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**Becoming a Rhetor:
The Development of On-the-job Writing Ability
in Ten Recently Graduated Knowledge Workers**

by

Jamie MacKinnon

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
May 1992

c 1992
Jamie MacKinnon

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Becoming a Rhetor: The Development of On-the-job Writing Ability
in Ten Recently Graduated Knowledge Workers

submitted by Jamie MacKinnon, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

In a naturalistic, qualitative study of the development of on-the-job writing ability, a comparison was made of the writing and the writing-related knowledge of ten university-educated "knowledge-workers" at two points in time: shortly after the participants started their jobs, and again, 10-20 months later. The participants appeared to develop in four major areas: their writing-related attitudes and beliefs, their writing processes, their knowledge of the organizational context for their writing, and the acceptability and usefulness of the documents they wrote. Development appeared to be sparked by the nature of the writing demands placed upon the participants, by the feedback they received on their writing, and by the participants' growing sense of becoming members of a work community. The study has implications for writing theorists and researchers, for writing instructors in universities and workplaces, for employees newly hired in "writing-intensive" jobs, and for people who supervise on-the-job writing.

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1. Introduction: The raison d'être of the study

While a good deal of research has been done on the development of writing ability in schoolchildren (e.g., Britton et al. 1975, Bereiter 1980), little is known about the development of writing ability in educated, working adults. Recently, a few researchers have discovered that people who write as part of their work believe that they do learn a good deal about writing through experience, and that this on-the-job experience is valued more highly than other factors such as writing courses or training in school (Brown 1988; Anderson 1985).

What then might be the nature of this learning, of the changes which add up to what the writers themselves believe to be significant development in their writing ability? This question was the impetus for a longitudinal investigation of the development of writing ability in ten "knowledge workers," recently graduated from university, and recently hired in a workplace. The investigation was an attempt to provide provisional answers to two questions. First, what writing-related knowledge, if any, do highly-educated employees acquire in the first ten to twenty months on the job in a large, "writing-intensive" organization? Second, how do they learn what they learn? These questions in turn suggested a host of lower-level questions about the role of attitudes and beliefs in developing on-the-job writing ability, about the effect a growing understanding of the organizational context might have on writing, about factors which might impede or promote writing-related learning, and so on. The investigation was also an attempt to provide a tentative answer to a third, higher-level question: How best to characterize and interpret the learning process and the knowledge gained?

The questions outlined here had grown in the mind of the researcher over the course of several years' teaching of writing in a business setting. Observation had led the researcher to believe that even without formal training, many employees do develop writing ability on the job. This development, the researcher believed, was manifest in several ways: increased ability to meet given audiences' expectations and requirements; more efficient production of formulaic genre writing; and increased ability to use writing to achieve a wider variety of purposes, both personal and corporate.

If educated adults do develop their writing ability as they write in the workplace, an understanding of the developmental process -- what sparks it, what fosters and enables it, what it entails, and what differences increased writing ability might make in the life of the writer/worker -- would be of interest to a number of people. There are obvious practical implications for teachers and trainers. For teachers in schools and universities, knowing how students may continue to develop writing ability after they graduate would prove important for instructional theory. For writing trainers and consultants in the workplace, a better understanding of the developmental process would have implications for theory and pedagogy. For employees newly hired into a writing-intensive workplace, it might prove useful to understand some of the changes and accommodations often required of employee-writers in a new business setting. For business managers, there are "mentoring" and human resource development implications. Finally, a better understanding, even a provisional one, of how adult knowledge workers develop writing ability on the job would

also help composition theorists and researchers as they try to draw a more comprehensive picture of nonacademic writing and of development outside school settings.

This thesis describes an investigation into the questions outlined above, provides some tentative answers to the questions posed, and attempts to interpret the findings from a "social-cognitive" and a rhetorical perspective.

To locate and contextualize this study, we will first survey some relevant theory and empirical research.

2. The Context: A review of some relevant literature

Introduction: The multidisciplinary study of writing

Although the questions at the heart of this study appear not to have been previously addressed, a good deal of literature is relevant in providing a general context. Much of this literature comes from a field which has different names, e.g., "composition," "writing studies," as well as diverse roots,¹ e.g., "rhetoric," "applied linguistics," and "communication studies." To further complicate the picture, a good deal of theory, method and research literature of interest to the "writing studies" community comes from other disciplines: literary theory, philosophy (especially epistemology), anthropology, adult education, psychology, and sociology.

The increasingly inter-disciplinary study of writing is likely a response to the nature of writing itself. Because writing is a highly complex activity -- perhaps the most difficult and complex cognitive activity humans commonly engage in -- no single viewpoint or discipline has been able to provide an adequate, fully encompassing, theoretical account. Writing is not only enormously complex, it is also arguably the most important means of creating and disseminating knowledge in the modern world. Writing enables the creation of knowledge, and helps put this knowledge in the realm of falsifiability, an important consideration in many disciplines. It is one of the most useful,

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¹ For insight into how the intellectual roots and ancestry of writing studies have shifted in the past two decades, see Freedman and Pringle (1980), "Epilogue: Re-inventing the Rhetorical Tradition."

profound, and universal symbolizing activities.

For a number of reasons, including its importance in archiving knowledge, and its role in promulgating law, regulating commerce and codifying religion, writing has always held an interest for scholars. Writing held special interest for philosophers in Periclean Greece, for Roman rhetoricians, for Christian theologians, and for a variety of scholars in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century philosophers. Now more than ever, writing is being examined and discussed in academic circles. Reasons for this include: "post-structural" theories of language, the growing interest in method and epistemology in philosophy and other disciplines, the interest in remediation of writing ability in universities, and the recent understanding of writing as a complex symbolizing activity, which is both deeply personal and yet embedded in communities with historical traditions and shared experiences.

