father and my mom's). He passes that information to me, so in a sense *I get to carry around years of experience before I even have a career* [italics added]. I've been learning about work environments and how to handle difficult decisions and situations while I was still in university. Now when I face them for the first time, it does not seem as scary because I have the feeling I've been there before. This helps keep me on the right track and helps prevent negative decisions. (September 16, 2003)

After graduating from the university, Sami was immediately hired by a local high-tech company that, within several months, went bankrupt. He then started looking for a new job in his area of specialization. In a few months, he acquired a job at an engineering company. The following e-mail excerpt illustrates the influence of Sami's family's "war stories" on his career decision:

When I got offered the position here at [the new company] for . . . less pay than what I was making [in the first workplace], I almost did not take the job. However, my father told me a story about how my grandfather had to take a job that paid so little, in fact his allowance from his father was higher than his pay. But he took it because he needed the experience. A little while later he got offered a much better position with much higher pay due to that experience. So I did the same and it was not very long after I started that I got promoted and was being paid the same as when I was [in the first workplace]. This is probably the best case where I was influenced to make a positive [career] decision. There is no doubt in my mind that if I had turned it down, I would not be where I am today. Actually, I would most likely

still be unemployed. (September 16, 2003)

Thus Sami's cultural capital, by supplying him with confidence in his actions, allowed Sami to realize the choices he could make and exercise his agency.

In a series of e-mail messages following his hiring, Sami shared his observations of the communication practices in the new workplace, conveying deep frustration with them. He felt that these practices were contrary to what he had learned from his family, at school, and in the first workplace (cf. Anson & Forsberg, 1990/2003). Among other "problems with communication" (June 17, 2002), Sami reported incomplete product documentation, inconsistent use of metric and imperial units throughout the documents, mislabeled figures and tables, missing data, and so on. He commented on difficulties that technical support staff faced due to missing documentation when trying to troubleshoot problems on the phone with clients. To this lengthy lament, Sami added his intentions for correcting the situation in his department:

So here is what I see . . . Time, money and other resources are constantly being wasted due to bad or lack of documentation

[My] department is made up of two engineers including me. I am currently project lead on the prototype that we are designing and you'll be happy to know that I'm assuring that the documentation of the . . . department will not be like the rest of the company

I always knew that documentation is important but I don't think one really gets to appreciate [its] importance until they face problems like these. (June 17, 2002)

Then, in three months, I received the message cited at the beginning of this article: the message describing Sami's unexpected initiative to present his own implementation plan to management, his well received presentation, and his subsequent promotion to the position of division director. After receiving this message, I contacted Sami in a series of electronic and face-to-face interviews. I asked him whether he had consulted any

proposals written in that company before writing his own or had attended any presentations before delivering his own. In an e-mail Sami explained that he had not seen

proposals written within the company, but just other sample documentation. I would have liked to see a proposal, but I could not locate one Yes I had attended 2 or 3 presentations. Only one of which I thought was good (it was given by our chief engineer, whom I have much respect for) and the rest were poor at best. The presenters did everything that we are taught to be wrong. (February 3, 2003)

When I asked what had helped him to prepare the proposal and deliver the presentation so effectively, Sami responded as follows:

I relied more on what I learned at school and my other experiences¹¹ than I did about what [the company] was doing. In all fairness, anything would be better than the general practice here. (February 3, 2003)

Responding to my question of why he had decided to write his own proposal for the implementation plan, even though such a proposal had not been officially requested and he would have to face the senior engineer's opposition, Sami explained that

the *only* reason why I wrote my own proposal was to show the senior engineers and the director of [my division] that I was capable of independent thought. That I was not just another lab rat. (February 17, 2003)

Interpretation of the Events as Narrated by Sami

Bazerman (1997) and Russell (1997), among others, have noted that newcomers base their perceptions of new situations on the forms they have learned in the classroom, bring with them their old discourse habits, and develop their "motives and desire

to participate in what the new landscape appears to offer [starting] . . . from motives and desires framed in earlier landscapes” (Bazerman, 1997, p. 19). Anson and Forsberg (1990/2003), MacKinnon (1993/2003), and Paré (2001) have observed that newcomers often find new genres contradict the communication habits they have developed in school. Often these old communication habits clash with the existing situation and create problems for newcomers (e.g., Anson & Forsberg, 1990/2003; Artemeva, 2003a, b; Dias et al., 1999; Katz, 1998).

Sami reported that when he arrived at the company, he found that communication practices there were the opposite of what he had learned as a student and experienced during work terms and in his first workplace. Even though Sami was critical of his new workplace's communication practices and appeared to reject them, the workplace had obviously functioned prior to Sami's arrival—it developed products and sold them—which indicates that the genres and practices (which I have no information about except what Sami provided in his interviews) in place at the company “had their ecological validity” (Freedman, personal communication, May 22, 2003). Sami's reaction to the communication practices of the new workplace is similar to the stage in novices' acculturation that Anson and Forsberg (1990/2003) called “disorientation,” at which point novices' views of communication often conflict with their supervisors' views. Novices often feel insecure and threatened by such conflicts and may react strongly in response. But, as Anson and Forsberg noted, this is the stage at which initiative starts to develop. The novices begin to “assert their own opinions against those presented in the workplace, to strengthen and define their own role by imitation or contrast” (p. 398), which gradually leads to transition and resolution and to at least partial recognition of novices' input into the work of an organization.

Katz's (1998) study of novices in the workplace demonstrated that the process of novice acculturation into an organization has two complementary but opposite dimensions: organizational socialization (the process in which novices become assimilated to the organizational culture) and individualization (the process in which novices attempt to change the organization to meet their personal needs). In Katz's research, some novices were successful in their individualization while others failed. The outcome of Sami's actions coupled with

Katz's observations brings us back to the question I asked at the beginning of this article: What makes a novice successful in challenging and changing rhetorical practices of a workplace?

If, as Sami states, his only reason for submitting an independent proposal was to make management notice him and the welfare of the company did not figure in his decision at all, then Sami appears to be referring to what Miller (1984/1994) calls a "private intention." In her discussion of exigence, Miller distinguishes between social motive and private intention, suggesting that

although exigence provides the rhetor with a sense of rhetorical purpose it is clearly not the same as the rhetor's intention The exigence provides the rhetor with a socially recognizable way to make his or her intentions known. It provides an occasion, and thus a form, for making public our private versions of things. (p. 30)

Even if Sami's only motive was personal, he was able to produce a document that was needed and appropriate at that particular moment. In other words, there was an objectified social need for a proposal, known within Sami's division, and this need provided Sami with a sense of rhetorical purpose (cf. Miller, 1984/1994). In Sami's case, the external *kairotic moment* (Stephenson, 2003), though existing (The management did need "an implementation plan."), was not prominent, as it would have been if the management had put forward a request for proposals from all employees. Sami recognized this external kairotic moment, an opening that may close quickly and requires fast action (Stephenson, 2003), and enacted his own internal kairotic moment (cf. Consigny, 1974; Miller, 1992; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002). He exercised his agency by proposing his own implementation. Sami's timing was so effective that his proposal was accepted, and he was promoted even though his communication strategies were different from those accepted within the company. In contrast, the senior engineer, being accustomed to the conventional lack of written communication in the company, did not recognize the opportunity the external kairotic moment presented to him and acted in a routine way. That is, he saw only a routine assignment that involved a routine

presentation that would not be decisive in any way. He seemed to expect the usual (positive for him) outcome of his routine presentation. Normally, as Sami himself noted in an interview, if two proposals were submitted, one from a junior and one from a senior engineer, managers would choose the senior engineer's proposal because they would trust the senior employee and rely on that individual's previous work experience and track record. Continuing with Miller's (1984/1994) view of exigence, that "exigence must be seen neither as a cause of rhetorical action nor as intention, but as social motive" (p. 30), we can conclude that Sami recognized the social motive (i.e., the need for a proposal for a new implementation) and responded to it rhetorically. In other words, he was acting in response to the social motive in addition to his personal intention; that is, he was both seizing and creating a kairotic moment.

As is typical of novices entering a new workplace, Sami was genuinely frustrated by the quality of communication at the company (cf. Anson & Forsberg, 1990/2003). But the outcome of Sami's actions was different from that of the actions of the intern in Anson and Forsberg's study. That intern's initiative was met with resistance and criticism because he "had apparently misread the needs and goals of his organization" (p. 401). Sami was successful in bringing together the ingredients of his understanding of the purpose, strategies, and practice of engineering communication (i.e., cultural capital appropriated from his family, school experiences, and previous workplace opportunities) to analyze the present situation in the company and to critically look at the accepted communication practices from the perspective of both an insider and an outsider. Sami was successfully able to resist socialization into the company's practices because he had already been socialized into engineering communication practices that he considered the norm and thus viewed the current practices of the new workplace as an aberration.

In both his e-mails and interviews, Sami uses his critical interpretation of the company's communication practices in an attempt to conduct what we would call an analysis of rhetorical situation. Although Sami himself never identifies what he is saying as an analysis—and he probably is not even aware that he is analyzing the situation—the ingredients of his genre knowledge seem to enable this critical analysis. In e-mails, he reflects his

critical view of the habitual communication practices in the company when he tries to justify the current state of communication in each group within the company: “

The engineers are happy [with the lack of written communication] because they don't like doing the documentation, and the technicians are happy because they are the only ones who know what is going on (*therefore their jobs are very secure*) [italics added]” (July 17, 2002), and “I am finding that there are a number of people who like to do things orally, *so that they are not held as accountable* [italics added]” (February 3, 2003). He also manages to use his view of engineering communication practices to turn this situation to his advantage; that is, he uses the right time (*kairos*) to exercise his agency within the constraints of the workplace structure.

In addition to his sense of *kairos*, Sami's success lies in his ability to “read” the hierarchy of the workplace. After a failed attempt to attract the senior engineer's attention to his original proposal, Sami approached his boss, the director of the division at the time, who, as Sami claimed in an interview, is his “supporter.” Sami's boss advised him to go ahead with the proposal and presentation, telling him who would likely attend the presentation, which allowed Sami to exercise his sense of audience, acquired in part from the engineering communication course, to prepare an audience-tailored presentation. At the time I wrote this chapter, Sami's boss remained his immediate superior: His boss had been promoted to vice president of the company, and Sami was promoted to replace his boss as division director. Sami has recently reported that, in his division, he continues to foster communication practices that he considers productive and that his boss continues to support his communication related initiatives. Sami also commented in that interview that the company's “CEO is 100% behind what I do as well” (January 08, 2004).

In interviews, Sami consistently claimed that in the new workplace he used communication strategies that he had learned at school and practiced during his work terms and in his first workplace. Although Sami credits his family— his grandfathers on both sides and his father—with passing on to him experiences of generations of engineers, in the following e-mail Sami credits his school for providing him with practical experiences:

My father has a large influence on my choices, but from the business and professional side. (i.e. how to handle certain situations, how to deal with certain people, what to watch out for in the workplace and so on). My communication choices are more based on what I learned in school, and what I deduce from problems that I recognize in the field. (February 17, 2003)

In interviews and e-mails, Sami referred not only to having learned about such engineering genres as proposals, progress reports, technical literature reviews, and formal oral proposal presentations, and to having practiced them in the communication course and upper-level engineering courses, but also to having learned how to “read” the audience and tailor his written and oral performance to that audience's needs and expectations. For example, in his interviews, Sami repeatedly mentioned a communication course exercise (devised by my colleague Christine Adam) in which students were asked to build a structure using Lego blocks and write instructions on how to build such a structure. After that, students would hide the structure and pass the instructions on to another group of students who would have to follow the instructions, build an identical structure, and comment on the clarity of the instructions. Sami mentioned in an interview how important that small exercise had been to his understanding of audience and precision in writing:

The time we wrote the procedure to combine all Lego parts . . . that haunted me when I was writing the test sequences [at a summer job in an engineering company] ‘cause I had to make sure that whoever was reading this, not only knew what I meant but knew exactly, to the letter, what to do That’s one of the things that definitely stuck in my mind. (February 5, 2001)

That exercise . . . was the first time I got a big wake-up call, I think, ‘cause when we wrote the instructions for it, we did a pretty good job. I thought, you know, there was no way that

anybody could miss it They [the students who were asked to follow the instructions and build an identical structure] did it wrong. They did it wrong. Yeah. And, of course, once you get it built wrong, and then you look at your instructions, you see why, you see that you weren't specific enough. (January 8, 2004)

Another important lesson from the communication course that Sami referred to concerned formal oral presentations:

The second [lesson to remember from the communication course] is the proper way to do an oral presentation First, you've got to remember who your audience are . . . secondly, remember, why they are here, why are you presenting to them Don't bore them with things that are not interesting, give them the meat If there is just a split second when the audience feels that you are not quite sure of what you're saying, you lost complete credibility and then, you're done. That's it. You're completely done. (February 5, 2001)

Most important, in his response to the workplace situation, Sami demonstrated his ability to adapt the genres of engineering he was familiar with (i.e., the formal proposal presentation and written proposal) to the exigencies of a particular situation. He demonstrated that he had learned precisely what I was trying to teach in the engineering communication course. From his explanations of how much his family history influenced his decisions and actions, we can conclude that the cultural capital of Sami's family gave saliency to everything he had learned at school. By the time he had joined the new company (his second engineering job after graduation), Sami clearly had gained access to a repertoire of appropriate engineering communication strategies that were regulated (because they were immediately recognized as such by management and clients) and at the same time *improvisational* (because they were distinctly different from the practice of that particular workplace) (cf. Schryer, 2000, 2001). Sami

accumulated this repertoire through conversations with his father and other family members, the undergraduate engineering communication course, academic engineering projects, and work experiences. In addition, Sami has accumulated sufficient expertise in the engineering domain content. Following Geisler's (1994) definition of expertise as a dual space that combines domain content and rhetorical process, Sami can be considered as a developing expert in his field.¹²

Sami's Challenges

The division Sami is heading has grown. After the commercial success of his first proposal, Sami proposed another project that was also accepted. As the result of these successes, many of the company products have been turned over to Sami's division, which makes him happy and proud. But not all the consequences of Sami's actions have been advantageous for him. As he explains in an e-mail, he continues to face new challenges following his promotion:

As a young engineer working with others who have been part of industry for years, it can be difficult to get your ideas taken seriously. More importantly, it is more difficult to get your opinion[s] given their proper weight against those coming from more experienced people. However, being prepared and organizing a good document can do wonders. (October 29, 2002)

In another e-mail several months later, he added, "Being so young, it is hard for senior staff to treat me as an equal, because I am the same age as their children" (February 10, 2003). Then in an interview almost a year after that, he complained, "I am constantly fighting a battle with the older engineers that have been there for a long time They always feel like you're . . . personally attacking them It's been difficult" (January 8, 2004). And the senior engineer who refused to support Sami's original proposal continues to be Sami's "biggest opposition" (January 8, 2004) in the company.

Sami claims that he has changed the way of communicating in his division, that the director of another major division in the company has also been working on documen-

tation, and that, generally, communication within the company has improved. But, he adds in an interview, the change is slow, and many employees resist it: “Some people are now complaining about the amount of documentation that has to be done, and they’re saying that . . . it’s wasting their time” (January 8, 2004). But Sami’s ability to read the workplace situation and his self-confidence appear to help him cope with these complications:

I think my saving grace is that . . . the upper management realizes that we’ve come to . . . a turning point where if we don’t move in a different direction, . . . our products will die. So the reason . . . why the opposition hasn’t damaged me that much was because even though . . . [the managers] are listening to what . . . [the senior engineer] is saying, they do understand that he doesn’t necessarily know the right way to do it And they do realize that what he’s saying is just to damage what I’m doing. (January 8, 2004)

To see if Sami is accepted as a respected member of the workplace community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and to observe the effect of these challenges and complications on his behavior and career, we will need to follow him further.

Lessons to Learn from Sami's Case

From the analysis of Sami’s case, we can learn important theoretical and pedagogical lessons. First, a newcomer can successfully introduce new communication strategies that deviate from the accepted workplace genres (but are still recognizable and acceptable engineering communication strategies). Both Katz’s (1998) observations and Sami’s case provide evidence that novices who have not yet acquired full insider status can be critical of the organization’s communication practices when they perceive such practices as inefficient and opposite to what they have learned elsewhere. This finding contrasts with Winsor’s (1996) observation that for novices to become critical of the communication practices of their profession, they must acquire a “status as an insider because until that point one is still hesitant

to depart from the norm” (p. 107). Sami’s case indicates that cultural capital can supply novices with enough confidence to take a critical stance with regard to existing communication practices and act in a way that may be unconventional for the company.

The positive outcome of Sami’s initiative indicates that his workplace (or at least the upper management of his workplace) was to some extent ready for the change. Sami was not in conflict with his boss, the division director, even though he was in apparent disagreement with the senior engineer: Sami started working on the presentation only after “being advised” by his boss. Sami would probably not have enjoyed the same success if his superiors had held different views on the state of communication in the company.

Second, a novice who possesses the ingredients of genre knowledge (e.g., in Sami’s case, what he learned from his family and at school and what worked as engineering communication strategies elsewhere) can select strategies relevant to workplace communication contexts. As in Schryer’s (2000, 2003, 2005; Schryer, Lingard, Spafford, & Garwood, 2002) comparison of genres to jazz, Sami was successfully able to improvise within the limits of the genre so that his improvisation was recognized by the upper management as a legitimate variation on the theme; in other words, his proposal and presentation were recognized as engineering genres. Miller (1984/1994) reiterated that our knowledge of genres is useful only as far as it has bearing on new experiences. Bazerman (1994) has observed that

only by uncovering the pathways that guide our lives in certain directions can we begin to identify the possibilities for new turns and the consequences of taking those turns. We are put on the spot, we must act, and in acting we must act generically if others are to understand our act and accept it as valid. (p. 100)

In this case, Sami used his engineering genre knowledge to recognize the situation and to choose an appropriate uptake.

Third, “best” communication practices can be taught outside of local contexts. Even though the genre practices (the formal oral proposal presentation and written proposal) that Sami

had learned elsewhere and brought to the new workplace were different from the locally accepted practices, experienced engineers who occupied power positions in the company (i.e., the division director, the CEO) recognized and accepted the new practices as superior. The new way of presenting a proposal that Sami introduced required him to study the background of all members of the audience and tailor his presentation to their level of understanding and needs. In other words, the genre of the proposal presentation that Sami introduced gave more power for decision making to people in the audience because they were no longer

expected simply to trust the authority of the speaker—no matter what his track record was. They were expected to take on the role of decision-makers in a much more active way. (This was subtly flattering to them too.) A very radical difference in decision-making, in the nature of authority, in the value assigned to track record and expert knowledge was being effected. (Freedman, personal communication, May 22, 2002)

A novice engineer and new employee in the company, Sami treated engineering genres as allowing for flexibility. This perception is radically different from that of genres as rigid templates that engineers have to follow, which is often portrayed in technical communication textbooks (see, e.g., Houpp, et al., 1998). In other words, Sami was able to use the accumulated ingredients of genre knowledge and adapt this knowledge to the new workplace. He managed to recognize the construal (Miller, 1984/1994) of the situation type as recurrent and respond to it with the appropriate genres, the proposal presentation and written proposal. In doing so, Sami altered the workplace by introducing “a discourse of such a character that the audience, in thought and action . . . [was] so engaged that [the discourse became] . . . mediator of change” (Bitzer, 1968, p. 3).