Interest in writing has grown especially in the last twenty years. In the 1960s, curiosity about and research on *how* people go about writing marked the start of the "process" movement, the effect of which was a significant change of perspective, from writing as artefact to writing as a complex activity. An extraordinary variety of areas considered worthy of study have come into play, many of them now virtually sub-disciplines of the writing studies field: genre theory, "nonacademic writing," etc.

At the same time, a growing use of methods and knowledge from other disciplines -- literary theory, literacy studies, reading theory, neuropsychology, anthropology, applied linguistics -- began to inform the study of writing. The

different perspectives and assumptions of these domains have also tended to give us a variegated, heterogenous picture of writing rather than a seamless, simple and unified view. In short, our present knowledge of writing is likely deeper, richer and broader than it was twenty years ago; it is also marked by less unanimity and fewer "simple truths."

Consequently, the literature summarized and referred to in this section is eclectic in provenance. Because no studies have been done on the development of writing ability in university-educated adults, no literature (research or theory) directly addresses the questions posed by this study. Indeed, and surprisingly, even "development" is yet to come into its own as a sub-topic of writing studies, at least in a formal sense. In Hillocks Junior's 1986 summary of writing research, *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching*, "development" does not even rate a place in the index, although research on development is discussed in passing. Much of this section should therefore be seen as useful in providing a *general* context for the study.

The section has been broken into seven subsections. Because the most relevant literature comes from different disciplines, many of the topics do not neatly dovetail. The subsections are: (1) the development of writing ability and the concept of "rhetorical maturity" (definitions and problems with definitions); (2) the development of writing ability in children and adolescents; (3) adult learning theory, adult cognitive development, and "social cognition"; (4) the writing process; (5) attitudes and beliefs about writing; (6) writing in "nonacademic" settings; and (7) aspects of rhetorical theory.

The development of writing ability: "rhetorical maturity"

Perhaps we should begin by posing a question: What is "development"? Development denotes change, and connotes improvement. Beyond this, we are in murkier waters. Defining the development of writing ability is highly problematic. When we look at the what, the how, and the why of change in a writer or in a writing population, we are perforce engaged in ideology and philosophy. To simplify and point to only one major philosophic "divide": in the literature on writing ability development, there are "vitalist" (or "romantic") and "behaviourist" biases, reflecting at times the rationalist-empiricist split in philosophy. To complicate the matter, these biases are often hidden from view in the literature, especially literature on development.

Another kind of problem exists in drawing from a literature which ranges widely in kind: from philosophical to empirical, from hypotheses and models to empirical studies, and from general patterns to specific aspects. Yet another problem is the problem of *time* in development: "we do not know whether 'time' in such discussions would mean number of years or frequency and duration of practice" (Miller 1980, 120).

What is lacking then, is a powerful general model of development (Miller 119) which might give us a clear notion of *what* writers of various ages abilities learn, and of *how* they learn it. Given the seriousness of these problems, researchers interested in development may sometimes wish they had a framework of unified development theory, and with aspects of development neatly categorized and ordered. Such a framework does not yet exist. Nor,

surprisingly, does a widely accepted definition of "development of writing ability." Recently, however, at least two theorists have looked at what it might mean to be "rhetorically mature."

Susan Miller's "Rhetorical Maturity: Definition and Development" (1980) emphasizes the importance of working toward a definition of rhetorical maturity broader than that which is applied (or implied) in scholastic writing. "We still have no agreed-upon definition of what it means to be an able adult writer and no accepted model of how such ability is acquired during post-adolescent maturation" (119). So, "since no model for the evolution of the normal, healthy, maturing, proficient writer now exists" (119), no one can be sure that a given pedagogical technique is appropriate to "a particular stage in the development of a proficient writer" (119).

Miller proposes her own definition of rhetorical maturity. It involves an ability

to solve increasingly complicated problems. And conceptual maturity -- what might be called cognitive or inventive maturity -- is not the only addition to syntactic facility or control of surface features that would complete a model of fully-developed writing ability. Able writers also communicate effectively to a larger variety of more or less immediate audiences. . . . They are adept in a number of writing situations, and write effectively under various formal, temporal and political constraints. In sum, they are . . . able to identify and respond to the various demands . . . that many writing situations create. . . . [P]roficiency [is] an ability to effectively vary perspectives on many writing tasks. . . . [T]he mark of an able writer comes to be *virtuosity*: not some product-related quality of the writer's prose, but the ability to write with varying degrees of authority and varying senses of an audience's knowledge (120).

Miller's definition, then, assumes that "syntactic facility," conceptual or

cognitive maturity, and contextual responsiveness are key elements of rhetorical maturity, which is seen largely as "virtuosity." Miller's definition seems to suffer from abstraction and acontextuality. It also seems unrealistic: one wonders how many able adult writers, even professional writers, are "fully developed" virtuoso writers. If few are, and "fully developed" or "mature" is only a notional *telos* of the model, then what questions does the model leave unanswered? If able writers are adept in only some (i.e., "a number of") situations, or only some of the time, why?

Lee Odell acknowledges this problem in "Redefining maturity in writing" (1983) when he writes "our definition may have to vary according to the kind of writing one is doing (107). A "writer's performance can vary widely from task to task. People who write with some maturity in one context may not do so in other contexts" (105). Odell also recognizes that while rhetorical maturity is *generally* marked by increased decentration (i.e., less egocentrism, more other-orientation), "egocentrism appears to have its uses. Even very mature writers may, at some point in the composing process, find it helpful to be egocentric" (112).