Over the course of his life, from his family, school, and workplace opportunities, Sami acquired the values and principles of engineering communication. Even though he just recently graduated, Sami already had a solid strategic rhetorical preparation. In addition to his domain content knowledge

(Geisler, 1994), Sami has developed a repertoire of flexible rhetorical strategies that enabled him to seek advice from an appropriate person in the company's hierarchy (the director of his division), recognize the opening in time and create his own kairotic moment, select a suitable constellation of communication strategies, and turn the rhetorical situation to his advantage. The nontextual uptake on Sami's communication act was his promotion to the position of division director. This nontextual uptake (i.e., the decision) was, of course, communicated through a series of written documents and verbal communication. This process, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

Implications of the Study

The results of Sami's case analysis show that Sami is a novice engineer who has successfully mastered engineering communication strategies. As Bazerman (1997) pointed out, once rhetors understand the dynamics of a genre, they have a range of rhetorical choices, "including choices that are far from traditional in appearance, but which nonetheless speak to the circumstances *The pressure of genre is not of conformity so much as of response to complexity* [italics added]" (p. 23). The results of Sami's case analysis further urge us, as technical communication researchers and instructors, to revisit our understanding of what it means to successfully master the genres of a profession and what it means to teach these genres. Swales (1993) has questioned what we should consider successful: "meeting the genre expectations, or being communicably effective." (p. 689) That is a pertinent question for writing instructors because the answer could lead them to reconsider genre pedagogy, design new courses, and, perhaps, revolutionarily change the program design in order to address flexibility of rhetorical strategies within generic forms and thus provide students with opportunities for both seizing and creating kairotic moments.

I have undertaken this study to better understand what mastering genres of professional communication means and to find preliminary answers to the following questions: What are the ingredients of rhetorical genre knowledge that allow a novice to be successful in challenging and changing rhetorical practices of the workplace? Where and how does a novice accumulate this

knowledge? And, specifically, did the engineering communication course provide Sami, a novice engineer, with a foundation to draw on when responding to rhetorical situations in the workplace?

As we have seen, by the time Sami was hired by the second company, he had already been socialized into the genres of engineering and possessed the ingredients of engineering genre knowledge that enabled him to be successful in his actions. These ingredients, in Sami's case, included his family's cultural capital (i.e., knowledge of the profession based on his family's "war stories"), domain content expertise, and basic engineering rhetorical strategies. He acquired these ingredients from his family, in the engineering communication course, and through previous academic and workplace experiences. Sami's case provides evidence that the engineering communication course, designed on the premises of RGS, supplied Sami with a foundation in professional generic practices that Sami was able to draw and build on throughout his other academic and professional experiences.

Even though Sami was able to achieve his personal goals through calculated risk-taking and, apparently, help the company achieve its goals as well (e.g., Sami reported in an e-mail that once his proposal had been implemented, "orders started to roll in . . . large orders" [April 25, 2003].), his actions should not be taken as a recipe for recent university graduates entering a professional workplace. Indeed, they need to be cautioned against such radical actions. Not all novices are as prepared for the workplace communication within their professions as Sami was.

Rather than providing a recipe for recent graduates, Sami's story illustrates the critical role of such genre knowledge ingredients as cultural capital and agency in a rhetor's ability to both seize and create kairotic moments in the chronological flux of time and enact genres in ways that are different from the accepted routine and yet recognizable. It also underlies the importance of the rhetor's understanding of the improvisational qualities of genre. But the improvisational part of genre almost never surfaces in the traditional classroom, and students have little opportunity to create kairotic moments and exercise their agency in a course. Instructors are the ones who traditionally create what perhaps could be called kairotic moments (i.e.,

deadlines for course assignments).

In my experience, only a fairly small number of students create their own kairotic opportunities in a course. I can recall several students in the engineering communication course, who, in response to the request for proposals for a project based on engineering course topics, decided to base their projects on their engineering interests rather than on any specific courses they were taking concurrently with the communication course (a traditional option suggested in the course outline). These students were already knowledgeable about their proposed subjects (i.e., had some domain content knowledge) and passionate in their informed arguments that their projects would allow them to learn more about their subjects of interest and enable them to create better technical documents and deliver better oral presentations. They convinced me on several occasions. In their projects, these students had to adapt genres introduced and discussed in class—in particular, the completion report genre (the final assignment in the course)—to the needs of their projects. It is not surprising that these students' work in the course was often outstanding and that they were more satisfied with the course outcomes. But such students are an exception rather than the rule.

Sami's case provides evidence that domain-specific communication courses that build on student cultural capital allow them to accumulate more of it and enable their actions as independent agents. In addition, since experienced professionals in Sami's workplace seemed ready to recognize and accept superior communication practices, Sami's case shows that such practices can be taught in the academic classroom, contrary to what some recent research has suggested (e.g., Dias et al, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991). If such teaching is, in fact, possible, how can we make it more effective and ensure a widespread acceptance of this type of pedagogy? Should discussions about the improvisational nature of genres and opportunities for creating kairotic moments figure in classroom teaching, and, if so, how can these opportunities be integrated into academic courses? If our courses do not include such opportunities, how will we be able to assist those students who do not have access to the type of cultural capital that Sami had through his family? These are questions for further research.

Another question that remains unanswered at this point concerns how professional genre acquisition by students can be

assessed. Sami's case and my ongoing longitudinal study (Artemeva, 2004) offer evidence that such an assessment becomes possible only years after the students have been introduced to a particular genre. Perhaps the longitudinal study model may indicate directions for the development of a delayed assessment. Opportunities for the design and administration of such delayed assessment need to be explored.

The study presented here indicates that combining RGS with other complementary theories provides researchers with powerful tools for analyzing rhetorical situations in workplace contexts (See also, Freedman, "Interaction between Theory and Research" and "Pushing the Envelope," in this volume). In addition, combining RGS with other theories may also help instructors to develop new classroom contexts that will allow for the successful acquisition of regulated improvisational strategies (Schryer, 2000, 2001), and therefore facilitate students' transition between school and the workplace. This study also demonstrates that doing something different does not necessarily land novices in unfavorable situations; in fact, it can help them in their professional careers as long as they are in possession of the necessary ingredients of genre knowledge; in other words, as long as they have developed a keen sensitivity to the communication practices of the profession. Whether classroom teaching can help students acquire this firm grounding is yet another question for further research.

APPENDIX

Sami's Project: An Example of the Engineering Communication Course Project

Sami had initially chosen to describe and discuss a laboratory experiment from a second-year electrical engineering course as the subject for his communication project. Later, through a dialogue with his classmates in the electronic discussion group and during in-class and out-of-class peer-feedback sessions, he learned more about their interests and discovered that a programming course seemed more challenging both to him and to his classmates. In the electronic discussion group on October 19, 1998, Sami wrote, "The assignments [in the programming course] are long and hard My mid-term

was a killer. I think I [failed].” Eventually, he decided to focus on an assignment that was offered in the programming course hoping that by writing and talking about it, he would be able to develop a better understanding of the computer language (Java) he was required to use in the assignment. In about a month, as he was working on the communication course project and studying in the programming course, his attitude toward the programming course became more positive. He seemed to feel more comfortable with the course material, as his posting to the electronic discussion group on November 11, 1998, shows: “O.k. so the course has its advantages. Now I understand the idea of classes [a concept in object-oriented programming that was taught in the programming course] much better than before.”

In the end, Sami developed a computer program in Java. The program was written to solve a problem provided in the programming course; however, the purpose of his completion report and final oral presentation was not only to demonstrate a software application that provided an accurate solution to the problem but also to explain to his communication course classmates and me why Java was a suitable language to use and how he used it to solve the problem. Sami had to develop and design his completion report so it would fit the chosen subject matter—that is, the development of a particular software application written in Java—and respond to the needs and expectations of the communication course audience.

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¹ The real name of the study participant has been substituted with a fictitious one. The participant provided me with informed consent at two stages of the longitudinal study: when he completed the engineering communication course and then again three years later, after his graduation.

² All sensitive and identifying information has been removed from e-mail messages and interviews; otherwise, the e-mail messages are reproduced without change.

³ Sami was promoted to replace the former director of his division, who had been promoted to vice president of the company.

⁴ I maintain a distinction between discipline-specific and domain-specific communication. While the term *discipline-specific communication*

predominantly relates to communication within an academic context, the term *domain-specific communication* encompasses communication within an individual's profession as well as academic discipline.

⁵ *Rhetorical genre studies* is a term coined by Freedman (1999, 2001); it is also known as *North American genre theory*.

⁶ Even though the connotations of the term *capital* in English imply that some may possess it while others may lack it entirely, I cannot imagine a family that possesses no cultural capital. Hereafter, I use the notion of cultural capital not as a form of capital that one family may lack while another may possess but rather as a form of capital that is valued in a particular society at a particular historical moment.

⁷ This course is taught by communication course instructors who have some technical background and are comfortable with multiple engineering topics. It can also be taught by a team of communication and engineering instructors. Another version of the course, developed by my colleague Susan Logie for those instructors who may not have a technical background, allows instructors to control project topics by selecting them from introductory first-year engineering courses. Instructors study background readings on the topics prior to offering them to the students.

⁸ The engineering communication classroom mostly contains a mixture of first-year second term students and second-year first term students, with some upper-year students. Ideally, such courses should be offered to upper-year students who have developed some level of domain content expertise in the professional program.