Overall, then, the notion of "rhetorical maturity" appears a highly problematic one. Writers may be mature only in a local and contingent sense. This view of maturity implies a highly contextualized view of development, a view this study will support. Of course, understanding "rhetorical maturity" as a more of a conceit or a notion than an actuality makes the process of development itself problematic.

The development of writing ability in children and adolescents

Almost all of the research and theoretical literature on writing development focuses on students: children or adolescents in a school setting. Although the school setting, as well as the age of students, limit the relevance of this literature for the present study, we think it useful to summarize some of this literature, partly to provide a sounding board for the interpretation of this study's findings, and partly following "the cognitive-developmental belief that one of the most fruitful ways to understand any mature mental activity is to study the ontogenesis of that process in the child" (Barritt & Kroll 1978). (Equally relevant to this study, perhaps, is the obverse side of the coin: the more we know about adult writing development, the better we will be able to understand and contextualize child and adolescent writing development.)

We must caution, however, that the literature on the development of writing ability in children is problematic (to say the least) in the context of this study for two reasons. First, the context of development for the two groups is markedly different in almost every regard. The setting, the taskmaster, the motivation, the level of cognitive and social acuity, and the degree of world knowledge are all different for school children and adult professionals. Second, it would seem likely that writing development in children is more closely tied to "general" gains in cognitive, social, moral and motor-skill development than it is in adults. At the very least, we can safely say that children develop writing ability at a time of significant and rapid gains in cognitive, social, moral and motor-skill development, while such development in adults is less dramatic.

A final caution: no universally accepted model of written language development in children yet exists. Although a good deal of study of the development of child and adolescent writing ability has been done in the past thirty years, the picture is far from complete. "There have been few detailed longitudinal . . . studies, so that analyses in terms of developmental stages tend to be very general or anecdotal" (Crystal 255).

Piaget and Vygotsky

Much of the literature on the development of children's writing ability is explicitly or implicitly rooted in Piagetian and Vygotskian psychology. Piaget remains a leading light for researchers who are concerned with making sense of writing development in children. Many psychologists continue to consider Piaget's model of cognitive development to be the best, most comprehensive model available.

"Piaget's central interest was in the development of logic, and his main hypothesis was that children are born without the internal mechanisms which allow them to be logical and that they eventually construct these logical mechanisms through their experiences with the world around them" (Bullock and Woodings 596). Generally speaking, Piaget's model of cognitive development is one of successive stages: a 'sensory-motor' stage which ends at about the age of two; a 'pre-operational' stage roughly from the age of two to the age of six; a 'concrete operations' stage, roughly from seven to eleven years of age; and finally, a stage of 'formal operations.' "At each stage, the intellectual structures are unique . . . Stage development is viewed as invariant, but the inter-stage

transition is neither abrupt nor absolute. Rather, each stage is integrated into the structures of the following with a necessity of each stage being present [Piaget, 1972]" (Long, McCrary & Ackerman 12-13).

For students of child writing development, the distinction between 'concrete operations' (the numeration, classification and ordination of "real" objects), and 'formal operations' is an instructive one. Formal operations involves the ability to generate and manipulate propositions, and thus allow a person to imagine *possibilities* and to ideate more powerfully. Significant too, for writing theorists, is Piaget's notion that 'disequilibrium' -- resulting from the discovery that the child "believes two or more contradictory things about the same event" (Bullock & Woodings 597) -- leads the child to develop new intellectual structures.

Piaget's understanding of "error" has also influenced our views of children's writing development. For Piaget, errors were more significant than mere breaches of logic or convention; errors were windows "into the mental processes involved in language use." "The fact that a writer has made an error is less significant than how he or she came to make that error" (Barritt & Kroll 53).

Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist who died in 1934, but whose influence continues to grow, is another major influence on language development theory. Unlike Piaget, who stressed the "biologically supported, universal stages of development," Vygotsky emphasized the strong "interaction between changing social conditions and the biological substrata of behaviour" (John-Steiner and

Souberman 123). In other words, Vygotsky was less interested in universal aspects of development than in how various aspects of development emerge as individuals engage their social environment. "Overall, he emphasizes the role of cultural and social factors in the development of cognition" (Bullock & Woodings 793). As we will see, the cultural and social environment also has a significant role in the development of adult on-the-job writing ability.

Vygotsky thought that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, on two levels: first, on the social, and later on the psychological level; first *between* people as an *interpsychological* category, and then inside the child, as an *intrapsychological* category" (John-Steiner and Souberman 128). For Vygotsky language was one of the most elaborate and important forms of "cultural development"; language development therefore exhibited the profoundly social nature of learning.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in Vygotsky's view, "learning to read and learning to write must be seen as inseparable aspects of *one* process, that of mastering written language" (Britton *Prospect* 1982, 46).

The work of Piaget and Vygotsky contributes much to present views of what characterizes writing development in children. One widely accepted characteristic is that of a general progression from egocentric or writer-centred writing to "decentred" or reader-centred writing. "One of the most compelling applications of Piagetian psychology to communication has been the link between egocentrism -- a cognitive state in which a person fails to perceive others' perspectives -- and lack of audience awareness" (Barritt and Kroll 54). A

second widely accepted characteristic of development in children's writing is that of a general progression from concrete here-and-now writing to increasingly "abstract" writing. These progressions may have direct consequences for determining what kind of writing a given writer is capable of handling. Interestingly, egocentrism, lack of audience awareness, and difficulty in some forms of abstracting are not confined to the writing of children, as we will later see. The work of these two theoreticians has also led to some of the contemporary interest in the social contexts of writing, contexts which will also prove important in this study.

Britton, Moffett, Wilkinson & Bereiter

These general progressions, from egocentric orientation to "other" orientation, and from concrete to abstract, are touchstones which are picked up to varying degrees in the relatively recent (1975 and later) work of four major students of writing development in schoolchildren: James Britton, James Moffett, Andrew Wilkinson and Carl Bereiter. Britton, Moffett and Wilkinson are particularly interested in how writing is taught, how it is learned, and in the "context-specific variables" (Miller 120) which affect writing and writing development. Bereiter is most interested in using a cognitive-developmental lens to examine some of the broad, rhetorical and epistemic elements of writing.

James Britton has spent much of his life researching and thinking about language, especially the development of written language skills in schoolchildren. Acknowledging that "long-term studies of the development of writing ability are almost as scarce today as they were when I. A. Richards first pointed out their

importance some forty years ago" (1978, 28). Britton concentrated less on the specifics of the what and the how of development than on what he considered to be the necessary precursor to detailed development research: devising a suitable conceptual apparatus with which to think about the development of writing ability.

Britton has often warned that researchers have often "mistakenly treated writing as a single kind of ability, regardless of differences in the reader for whom it is intended and the purpose it attempts to serve" (1978, 13). He has long insisted that writing is a complex, multi-dimensional activity, and that development research which focuses on measurable features of the written product is wrong-headed for this reason. Britton was one of the first empirical researchers to believe strongly in the importance of *context* to writing and to the development of writing ability. Carl Bereiter says of Britton's work:

One major finding . . . stands out above all the complexities. It is the overriding influence of school demands on student writing. Although there was some evidence of a developmental trend toward writing for a large audience, it was overshadowed by a trend (presumably school-induced) toward writing to the teacher as examiner . . . Thus, the disappointing message of the Schools Council research is that as soon as we begin to look beyond syntax, vocabulary and the like and try to investigate functional aspects of student writing, we begin to find out more about the school system than we find out about children. (Bereiter 76-77)

The present study will show that context also has a critical role to play in the development of *adult* writing ability, a proposition we regard not as "disappointing," but rather as interesting and richly problematic.

Britton saw the development of children's writing ability as the development of a process of 'differentiation,' that is, of an increasing ability to

handle a greater variety of tasks. Britton believed that schoolchildren start from an immature expressive mode (in which the writing stays "close to the speaker" and move to three higher-level modes: transactional (writing to get something done), poetic (language as artefact) and a more mature "expressive" mode.

Development is likely to include an ability to write to a wider variety of audiences and in a wider variety of forms. Significantly, Britton believed that "egocentrism [was] not something to be rooted out, but as part of the normal growth pattern" (Tirrell 168). Britton believed that meaningful research on the development of writing ability should concern itself with changes in the writer's writing process but devoted much of his own effort to developing a taxonomy of function and audience, which he believed was the *sine qua non* of understanding writing development.

We need not look at Britton's taxonomies in detail here, but two ideas may be relevant to this study. First, school-leavers have seldom written much for audiences other than teachers (particularly "teacher as examiner" 190), and perhaps self. They have seldom or never written for what Britton calls "wider audience (known)" or "unknown audience." "Why is it" Britton and his colleagues asked, "that . . . writing for a public audience is virtually restricted to the poetic [mode]?" (192). Second, according to the taxonomy he sets out in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)* (1975) (written by Britton with Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen, and one of the major studies of child writing development), students *theoretically* do a lot of "transactional" writing, principally writing "to inform." However, given the major audience for this writing, the

"teacher as examiner" (175), it would seem that this writing is not really transactional in nature: it is not informative writing for a reader who really needed to be informed, nor is it real instruction or persuasion.

Given the nature of writing in government and business, lack of experience in true transactional writing and in writing for wider and unknown audiences would, according to Britton's perspective, prove to be a significant problem for many newly hired employees as they write in their jobs.

Finally, borrowing from the work of D.W. Harding, Britton has used a powerful metaphor to describe a *role* for the individual in speaking and writing (and reading and listening): that of the spectator and the participant (1982). Simplified quite drastically, Britton's idea was that in all four communicative modes, we can be onlookers or active participants. Britton attaches no pejorative meaning to being an onlooker: it can bring a good deal of pleasure, when, for example we read, without debating, an author. When we read to test our own ideas, or write to persuade others, we play participant roles. Britton implies that people learn and develop in both roles.

Like Britton, James Moffett is interested in the 'natural' process of child language development, and has warned that because of the powerful effects of schooling, the 'natural' process can be difficult to see: "development may be imposed on children: we should know more if textbooks had not prevented teachers from finding out the facts that the textbooks were guessing at" (in Wilkinson et al. 9).

Moffett believes that a key concept in writing development is that of

abstraction. The child's increasing ability to abstract and to deal with higher level abstractions, akin to Piaget's notion of 'decentering,' (59) leads Moffett to posit a progression in written discourse, a progression related to development in abstraction:

1. Recording, the drama of what is happening
  2. Reporting, the narrative of what happened
  3. Generalizing, the exposition of what happens
  4. Theorizing, the argumentation of what will or what may happen
- (47)

Gains in abstraction are accompanied by movement from: "addressing the small known audience like oneself to addressing a distant, unknown, and different audience"; and "talking about present objects and action to . . . things past and potential" (57).