⁹ The longitudinal project was approved by research ethics boards of two Canadian universities.

¹⁰ Other encounters with Sami included group discussions that involved Sami, my colleagues, engineering professors, and me, and a videotaped presentation and two talks that Sami gave to an audience of engineering students a few years after his graduation.

¹¹

His family background, summer work terms, and his three-month employment at the first company after graduation.

¹² For example, while working at the first company that hired him right after he graduated, Sami solved a problem that was the focus of a large meeting of experts in the company. They were looking for a way to pass light from one optical fiber to another without joining fibers. While company experts were suggesting complex solutions based on optical reflections, Sami's improvised solution was to pour water and have the ends of both fibers immersed in it. This solution demonstrated Sami's domain content expertise.

Developing a ‘Discursive Gaze’: Participatory Action Research with Student Interns Encountering New Genres in the Activity of the Workplace¹

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Workplace research has begun to chart the ways in which writing is enmeshed, in locally specific variations, in the cultures, work routines, information technologies, and social relations of professional organizations. Related research has also shown that for novices in such sites, developing the ability to write proficiently can be a difficult challenge, one that involves learning to participate competently in multiple facets of organizational activity. (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Dias & Paré, 2000; Freedman & Adam, 2000). For instructors in university professional writing programs, this raises a crucial question: How can we help our students to develop a ‘discursive gaze’²—the rhetorical awareness that will allow newcomers to recognize and respond effectively to the distinctive ways in which written discourse functions within the activity of any particular professional organization? To address this question, we need context-sensitive qualitative approaches to research that can help us learn more about the complex socio-rhetorical landscapes of professional sites and that also cast light on the experiences of novice writers as they enter and attempt to navigate these sites.

This chapter describes one such approach. It reports on a study in which the authors employed participatory action research, paired with activity-based genre theory, to collaborate with student interns from a professional writing program in investigating two closely related concerns: first, how writing functioned within their respective worksites, and second, what

the interns experienced as they attempted to make the transition from school to a professional setting. A key attraction of this approach for our study was that, in addition to its research dimension, it offered the pedagogical benefit of helping the interns to develop a heightened rhetorical vision to bring to the different worksites they will encounter as they begin and continue on in their professional lives. Our hope is that in sharing our experience of combining participatory action research with activity-based genre theory—with the various benefits and challenges this entailed—other writing instructors will perhaps be motivated to collaborate with their students in similar research/pedagogical ventures.

The chapter comprises four sections. In the first two we look at participatory action research and at activity-based genre theory and point to epistemological assumptions common to them both. In the third section we describe the student intern study, and in the fourth we discuss the gains in learning that resulted from the study.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) is a methodology employed by academic researchers to provide a group of informants with the opportunity of active participation in and shared ownership of a research project investigating a particular social realm inhabited by the informants. As with all academic research, PAR aims to contribute to disciplinary knowledge; however, what distinguishes PAR from other approaches are two further goals: to engage its informants in generating knowledge and using it to take action that is helpful to them in dealing with a problematic situation or set of circumstances; and at the same time to empower these individuals in their lives in a more lasting way through the experience of producing and applying situated knowledge.

In this chapter we will focus on four particular characteristics of participatory action research: its social constructionist, knowledge-generating, critical, and transformative aspects. We will elaborate on each of these four aspects of PAR later in the chapter in the section that describes our study. For readers interested in gaining a more global (in both senses of the word) understanding of participatory action research, we recommend the following sources: book chapters by

Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart (2000) and by Peter Reason (1998), and scholarly collections edited by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2001), by Susan Smith, Dennis Willms, and Nancy Johnson (1997), and by William Foote Whyte (1991).

As we will explain later in the chapter, our use of participatory action research in the study described here offered many advantages. Before going further, however, there is an issue we need to address: Our use of the methodology in our study is less obviously emancipatory than much PAR research. And indeed there may be those who would be critical of us for appropriating participatory action research in a project where our primary aim was not to permanently change a particular environment for the better, in terms of power relations and social justice (see, for example, Cushman, 1999). One form this critique might take would be that PAR is meant to be used to improve the situations of oppressed peoples in developing, often postcolonial, societies and that employing the approach to look at North American business and non-profit organizations is wrong—yet another case of the West appropriating and domesticating a political strategy that is anti-capitalist in spirit. Another, more narrow, form of critique would not take issue with us using PAR to look at Western organizations, but would want it to be fully emancipatory and permanently context-changing.

Our own stance on this issue is that, while we certainly acknowledge and respect these views on participatory action research, we feel that our use of the methodology in our study has been valid and useful. We were aiming to make our student interns' work experiences better for them—that is, more satisfying personally and more productive for learning—and this frequently involved situations where the interns asserted agency in ways that encouraged other people in their worksite to relate and act differently towards them and that, for some of these individuals, perhaps brought about an enduring change in their attitudes vis-à-vis newcomers in their organizations. Further, we would hope that our experiences in the research project—that is, both the experiences of the authors and those of the interns—will have future effects through our interactions with colleagues in the different worksites that each of us enters.

Activity-Based Genre Theory

As with any qualitative methodology, participatory action

research employs a theoretical framework to orient inquiry. In the study reported on here, the authors used activity-based genre theory to provide themselves and the student interns, as collaborating researchers, with a common theory-based analytical frame that served both for generating research questions and for analyzing the data that was collected.

As outlined elsewhere in this volume, Rhetorical Genre Studies characterizes written genres as recurrent, textually mediated, social-rhetorical actions. Researchers working in this tradition have shown how professional organizations employ genres of written discourse to produce, circulate, and apply the particular types of knowledge the organizations need in order to accomplish their work (Bazerman, 1999; Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Devitt, 1991; Paré, 2000; Schryer, 1993; Smart, 1999, in press; Swales, 1998; Van Nostrand, 1997; Winsor, 2003; Yates, 1989).

To complement genre theory, a number of researchers have combined it with activity theory—North American, British, and Scandinavian elaborations of the Soviet historical-cultural approach (Leont'ev, 1978; Luria, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978)—creating a powerful analytic frame for investigating the socio-cultural contexts within which writing is situated (Bazerman & Russell, 2003; Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Smart & Brown, 2002). From this dual theoretical perspective, a professional organization's set of written genres³ can be viewed as one element in an "activity system" (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 8): an historically and culturally situated sphere of goal-oriented collaborative endeavour in which intellectual work is enabled and shaped by culturally constructed tools. The various material, social, and symbolic tools used within an organizational activity system mediate—that is, they both extend and exert a shaping influence on—participants' cognition, discourse, and work practices. Such tools can include, for example, computer technologies, built environments, analytic methods, systems of classification, conventionalized forms of social interaction, and genres employing texts in different symbol systems.

The concept of distributed cognition, a strand of activity theory, posits that reasoning and knowledge arise as people collaborate, using shared cultural tools, in performing intellectual work. A corollary of this concept is that knowledge produced through distributed cognition in collaborative intellectual activity may be instantiated in symbol-based representations of many different types, such as alpha-numeric texts, diagrams, graphs, photographs, computer programs, and mathematical equations

(Hutchins, 1995; Lynch & Woolgar, 1990; Pea, 1993).

In another line of theorizing often associated with activity theory, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) describe the “situated learning” that occurs within any organization. They consider such learning, “the development of knowledgeably skilled identities” (p. 55), to be part of a larger and gradual process of increasingly competent participation in a community of practice. Lave and Wenger’s perspective here is congruent with Donald Schön’s (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner—one capable of “reflection-in-action” (p. 21), able to construct and apply localized theories in the course of professional practice.⁴

While we cannot truthfully claim to have thought this out in any great detail in advance of our work with the student interns, during the study we were repeatedly struck by the resonances between the epistemology of participatory action research and concepts underlying activity-based genre theory. One example of this relates to the preceding paragraph. In a PAR project, as described in more detail later in the chapter, the collaborating informants are encouraged to think self-reflexively, in metacognitive ways, about their own understandings, actions, social identities, and individual agency. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ideas about learning and identity formation obviously accord very well with this aspect of PAR, as does Schön’s (1983) notion of reflection-in-action. More generally, PAR and activity-based genre theory both view human experience, identity formation, and learning as occurring within a social world constructed through discourse and animated by the tension between, on the one hand, the conventions and constraints of social structure and, on the other, the possibilities for change afforded through individual agency.

The Student Intern Study

The study we describe in this chapter focused on the workplace experiences of student interns from a Professional Writing major in a large public university in the U.S. Midwest.⁵ The major aim is to prepare its students for a range of careers in technical communication, journalism, publishing, and organizational communications. The rhetorically based

curriculum helps students, through experience with a range of workplace genres and computer technologies, develop competence in areas such as research, reader-centred writing for print and electronic media, collaboration, project management, and usability testing.

The study draws on our analysis of a variety of data gathered over four years from approximately 40 student interns. The methodology of participatory action research was only employed during the final two years, however, and, therefore, in this chapter we will focus on the experiences of the 24 interns who participated in this phase of the study.⁶ The 24 interns were undergraduates, almost all of them seniors (4th year). They were placed in a variety of organizations, including high-tech companies, newspapers, a magazine, a university press, a media and public relations firm, the training unit of an auto manufacturing plant, and a number of non-profit organizations. Each intern spent either ten or twenty hours a week (depending on the number of credit hours taken) in their host organization over a 15-week period, and also participated in a weekly two-hour internship class at the university, team-taught by the two authors. In their worksites, the interns produced a variety of written genres with the texts in these genres including print and on-line user documentation, computer-based training materials, newspaper and magazine articles, texts for museum and art gallery displays, newsletters, employee handbooks, grant proposals, book manuscripts, websites, and scripts for cable TV features, radio and TV advertisements, and university tele-fundraising.