Andrew Wilkinson was one of the first researchers and theorists to wonder if the focus in development studies had been too a-contextual, and thus too narrow: "How can one talk of 'development' unrelated to the social and situational demands made upon the learner . . . We can only begin to look at a development within the writer when we give him an opportunity to carry out these various tasks and see how far he succeeds. Even so we have to accept that we are defining development in terms of the tasks we set; and there is no way out of this dilemma" (Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna & Swan 14). Partly as a consequence of his belief in the importance of context to development, Wilkinson thought that models of language "should be underpinned by a theory of development" (9). The findings of the present study support the notion that the nature of the writing tasks faced by the writer help define the resulting

development; we will argue, however, that this relationship does not present a "dilemma."

Wilkinson argues persuasively for treating writing development as more than a form of cognitive growth. A greater awareness of and ability to articulate *affect*, which Wilkinson linked to continuing growth in the "awareness of others" (152), is for Wilkinson an important dimension of language development. Another aspect of development not well accounted for by the cognitive perspective is that of *moral* development. Wilkinson argues that "if we . . . know more about the characteristics of children's moral thinking as they mature we will be less likely to condemn them for immaturity, and will have a more realistic notion of what constitutes true development" (170). Wilkinson also believes that *stylistic* development, particularly overall organization and appropriateness of register, are best viewed separately from cognitive development.

Like Britton and Moffett, Wilkinson points to more questions than answers in his writing on development. All three have underscored the complexity and contextuality of writing and the development of writing ability.

Carl Bereiter presents a view of writing development which is cognitive-developmental in its roots, and which pays close attention to some of the variables inherent in writing. Among Bereiter's important claims are the following: that writing development is a "normal" or natural process, largely cognitive-developmental in nature, though reflecting moral development and "social cognition"; that the notion of "stages" in development, whether

interpenetrating or discrete, is not a useful one (following Loban); and yet that "movement toward a . . . higher order [system] (in which the important concerns of content and reader can be dealt with) would have to wait until the lower order schemes (of getting 'language onto paper') are sufficiently automatized" (Bereiter 1980 74-90); and finally, that "epistemic writing" is the

culmination of writing development, in that writing comes to be no longer merely a product of thought, but becomes an integral part of thought. . . . As a result, the various skill systems that have been integrated to produce mature writing competence may now be enriched by the cognitive consequences of writing (88).

The notion of "epistemic writing" is important to this study, as is the possibility that writing's 'component' skills may be further enriched or developed as a result of the cognitive consequences of writing. The results of this study, however, problematize the notion of epistemic writing as the "culmination" of development.

With his colleague Marlene Scardamalia, Bereiter also believes that development and "difficulty" depend largely on the task that writers set for themselves: "people for whom writing keeps getting harder are people who keep reformulating the task into one of increasingly complex demands" (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1983 22). As cognitivists, Bereiter and Scardamalia believe that "limited mental capacity" plays a key role in the activity of writing for most writers, and that therefore fostering such cognitive abilities or strategies as "self regulation," "evaluative, diagnostic and remedial capabilities" and "reflective processes" are likely to promote the development of writing ability (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987 249-304).

Theories of adult learning, cognitive development and "social cognition"

Given the cognitive and social differences between adults and children, it would be useful to know a little about the specifics of adults learning.

Unfortunately, not a great deal is known about adult learning and cognitive development, but the researcher thinks it useful first to describe the state of adult learning theory, then to look briefly at some speculation on adult cognitive development, and finally to examine one theoretical aspect of cognitive functioning/ability of relevance to adult writers, "social cognition."

Recently Sharan Merriam assessed "the state of the art of theory building efforts in adult learning" (Merriam 1987, 187). While acknowledging the need for theory, or "a set of interrelated concepts or principles that attempt to explain the phenomenon of adult learning" (188), Merriam is not optimistic about progress to date. "Theory building in adult learning is in its infancy," she writes. "We have attempts, tentative formulations, rather than fully developed theory" (189). Theories fail, according to Merriam, on one of two counts: "the theory is not unique to adults, or it fails to account for all types of learning" (189). This failure may suggest the need for domain-specific theory. Merriam acknowledges that a sound theory may never be found, but she does believe that recent theoretical formulations do contribute "to our understanding of adult learning" (189). Of interest for the present study is Merriam's emphasis on the importance of social roles to adult learning:

None of the theories reviewed define learning in the traditional sense of behavioural change or cognitive functioning, although these dimensions may be present. Rather the theories . . . explicitly or implicitly define learning in conjunction with adult social roles and life situations. To do otherwise would lose what is

most important, perhaps unique, to learning in adulthood. (189)

Merriam provides a workable taxonomy for theories of adult learning: theories based on adult characteristics; theories based on an adult's life situation; and theories based on changes in consciousness. Perhaps the most famous "theory" of adult education based on adult characteristics and on an adult's life situation is "andragogy," a term popularized, though not coined by, Malcolm Knowles. His pedagogically-oriented theory is based on four assumed characteristics of adult learners, three of which are likely relevant: 1) that unlike children, adults have a huge reservoir of experience which is often useful in learning, 2) that adults "become ready to learn something when they experience a need to learn it" (Knowles 44), and 3) that adults want to apply learning immediately, and thus, the learner's orientation is "performance-centered" as opposed to "subject-centered" (44). Knowles has since modified his position, saying now that andragogy and pedagogy do not describe exclusively adult and child learning, but rather "andragogy-pedagogy represent a continuum and that the use of both techniques was appropriate at different times in different situations regardless of the age of the learner" (Merriam 190).

"Since he no longer claims andragogy to be unique to adults, its status as a theory of adult learning is, in Cross's words, 'up in the air' [1981, p. 225]" (Merriam 190). While the field of adult learning is problematic with regards to theory, it does alert us to some of the key variables which contextualize and distinguish adult learning.