The Student Interns as Collaborating Researchers

In participatory action research, the informants take on the role of collaborators in investigating a particular social realm in which they are personally implicated. They participate in identifying questions to be addressed in the research, in collecting and analyzing data, in evaluating progress in the work, and in applying the knowledge that is produced. As described below, the student interns in our study collaborated in all these aspects of the research.

In each of the final two years of our study, at the first weekly meeting with the student interns, we began by inviting the interns to join in our research project, making it clear that

participation was fully voluntary⁷, and then proceeded to negotiate the goals for the research, a process that was informed by concepts from both participatory action research and activity-based genre theory. In the second year of the study, we ended up establishing four primary goals:

- to look at how writing functions in a range of worksites, noting both similarities and differences;

- to observe the weekly ebb and flow of the interns' experiences in these worksites and to try to help make these experiences as productive, satisfying, and educational as possible for them;

- to look for opportunities to propose constructive suggestions for change in the practices of the host organizations,⁸ and

- to contribute to the university's Professional Writing major by using the knowledge generated through the research to propose changes to the curriculum.

To provide the student interns with another aspect of the researcher experience, we also walked them through our university's human subjects review process that had occurred a month or so before the course began. As part of this walk-through, we shared with the student interns the documentation from the review process in addition to our e-mail exchanges with the human subjects review board. Our intent in doing this was two-fold: First, by sharing with the interns the questions or challenges posed to us by the review board, we helped them recognize the commitment we were making to them as participants; and second, the process led to discussions about policies in different universities and also about the various ways in which knowledge gained from research can be used for both local and disciplinary ends.

Over the next few weeks of the semester, we coached the student interns in research methods for collecting the data needed to pursue the four goals we had defined. In their Professional Writing courses the interns had received substantial training in conducting research—and so this was not an unfamiliar practice for them. What was new, however, was playing the role of self-reflexive ethnographer in investigating the ways in which writing functions in a particular social environment while simultaneously examining one's own experiences as a social actor.⁹ Using

assigned readings and class discussion, we rehearsed the interns in the role of participant-observer and in the practices of recording field-notes and conducting interviews, preparing them to gather data regarding the place and role of writing in their respective worksites and on their own experiences as novice writers in these settings.¹⁰ Initially, in addition to the coaching, we also gave the student interns prompts to guide their observations in their worksites. As the weeks went by, however, the need for these prompts diminished as the interns became more confident of their own judgements regarding what was most significant and needed to be recorded.

In discussing participatory action research with the student interns, we also made the point that PAR, like all qualitative inquiry, uses theoretical constructs that “help [researchers] name, explore, and explain what [they are] seeing” (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001, p. 224). Subsequently, we introduced the interns, again through readings and class discussion, to concepts associated with activity-based genre theory, as described earlier in the chapter, explaining that this would give us a common analytical frame for interpreting and discussing events in their respective worksites. Our decision to focus on activity-based genre theory as a conceptual underpinning for the research during the final two years of the study reported in this chapter resulted largely from the experience of the first two years of the research. During this initial phase of the study, 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.

To make this analytical frame more operational for the student interns as researchers engaged in participant-observation, we did two things. First, we presented a definition of genre that focuses attention on largely visible entities and events. According to this particular definition, a genre is viewed as a broad rhetorical strategy encompassing texts, composing processes, reading practices, and social interactions involving the use of texts—a collective strategy that allows a professional organization to regularize writer/ reader transactions in ways that ensure (or at least encourage) the reliable, consistent construction of the specialized knowledge that the group needs to do its work

(Paré & Smart, 1994).

Second, we drew on concepts from genre theory and activity theory to create a heuristic model for mapping the ways in which writing is situated within the socio-cultural environment of a professional worksite. As can be seen in the diagram in Appendix A, the model comprises two circles: one representing the worksite as an activity system, and the other, inner circle, representing the genre set enmeshed within that activity system.¹¹

As shown in the diagram, the activity system circle includes the following elements: the organization's mission and major work activities, along with its organizational structure, conventional methods of research and analysis, computer technologies, decision-making processes, professional ideology, shared knowledge and expertise, administrative processes, relationships with external players, formal methodologies, and internal politics. The genre set circle includes five elements: the types of documents used within the organization, the functions of these documents, the processes involved in the production of documents, the reading practices employed to interpret documents, and the organizational or social roles performed by writers and readers.

Our intention with this heuristic model was to give the student interns a tool that with repeated use (and ongoing elaboration, as mentioned below) would enable them to see, reflect on, and talk about the most salient aspects of the relationship between writing and the organizational culture and socio-technical practices of their worksites, while at the same time examining, with an acquired detachment, their own experiences as social actors. Our hope was that this experience would contribute to helping the interns develop a 'discursive gaze' for reading the work environments they enter as professional writers in their future careers.

We focused on different aspects of the model incrementally, week by week, asking the interns to think about how a particular part of it might apply to their worksites. At the same time, we repeated that the model was simply a provisional construct for us to work with, emphasizing that not all the aspects of activity represented in the model would necessarily be relevant for an intern's particular worksite, and that, conversely, the model might well be missing some important aspects of activity for any given organizational setting. We also invited the interns to elaborate on the model in our weekly meetings, providing further details from their worksites. Appendix B shows the final version of the model that we ended up with, with the

interns' added details included.

As a heuristic, the model allowed us to generate further research questions to explore, such as those below related to the production of documents:

What types of documents have you produced, or seen other people produce, in your worksite? Who are the intended audiences for these documents and how are they used to accomplish work?

Have you recognized any common types of data or recurrent forms of argument in the documents you've read?

Are there analytic practices and/or computer tools that people in your worksite commonly use in producing documents, and if so, how do these practices and tools appear to affect the writing processes involved?

From your vantage point, what does the review process for documents appear to entail? Who is involved in 'document cycling' and what are the roles of these individuals?

Have you seen any formal methodologies employed in the production of documents, such as, for example, those used for project management or employee performance evaluation? If so, how do these methodologies appear to influence document production?

How would you describe the prevailing professional ideology in your worksite? Can you recognize any ways in which

documents reflect and/or contribute to this professional ideology?

In parallel with our use of the model as a heuristic for observation and discussion, we designed course assignments that provided cues to focus the student interns' attention as they collected data. The interns kept work journals in which they recorded field-notes after each day in their worksite, produced two analytical reports during the semester on their worksites and internship experiences, and participated in a class e-mail listserv. (See Appendix C for the assignment guidelines that the authors provided to the student interns.) All of these course assignments produced data that, as described below, became grist for the mill in our weekly class meetings.

The Weekly Class Meetings as a Forum for Data

Analysis

We typically began our weekly two-hour meetings with the student interns with an around-the-table account of the week's events, with each intern taking five or ten minutes to talk about the highlights of his or her recent work experiences. For example, we heard an intern who was writing an article for the independent student newspaper on a student recently killed in a car accident talk about the anxiety she felt when faced with the task of interviewing the student's family and close friends. We heard from another intern who was doing research for a publishing firm about his attempts to obtain more hands-on mentoring from his supervisor. From a third intern, working in a computer software company, we heard about his experience learning to use a technology called FrameMaker+SGML to collaborate with co-workers in producing end-user documentation for the company's customers. From a fourth intern we heard about her anger towards a co-worker who had passed off written work that the intern had done as his own. And from a fifth intern we heard about the resistance she encountered as she attempted to introduce certain rhetorically sound writing practices into her worksite. In addition to the very important opportunity to talk about, and thus begin to reflect upon, their own personal experiences in their respective worksites, these around-the-table sessions provided the interns with a window onto a range of other worksites beyond their own, with their familiarity of these different worksites growing in depth week by week.

The narratives produced in these sessions, with their frequent focus on difficulties encountered by the interns, often led into collective problem-solving discussions. The narratives also became further research data, adding to the body of data that the interns produced as part of their participation in the internship class: field-notes (in their work journals), short analytical reports, messages posted to the class e-mail listserv, and, in some cases, tape-recorded interviews with other employees in their worksites.¹²

We spent some time at each weekly meeting engaging the interns in analyzing some part of these data, working with the

interns to turn these interpretations around in a way that would cast some light on their experiences in their worksites. Below, we use the four characteristics of participatory action research mentioned earlier—its social-constructionist, knowledge-generating, critical, and transformative aspects—to organize our discussion of this ongoing, collaborative data analysis.

The Student Interns Becoming Social Constructionists

Participatory action research is social constructionist in its epistemology. Rather than perceiving the social world as solid and immutable, PAR assumes that people in social groups co-construct their local reality through their ongoing social exchanges, discourse, and actions—with the implication, crucially, that this reality is constantly evolving and open to change. Accordingly, PAR aims to engage its informants in new ways of seeing the familiar, prompting them to view reality in the social realm under study as constructed through the understandings, practices, and social interactions of its participants—a reality amenable to reflection, evaluation, and possible re-orientation.

In our work with the student interns during the weekly class, we followed this social constructionist approach. We asked the interns to map out, both visually and conceptually the social environment of their worksites (using the diagram presented in Appendix A). We also encouraged the interns to ‘read’ situations, events, and behaviours in their worksites from multiple perspectives—their own, a co-worker’s, a supervisor’s, a client’s. As well, we asked the interns to situate themselves and their experiences within these social mappings, as positioned both within their immediate local web of relationships and within the larger social structures of the work unit, the organizational culture, and American society.

At the same time, we discussed the notion of written genres as forms of social action and sites for textually mediated activity. To make these concepts more tangible, we asked the interns each to focus on a particular written genre in his or her worksite and to look at how texts in this genre are produced, distributed, read, and used. As the interns reported back on different aspects of this research, we worked towards an understanding of how a genre can serve to align the attention and

expertise of co-workers, coordinating their efforts in accomplishing specific kinds of work, and, more broadly, towards a sense of how a genre contributes to the social construction of the workplace.

We also came to see, though the interns' accounts of specific situations, the interplay between the written genres in a worksite and other activity-mediating material, social, and symbolic tools. Among such tools were the following: softwares and collaborative routines used jointly in the production of end-user documentation; digital devices for recording and transcribing interviews with subject-matter specialists; computer codes in softwares used to build websites that combine textual and graphic elements; conference rooms and recurrent social interactions employed in the collaborative review of texts-in-progress; museum display cases for presenting artwork and interpretive texts; funding agency websites accessed for guidelines and illustrative models by writers preparing grant proposals; and softwares providing on-line tutorials for learning to use other technologies.

The Interns Generating and Applying Knowledge

A key goal of participatory action research is to generate a particular kind of knowledge about the social world(s) under study. Avoiding the narrow form of empiricism that aims to produce objective descriptions of reality, PAR focuses instead on people's subjective experiences of the material, social, discursive, and political aspects of their life-world. Sharing perceptions and interpretations, the informants in a PAR research project collaborate in developing theories about the nature of their lived reality as discerned in practices of work, communication, and social organization. At the same time, the informants are encouraged to cultivate self-reflexivity in examining their own understandings, values, actions, and social identities.

Knowledge production in participatory action research is recursive. Since PAR informants continue to participate in the particular social environment under study during a research project, they are able to apply newly-acquired knowledge, both about their social environments and about themselves, with the experiences that ensue becoming additional data for analysis.

The focus in the weekly class was on the interns' sharing of observations, questionings, and achieved understandings regarding specific situations in their worksites, as well as on their own actions in response to these situations. While part of this collaborative meaning-making involved pointing out differences from one worksite to another, it also frequently involved identifying patterns that appeared to be consistent across the different worksites, leading to what we might think of as 'working theories' about the place and functions of writing in these worksites and about the interns' experiences as writers operating within the sites.¹³ The evolving heuristic model used as a research tool, mentioned in an earlier section (see Appendix A), gave us a common visual/conceptual space for accomplishing this theorizing. As the weeks went by and we discussed the interns' increasingly detailed accounts and progressively more sophisticated understandings of what was occurring in their worksites, this knowledge was constituted in a shared discourse that enriched our collaborative data analysis.

One instance of this generation and application of knowledge was our observation of how the distributed cognition, or 'intelligence' (Pea, 1993), that is embedded in certain cultural tools can be accessed by writers attempting to produce unfamiliar written genres. A case in point was the experience of an intern working as a technical writer in a high-tech firm whose major product is a search engine sold to other organizations for use in managing large automated databases. Mark's assignment during his internship was to collaborate in the production of user documentation for a new version of the search engine. While he could at times confer with co-workers in the Documentation Department and had some access to engineers and programmers in the Research & Development Department, he also recognized the potential for tapping into the distributed cognition available in cultural tools such as texts. For example, Mark drew on the 'foundation notes' for the project he was involved in—a detailed written record of the weekly project meetings of managers and staff from Documentation and Research & Development. This record—a form of inscribed organizational memory—included transcripts of all the meetings, which had been tape-recorded, as well as copies of any documents or diagrams that had been discussed in the meetings. When Mark heard about the foundation notes early on in his internship, he decided to read

through the entire account from the beginning of the project, which had already been in progress for a year when his internship began. The historical record of technical information, discussions, and decisions that he garnered from the foundation notes proved to be invaluable to Mark in his work on the production of user documentation for the firm's search engine.

Following our discussion in class of Mark's initiative, other student interns made similar discoveries in their own worksites and were able to access distributed cognition embedded in various texts and other cultural tools that helped them in producing new written genres. Examples of texts and other tools that the interns found useful in this way were in-house style guides, websites, policy and procedures manuals, memos, minutes of meetings, web-based document templates, annual reports, newsletters, online tutorials for software users, and previous samples of texts in genres the interns were themselves producing.

The Interns Taking a Critical Stance

Participatory action research takes a decidedly critical perspective on the social world. Informants in PAR are provided with a set of concepts to help them to recognize— and, significantly, also to theorize—the presence and uses of power in the discourses, practices, and relations connecting people in their social environment. Similarly, PAR attempts to reveal the political dimensions of expert knowledge, which is viewed as a potential instrument of power and control. Further, the informants in PAR are prompted to take a broad perspective on the social landscape and to reflect on how their immediate experiences are linked to larger social structures—that is, on how the local and the global are connected—and to question these structures where they appear unfair or oppressive.¹⁴

And in all of this, PAR focuses on the issue of individual agency, both examining constraints on the informants and exploring the options for action available to them.

We regularly did explicit critical work with the student interns in our weekly meetings. For example, we talked about issues of power related to organizational hierarchies, employee roles, and expert knowledge, as well as how this manifested itself in social interactions among co-workers and materially in the physical layout of their worksites and in access to desk space,

high-performance computers, and even parking spaces. We also discussed the possibilities for seeking out important writing tasks (as opposed to repeated envelope-stuffing, for example, as in the case of one intern) because of the potential gains in learning at stake, and for advocating the use of rhetorically sound writing practices within the worksite as an opportunity to apply their professional expertise.

At times we prompted the student interns to negotiate with co-workers in their host organizations, tactfully but firmly, regarding issues such as these: the interns' roles as professionals—for example, being allowed to participate fully in project teams, where their abilities merited this, rather than being unfairly marginalized; appropriate recognition and credit for their work; the wish to use rhetorically sound writing practices; opportunities for needed technology training; and safety from exploitation or harassment (instances of the latter were rare but did occur). In such cases, we encouraged the interns to question the status quo in their worksites when this appeared to be irrational, unfair, or unduly constraining—although actually the interns generally needed little if any prompting in this regard—and we coached them in developing and communicating contextually informed and tactful critiques. At the same time, however, we discussed situations in which the interns themselves needed to take on responsibility for learning more about the history and motives of certain practices in their worksites and for improving their situations through more skilful attitudes and social interactions.

We also encouraged debate about the educational experience that the student interns were getting in the Professional Writing major—whether this experience was what they wanted it to be and, where it was not, what changes they would like to see. We encouraged the interns to critique the major in light of perceived differences between writing-related tasks taken on in their worksites and the corresponding 'school version' of these tasks. Two examples here are conducting research and participating in collaborative writing projects: In both cases, the reality that the interns reported encountering in their worksites was significantly different and more complex than similar activities in their courses.

The interns also identified another major difference between writing in school and in their worksites: the memos,

proposals, progress reports, research reports, computer documentation, and so on that the interns observed and were sometimes asked to produce in their worksites often looked quite different from the versions of these genres they had been taught in their Professional Writing courses. At first, this perceived mismatch between school genres and the corresponding workplace genres led some of the interns to express feelings of insecurity about their seeming lack of preparedness for the workplace. This prompted discussion in our weekly meetings about the variability of written genres in different settings and also about the reasons that academic course work is organized the way it is.

The Interns Transforming Their Social Reality

Ultimately, participatory action research is transformative in intention: Its fundamental motive in investigating the status quo in a particular social realm is to achieve positive change. The larger aim is to help the informants in PAR free themselves from irrational, unproductive, or unfair constraints inherent in established discourses, modes of work, and social relations. This change occurs as the informants, equipped with newly acquired knowledge, self-awareness, and social strategies, enact their individual agency in ways that allow them to behave more effectively in specific situations and that also lead to permanent gains in personal growth as social actors. At the same time, the hope is that the informants' interactions with others in their environment will bring about more equitable social relations on a broader scale.

In our study, many of the student interns were successful in taking ownership of their findings as they used the knowledge gained from the study to institute constructive change, both in their own professional identities and in the social environments of their worksites. At the beginning, our weekly class meetings were the occasion for a fair amount of complaining, as the interns, quite predictably, went through an uncomfortable period of disorientation in their new worksites.¹⁵ However, after a week or two, we began to challenge the interns to find creative solutions for the problems they were encountering. More often than not they were able to do this, and frequently the solutions involved changes in their own behaviour and in their interactions with co-workers. These experiences

often led the interns to articulate new working theories about the social realities of their worksites, theories that linked their immediate local experiences to the broader social structures of the American workplace.

One of the course assignments, a three-page analytical report, focused directly on the themes of problem-solving and social transformation. In the assignment the student interns were asked, as a first step, to analyze how change appears to occur in their particular worksite, and then, with this analysis in mind, to describe one or more writing-related innovations that they had introduced (or thought they could have introduced) to the host organization.¹⁶ The outcomes from the assignment were discussed in our weekly meetings.

We would like to present a particular episode in one student intern's work experience as a fairly dramatic example of how the interns were able, in certain circumstances, to transform the social realities of their worksites in positive ways. This is the case of Martha, an intern who worked as a technical writer with ManageWell, a company that specializes in creating computer-run productivity tools for organizations and in providing related training in using these tools.¹⁷ By the end of her internship, Martha's sense of herself as a professional writer—her 'knowledgeably skilled identity', to use Lave and Wenger's (1991) insightful phrase—had grown considerably. As Martha describes it,

I didn't know anything when I started at ManageWell. I was just a student intern; my name was Martha Smith, JAI: 'Just an Intern' I had to figure out a lot of different things But by the end of my internship, though, people were coming to me when they had questions about the documentation or even about the software itself. And that made me feel really good I eventually got to where I felt like I was really part of the team So by the end, it was different—it was like being, well, like being a real tech writer.