The field of adult cognitive development is a recent one. This field,

though speculative, addresses the third part of Merriam's taxonomy: theories regarding changes in adult consciousness. Much of the research into adult cognitive development is Piagetian in inspiration. "The stimulus for increased interest in applying Piagetian concepts to adults was provided in part by adult educators and gerontologists who questioned Piaget's theoretical position that the highest level of cognitive development was achieved by age 15" (Long, McCrary & Ackerman 11). In addition to the desire to build on the base established by Piaget, the 'aging of the population' and the development of geriatrics as a discipline are also likely responsible for the increasing amount of research being done on adult cognitive development.

Perhaps the most interesting possibility from adult cognitive theory, at least in terms of relevance to adult rhetorical development, is a "fifth stage" theory. Drawing on the Piagetian four-stage model of cognitive growth, at least two researchers have posited a fifth stage. The two theories sketched below are highly speculative, but of possible relevance to an understanding of the development of a complex, at least partly cognitive ability, i.e., writing.

In 1973 Klaus F. Riegel proposed a fifth and "final period of cognitive development" (346). Using Hegel as a philosophical underpinning, "especially his *Phenomenology of Mind*, which provides an exceptionally rich source and a distinct model of the development of the individual and society," Riegel tries to bring Piaget full circle. That is, in Piaget's model of cognitive development, maturing humans tend away from the dialectical thinking which marks childhood and "inherently tend to toward equilibrated states"(366). A child's thinking is

marked by contradictions; Piaget's own research, according to Riegel, shows "the dialectic nature of the child's thought" (355). Then, through the processes of accommodation and assimilation, the growing human moves toward "equilibrium" and the contradictions and dialectics are diminished as the individual matures. Riegel would modify and extend Piaget's model by reintroducing dialectical thinking into mature thinking.

Our own modification recognizes dialectic conflicts and contradictions as a fundamental property of thought. In contrast to Piaget, we maintain that at the levels of dialectic operations at maturity, the individual does not necessarily equilibrate these conflicts, but is ready to live with these contradictions; stronger yet, the individual accepts these contradictions as a basic property of thought and creativity. (366)

A different fifth stage was proposed by P.K. Arlin (1975). She

proposed a *problem-finding* stage that can be distinguished from the formal operational stage with its attributed characteristics such as the ability to engage in abstract thinking, to generate hypotheses, and generally to use a hypothetic-deductive approach in problem-solving. She argued that the formal operational stage may form "building blocks for new structures that go beyond those traditionally defined as formal" [p. 602] (Fakouri 472, italics added).

Finally, given Merriam's persuasive observation that much of what is important and unique in adult learning occurs "in conjunction with adult social roles," we will look at a concept which is useful in linking cognitive development to the social context.

The term "social cognition" has recently entered the lexis of some composition researchers. Piché and Roen (1987) refer to Schnatz (1975, 1981) for a definition: "the intuitive or logical representations individuals make of themselves and others" (68). When applied to writing, representations of others

are typically called audience awareness. The term "social cognition" is both an attempt to locate audience awareness within a cognitive-developmental paradigm, and a reminder that "audience awareness" is a form of *knowledge*, and thus can be viewed fruitfully as part of epistemic development.

According to Piché and Roen's review of the literature, there is: a) a "relationship between the development of writing ability and the development of social or personal perceptions, role-taking ability, or, more generally, social cognition" (68-69); and b) a close conceptual link between the capacity for greater differentiation of one's social representations and general communicative ability" (69).

Piché and Roen "believe that social cognitive ability plays a larger role in writing than is revealed by measures of specific adaptation to the particular dispositions of one's readers. We suggest that it extends to more complicated patterns of text or discourse intrinsic conventions as well." (81)

We will draw on the concept of social cognition later, as we look at gains in the writing-related knowledge of writers who are recent university leavers, graduates writing in their first jobs. Employees with greater social cognitive ability may be better positioned to develop on-the-job writing ability more quickly.

The Writing Process

The writing process -- what writers actually do to generate text -- has been a major research focus in the past twenty years. A shift in interest from written products to the writing process has had some far-reaching effects. First,

much of the research has proved invaluable in terms of the practical, pedagogically useful insights it has afforded. Second, because a community of researchers emerged around the notion of "process," the notion of writing as a field amenable to empirical research gained ground. And third, following the emergence of this community and the influence of literary and philosophical theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida, a new notion of writing started to emerge. This notion posits writing as: a) a complex, recursive activity of (often provisional) meaning creation, an epistemological endeavour which creates knowledge first for the writer, and then (in concert with other factors) for readers; and b) an activity occurring in a complex social sphere, a sphere which sees writing as part of a "conversation" (following Burke 1973 110-111) in which other texts, readers, and ambient social forces influence the writer in the act of writing.

This idea of writing challenges the notion of writing as a solitary activity practised by an autonomous writer, of writing as merely the putting down on paper pre-existing thoughts (writing as "transcription" of thought, and thus writing as lacking an epistemic dimension, as merely a means of communication), and of writing as an unproblematic, linear procedure: i.e., think, draft, edit.