A key event in this development of professional identity occurred when Martha found herself in a very difficult situation, one in which she felt compelled to defend her ownership of a

piece of work she had done. Martha describes the incident:

I was doing a set of PowerPoints and uploading them to the server for our virtual classroom. And I did 16 of them in one night, because they needed to be done the next day for a training session, and I got [the instructional material] late. So I did [the 16 Power-Points], and I was up until 5:00 a.m. And the next day, George [Martha's supervisor] called me and said, "Why didn't you get those PowerPoints done." And I said, "I did them all." And he said, "Well, Jack says that he did them." I said, "No, I did them. You go to the server and find out the IP address for the computer that uploaded them." And so he did, and found out it was my computer. So I said, "That's my computer; that's my work."

As Martha explains, the way in which she responded to this situation was very important for her growing sense of herself as a competent professional:

I had to do something about what had happened, though I didn't really know how to go about it. So I just decided to get them together and let them know how I felt. I told George I wanted to see him and Jim—to talk about what had happened. So the next week, we had a meeting: George, Jim—that's George's boss—and me. I told Jim what had happened: that it was my work and that somebody else had been claiming they did it, and that I didn't appreciate that I wanted them to recognize that I do my own work, and I do my work well Now that I have experience dealing with these situations, it's sure to help. I'm much more confident now. I know I can stand up and say, "Hey, you're not going to take credit for this. This is *my* work."

Martha was fully aware of the power relations inherent in this situation: "It's a very delicate situation when you're dealing with bosses and their bosses; you've got to try to let them know

that you're upset, but still treat them with respect." Nevertheless, she was able to assert her own individual agency in a way that positively influenced her sense of herself as a professional, that encouraged other people in her worksite to relate and act differently towards her, and that conceivably might have brought about a lasting change in attitudes towards newcomers in the organization.

The Learning Gained from the Study

We will conclude the chapter with a discussion of the ways in which the participatory action research project resulted in learning for the student interns as well as for the authors. Our perception is that the weekly class meetings and course assignments took on added life, and dramatically so, in the last two years of the study when PAR was employed. PAR allowed us—the interns and the authors together—to create a learning-intensive community. Working collaboratively to define research questions and to collect and analyze data, we succeeded in producing a discourse and particular kind of grounded knowledge, both about the socio-rhetorical activity of the interns' worksites and about the interns' experiences as novices in these sites.

As researchers *and* social actors, the student interns developed sophisticated understandings about the material, symbolic, social, and political aspects of a range of different worksites, along with greater self-reflexive awareness of their own views, judgements, and actions. And with this came the growth of a 'discursive gaze'—the ability to 'read' the discursive dimensions of activity in a worksite from a social and rhetorical perspective and to respond effectively as a writer—a proficiency we hope the interns retain and further develop as they go on in their professional careers as writers. Indeed, our most ambitious hope for the interns is that they become the 'reflective practitioners' of Donald Schön (1983), writers capable of "reflection-in-action," able to generate and apply local working theories in the midst of their practice (p. 49).

Their experience with participatory action research also encouraged the student interns to see themselves as active agents responsible for managing the process of applying what they have learned in the Professional Writing major and in their internships

to their experiences in future worksites. In providing a space for the interns to reflect upon the relationship between academic learning and workplace practice, the interns' participation in the study has, we hope, better prepared them for the continuous learning that will be required of them during their professional careers as they work within constantly changing worksites and, in some cases, move among a succession of jobs and work environments.

Finally, and directly relevant to the theme of this volume, the student interns learned a great deal about the nature of workplace genres as recurrent, textually mediated forms of social action. As noted earlier, the interns came to recognize the variability of written genres such as reports, proposals, and computer documentation, with different worksites having their own local variations on these genres. The interns were also able to see that genres typically display a certain plasticity, open to innovation from one instance of the genre to another. As well, and this was very significant, the interns gained a strong sense of how genres serve to accomplish work—how the activity of planning, producing, and using documents enables co-workers to discuss issues, negotiate positions, make decisions, and develop relationships. And most importantly, over the course of the semester the interns came to see themselves as competent practitioners able to enact expert writing practices in these genres.

We, the authors, also learned a great deal from the study. In a very real sense, everything we have mentioned in the paragraphs above regarding the gains in learning for the student interns holds for us as well. We too learned much about the practice of research, about the ways in which professional identities and sites of work are socially constructed, about the application of school-acquired abilities to the workplace, and about the forms and functions of written genres (see Smart & Brown, 2002). Regarding participatory action research specifically, we learned the benefits of seeing research informants as collaborators and as potential agents of positive change, both in themselves and in their social worlds. As well, we recognized the gains to be realized from integrating our teaching and our research. As with the student interns, our most ambitious hope for ourselves is that the experience has moved us towards becoming more reflective practitioners, both as

researchers and as teachers.

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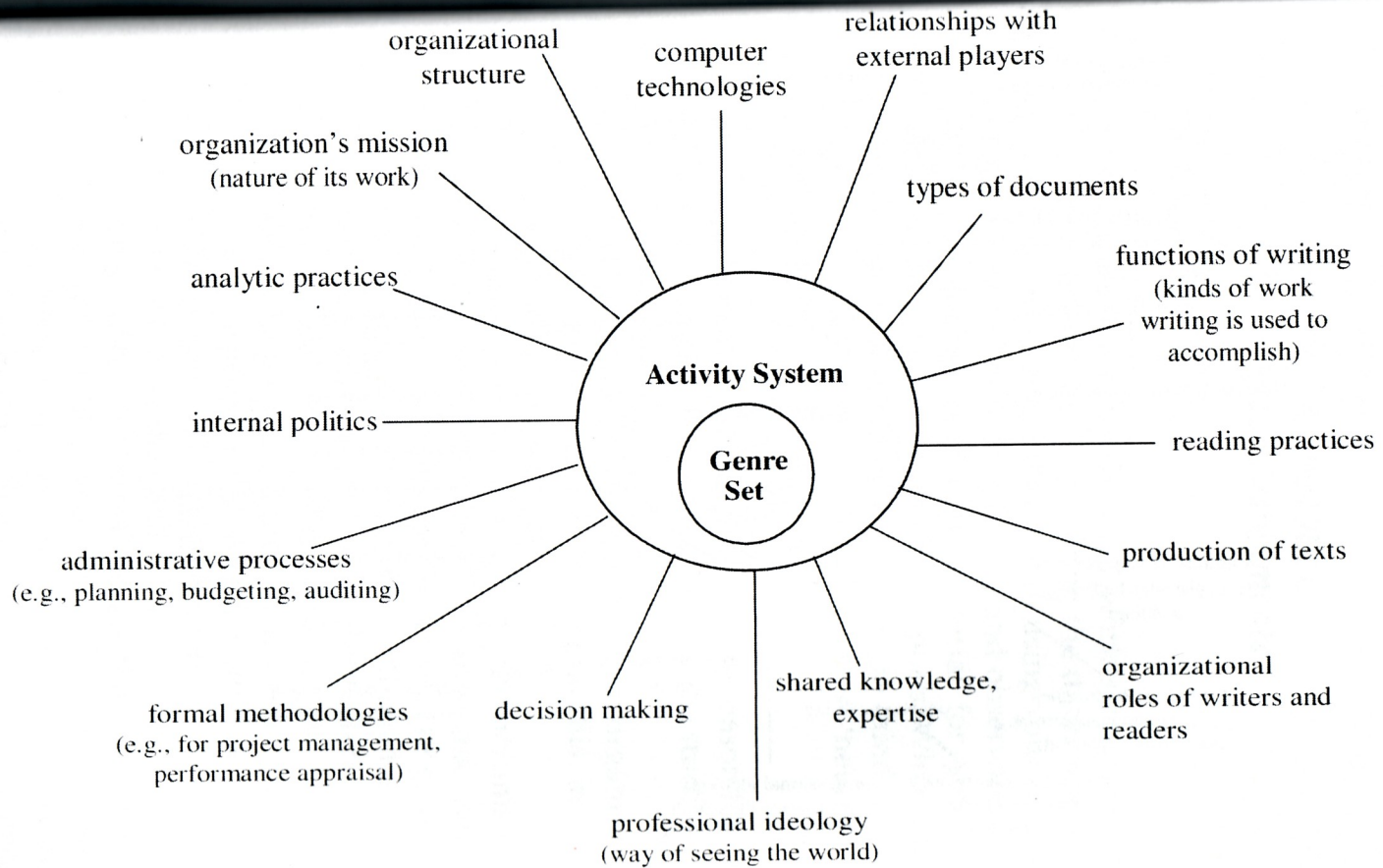
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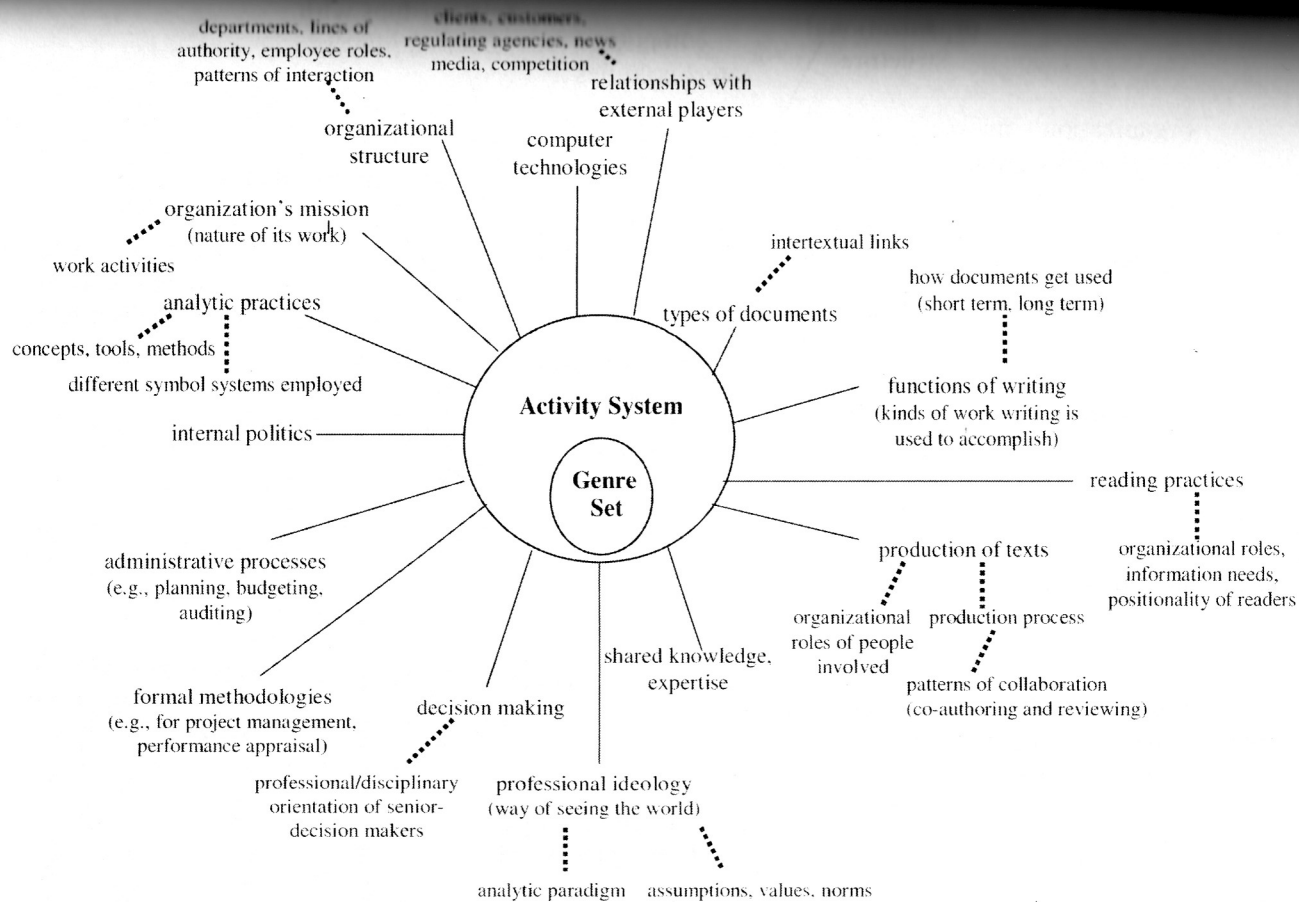
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APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

Course Assignments

Work Journal

Make at least one entry for each work session that you spend in your worksite. After noting the date, write freely on what you experienced that day. In using your journal as an ongoing record of your activities and observations, you will be developing some basic material for your three written reports and one of your oral reports. While you are free to write about anything that comes to mind, you may wish to use the set of points below as a 'heuristic' for generating ideas:

The work you did that day, and the reason for doing it (this would provide you with a good starting point for each entry).

Anything you learned about the organization's overall

mission and, following from this, its various business functions/activities.

Anything you learned about the organizational structure (e.g., divisions, departments, sections, units) and the various employee roles (e.g., director, vice-president for marketing, financial analyst, personnel administrator, city editor, clerks).

The different types of documents you see or hear about; the process for producing each type of document (the people involved, the nature of the writing activity); and the intended readers for the document and the way(s) they will use it.

Aspects of organizational culture that you observe, as well as any influence of this culture on the production, content, design, and/or use of a particular document or any influence on writing in general.

The influence of a document or set of documents, or of writing in general, on the organizational culture.

Any problems, obstacles, or difficulties you encountered.

Any insights you think you may have gained about professional writing in general.

Any other observations that strike you as significant.

Oral Report: *Description of worksite and document(s)*

For this report you will bring to class one or more documents that you have produced in your worksite. Having provided some context on your worksite, you will describe each document and explain how it is produced and how it is used. The reports are scheduled for January 22.

Written Report #1: *An analysis of the culture of your organization and an account of your strategies of social integration*

In this report you will analyze the culture of the organization in which you are interning, focusing on those aspects of the culture that are most significant for your work as a writer. Your analysis should touch on (though it could certainly go beyond) elements of organizational culture that we have discussed in our weekly meetings. You will also describe how you have accommodated your work behaviour and writing to the social realities encountered in your organization. The report should be 3-4 pages in

length (single-typed in Times 12 font, with two spaces between paragraphs and the effective use of headings and white space). It is due on March 1.

Written Report #2: *An analysis of processes of change and strategies for social innovation*

In this report you will discuss how change appears to happen in your organization, providing several specific examples. You will also describe one or more writing-related innovations that you have introduced (or think you could introduce) to the organization. The report should be 3-4 pages long. It is due on April 5.

Written Report #3: *A reflection on your internship experience*

In this report you will reflect on what you have learned during your internship about the interplay of writing and organizational culture. You might also wish to speculate on aspects of professional writing in general. The report should be 2-3 pages in length (single-typed in Times 12 font, with two spaces between paragraphs and the effective use of headings and white space). It is due on April 26.

¹We dedicate this chapter to our research collaborators: Kate Brisbane, Amy Brown, Jessica Burdge, Laura Cascella, Alicia Cray, Jillian Fairchild, Matt Francois, Megan Graves, Susan Hazel, Jeff Heiliger, Jean Hurley, Sarah Johnson, Steve Lopes, Rachel Mack, Carmen Morrissey, Kristi Newhouse, Shivaun Owen, Jessi Petrelli, Misti Pinter, Vanessa Renderman, Lauren Scharnak, Melissa Scurlock, Samantha Topliffe, and Erika Watkins.

2

In coining the term 'discursive gaze', we are playing off Michel Foucault's (1973) concept of the 'clinical gaze' in his book, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

3

The various genres employed by the members of a professional organization can be viewed as a "genre set" functioning as a provisionally stable discursive system for creating, negotiating, circulating, and applying specialized knowledge (Bazerman, 1994; Bhatia, 2004; Devitt, 2004; Paré, 2000; Smart, in press; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002).

4

Donald Schön's work in the early 1980s is a strikingly prescient precursor

to later scholarship in North America and Scandinavia on activity theory and situated cognition.

⁵ A growing number of U.S. universities offer specialized undergraduate and graduate programs in Professional Writing (also referred to as *Technical Writing* or *Technical Communication*). Most frequently these programs have the status of a major in a university's English department, although in a few cases they are sited in other departments or schools such as Engineering or Agriculture.

⁶ The impetus for this second and more intensive stage of the study, in which the methodology of participatory action research was employed, was a university research grant that one of the authors received.

⁷ In attaining approval from the university's human subjects review board to go ahead with the research project, we needed to demonstrate to the board that a student's decision on whether or not to participate in the project would in no way jeopardize his or her grade for the course.⁸ We should note here that we communicated continuously with each of the host organizations about the research project and its goals. We wanted to be as transparent as possible about our intentions.

⁹ In this chapter, we employ the term ethnography in a more specific way than it is sometimes used—as a synonym for qualitative research. We use the term to refer to a particular approach to qualitative research, originating in anthropology and taken up in other disciplines, in which a researcher enters a social group as a participant-observer and through extended experience lasting months or years explores, interprets, and produces an insider's account of the shared meanings that constitute the life-world constructed and inhabited by the group (Adler & Adler, 1987; Agar, 1980, 1986; Atkinson, 1992; Denzin, 1997, 1999; Geertz, 1973, 1983; Hammersley, 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Van Maanen, 1979, 1988, 1995).

¹⁰ The student interns read a chapter on ethnography from Mary Sue MacNealy's *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing* (1998).

¹¹ The diagrams shown in Appendix A and Appendix B are very similar but not identical to the diagrams we used with the student interns. The construction of the model depicted in Appendix A was based on concepts from genre theory and activity theory, on the experience of the first two years of our study, on empirical findings reported in the literature on workplace writing, and on the authors' experiences as writing consultants. We certainly would not claim that this model functions as a template applicable to all worksites; rather, we offer it as an example of a theory-based heuristic for examining writing in workplace settings. Some researchers may find aspects of the model useful in their own efforts to study writing in particular sites, while others perhaps may find the model suggestive in thinking about how they might employ different theories to serve a similar purpose.

¹² In addition to the data produced by the student interns, one of the authors

took field-notes at the weekly class meetings, and we conducted interviews with eight interns as well as with the contact persons in their respective host organizations. As much as possible, these data were shared with the interns for analysis.

¹³ These ‘working theories’ might be seen as similar to the local theories that, in Clifford Geertz’s (1973) words, “hover over” the account produced through an ethnographic study (p. 25). In this respect, they are also similar to Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser’s “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

¹⁴ Much interesting work along these lines had been done by Dorothy Smith and other researchers using her “institutional ethnography” approach. See, for example, Smith (1999, 2005) and Campbell & Gregor (2004).

¹⁵

Several previous studies have described the initial anxiety and frustration that student interns typically experience. See, for example, Anson & Forsberg (1990) and Gaitens (2000).

¹⁶ We are indebted to Marjorie Rush-Hovde and Gail Porter for creating an earlier version of this assignment.

¹⁷ The name of the student intern, the names of her co-workers, and the company’s name are pseudonyms.