What then have we learned about the writing process which might inform the present study? A good deal of research shows writing to be a complex cognitive activity with psychological, neurological and affective dimensions. In addition, it appears that: a) the writing process of effective writers is different from that of ineffective writers (though the individual differences in both groups

may be large); effective writers appear to plan more, and to greater effect than ineffective writers (Pianko 1979), to revise at a higher level and more strategically (Sommers 1980), to be less constrained by prescriptive rules and to have a greater repertoire of strategies to employ (Rose 1985), and to be better able to keep readers in mind when writing and to meet those readers' specific needs (Flower and Hayes 1980); b) the writing process is typically "recursive," that is to say, reflexive or non-linear (e.g., Perl 1980 363-369); and c) the writing process is affected by the function of the writing undertaken (Britton 1978 13-28). It also appears that word-processing technology may not have a significant impact on the writing process. In a review of over forty studies conducted between 1981 and 1988, Gail Hawisher concluded that there were not many consistent gains from word processing. The few gains attributed to word-processing included: "positive attitudes toward writing with computers; fewer mechanical errors; and, for many students, longer pieces of writing. Hopes that word-processing would do more, especially to improve the quality of their writing, were disappointed" (Kantov 63). Finally, the writing process cannot be viewed in isolation from various forms of context: other texts (thus the term "intertextuality"), power relations among writers and readers, the nature of the writing task, the social/organizational setting and forms of social interaction, the tools employed, etc. (e.g., Piazza 1987; Freed and Broadhead 1987).

Much is yet to be learned about the writing process, especially about the effect of the ambient "social context" on various aspects of an individual's writing process, and about how an individual's writing process changes as he or she

faces new writing demands in a new writing environment.

Attitudes and beliefs about writing

One thread investigated in the present study was that of possible change in participant beliefs about writing, and the role that changing beliefs might have in the development of writing ability. This was seen as an important area in an investigation of a group of highly educated writers who were generally quite confident about their writing ability at the start of the study. Specifically, the researcher was interested in: self-confidence; beliefs about the purpose and efficacy of one's written products as well as about the functions of writing in one's environment; attitudes toward and beliefs about collaboration and feedback; and attitudes toward and beliefs about the possibility and desirability of writing development.

Although researchers are beginning to realize that attitude and belief can have a profound effect on cognition (e.g. Voss 1991), we know very little about the relationship of attitude and belief to writing or writing development. To date, most research in this area has focused on the affective domain, particularly "blocking," or "writing apprehension." John A. Daly, in a 1985 essay called "Writing Apprehension," acknowledges that the concept of anxiety or apprehension "taps in only in a very limited way attitudes or beliefs about writing" (65). Daly and his colleagues have therefore tried to widen the theoretical focus to include more than apprehension, to take in the whole domain of attitude and belief.

Daly distinguishes between "dispositional" and "situational" attitudes and

beliefs. "Dispositional attitudes and beliefs are those generalized feelings and perceptions that endure in a relatively consistent fashion over time and across situations" (65). "Situational attitudes and beliefs are transitory feelings closely tied to a particular situation or event" (66). The distinction is useful, and suggests that writers may have a complex, heterogenous parcel of attitudes and beliefs about writing, aspects of which emerge and predominate depending on the task, setting, readership, prior experience, evaluation etc.

One component of "situational" attitudes and beliefs is "perceptions of writing contexts" (the other two components are "responses to the writing situation, and perceived outcomes" [71]). Daly points to the importance of individual perception in the situational context, and links writing attitudes and beliefs to the context in which writing occurs. Much as critics of "readability scales" deplore the idea of reading as a decontextualized event, so Daly insists that attitudes and beliefs must be examined in the complex context in which they arise.

Likewise, Lynn Z. Bloom (1985) takes a similar context-bound approach to understanding writing attitude. "An anxious writer out of context may be neither anxious nor a writer. The fundamental premise of social psychologist Kurt Lewin's classic *Field Theory in Social Science* (1951) is that behaviour is the function of the individual and his or her environment rather than a function of one or the other acting alone" (Bloom 119).

Of particular importance to Bloom, and of interest to the present study, are the *roles* assumed by (and sometimes thrust upon) writers, as well as the

relative support or interference certain social and organizational contexts provide writers.

Case studies . . . reveal the importance of studying writing processes in the relevant contexts . . . Not only are the immediate contexts . . . of paramount importance on the performance of the writer; so are the writer's multiple roles in these contexts. . . . Equally important is the writer's socialization into these roles, which determines how he or she is likely to perform in a given situation. For instance, the intensity with which writer pursues the goals of working on and completing a particular writing task is inevitably influenced by his or her involvement in other roles and commitment to other activities perhaps unrelated to writing. (131)

We can see, then, that theoreticians emphasize the importance of context to a writer's attitudes and beliefs. With this in mind, we will turn to some empirical findings on writing attitudes and beliefs held by working, educated adults. Paul V. Anderson's wide-ranging "What Survey Research Tells Us About Writing at Work" (1985) contains a number of useful findings in this area. Four clusters of findings relevant to the present study are listed below.

1. Most employees who write as part of their job regard writing as very important. Research cited by Anderson puts writing at or near the top of a list of skills needed by various working university graduates. Workers in business, engineering and technical fields believe that writing ability is an important determinant of prospects for advancement. In a 1977 survey of distinguished engineers, for example, "96 percent of the respondents said that the ability to communicate on paper had 'helped' their own advancement, and 89 percent reported that the ability to write is usually an 'important' or 'critical' consideration" for advancement (42).

Attitude to writing may affect whether writing is done at all: "researchers

found that writing apprehension scores constituted a significant predictor of the respondent's answer to the question: "In general, would you rather write or call?" (Anderson 32). Writing apprehension appears to be very widespread among business writers. One study reported that 55 percent of writers surveyed in government and industry "indicated that they approach writing tasks with 'apprehension,' 'reluctance,' 'dread,' or 'downright hate'" (Anderson 66-67).

These findings lend support to Odell and Goswami's 1982 assertion that the "consequences and contexts" of on-the-job writing are substantially different from those of "school-sponsored writing" (Odell and Goswami 202). Belief in the importance of writing to on-the-job success may well be a significant factor in explaining the development of writing ability, as well as writing apprehension.

2. "Many college-educated workers believe that in general the writing done in the workplace is of poor quality" (Anderson 63). Anderson says that virtually every survey confirms this perception, although the severity of the problem varies from survey to survey. Interestingly however, managers do little about this perceived problem because a) they "do not have the time required to supervise re-writing," and b) although managers "do recognize poor writing", they "are unable to identify the fault with it" (65-66). Significant for this study is the fact that new college graduates are often rated lowest ("inadequate") of employees by their supervisors and managers for six types of communication skills including writing (64).

There are interesting implications here. On the one hand there is the belief that writing in the workplace is of poor quality, and that new professional

employees are regarded as weak in writing ability. On the other hand, there is the implication that employee writing ability improves over time, as well as the implied belief of managers that writing ability is improved through supervised "re-writing" -- this, despite the fact that little of this supervision actually gets done, and the difficulty managers have in identifying writing problems!

3. New employees may be blind to their writing weaknesses and have a higher opinion of their writing ability than is warranted. Surveys show that recent college graduates generally consider themselves to be effective writers, but their superiors do not share this view (Anderson 67).

The gap between these perception is interesting and leads to speculation. Is the new employees' confidence the result of positive reinforcement (explicit or implicit) at university? When people write effectively in one domain, do they tend to view themselves as unlikely to develop their writing ability further? Are writers unaware of the different demands imposed by, and skills needed for, different writing situations? Do writers view writing ability as a "portable," monolithic, have or have-not ability? What conflicts and what learning results from the gap between new employees' views and managers' views of the writing done by new employees?

4. Most employees believe that their own on-the-job writing ability has improved over time, and that "people can learn how to improve their writing ability *through on-the-job experience*" (Anderson 68, emphasis added). Robert R. Bataille's survey research obtained a similar result: of five "kinds of experiences that respondents felt helped to improve their writing, the most important . . .

was practice, or simple job experience" (Bataille 279). In a 1984 survey by Paradis et al., 77% of respondents rated themselves as better writers at the time of the survey than they were in college, and 6% said that they were worse (Anderson 67). In a 1988 survey of Montreal business managers, 63% of the survey participants indicated 'yes' to "the statement 'I learned how to write through work experience'" (Brown 14). We can therefore deduce that new employees must often modify their writing practices to a significant extent in the early months or years of a new job.

Points three and four above tell an interesting story. Experienced employees believe that they *have* developed, and that employees generally *can* develop, writing ability through on-the-job experience. But new employees, at least in some sectors, seem to believe that they are already fully able to meet writing demands of a job, even when they have little experience. The inexperienced employees' self-confidence appears unjustified, especially considering the managers' critical perceptions.

David G. Myers, an American psychologist, has studied the apparent tendency of people to rate their knowledge and abilities as adequate even when they are not, i.e., as better than impartial others would judge. He attributes this "self-serving bias in the way we perceive ourselves" (Myers 49) largely to Herbert Simon's principle of "bounded rationality," the consequence of which is that a person constructs "a simplified model of the real situation in order to deal with it. He behaves rationally with respect to this model, [but] such behavior is not even approximately optimal with respect to the real world" (Simon in Myers, 48).

Myers believes that we are often poor at apprehending and appreciating our own fallibilities and limitations.

In conclusion, we can see that writing exists within an attitudinal and attributional realm. The little empirical evidence we have suggests that attitudes and beliefs about a variety of writing-related factors -- e.g., roles, self-valuation and self-confidence, setting, evaluation, perceptions of difficulty and importance of writing tasks -- have a significant influence on writing, and in all likelihood, on the development of writing ability as well.

Literacy, community, and writing in "non-academic" settings

A recent area of research with implications for this study is writing in "nonacademic" settings. Until the early 1980s, most research on writing, and virtually all research on development, was done in schools. Researchers, almost all of whom were affiliated with schools themselves, were naturally inclined to study student writers, partly because of ease of access to student populations, and partly because writing development may have seemed largely a function of, if not synonymous with, schooling. In societies in which schooling is universal, writing development occurs most obviously in schools. Less than a decade ago, a small number of researchers began to examine writing outside the academy. The impetus for the new research focus came partly from the work of a small number of people who were researching and re-thinking the concept of literacy.

Responding to what they perceived as a "writing crisis" caused by a "near-exclusive preoccupation with school-based writing practices" (75) Scribner and Cole (1981) sought "detailed knowledge of the role and functions of writing

outside of school, the aspirations and values which sustain it, and the intellectual skills it demands and fosters" (76). To this end, the two researchers, together with their colleague Jack Goody, studied literacy in the Vai people, a Liberian tribe. They wanted to know "how Vai people acquire literacy skills, *what* these skills are, and *what* they do with them" (77).

Their findings were startling for an academic community used to thinking of literacy as uni-dimensional, as an ability which one has or does not have, and as a context-free universal ability with predictable, universal, cognitive consequences (cf. Gee 1986). Close study of the Vai revealed that they employed many forms of literacy, that these forms were learned and valued in highly specific social, religious and commercial contexts, and that various specific literacies might have highly specific effects. Scribner and Cole found no *general* (or generalizable) mental or cognitive effects of any of the forms of literacy they encountered. Rather, they found "that each form of literacy was associated with some quite specific skills" (Gee 730).

Scribner and Cole arrived at what they termed "a practice account of literacy." A type of literacy enhances quite specific skills that are practised in carrying out that literacy" (Gee 730). They came to view literacy not as a state of cultured being, nor as a "package" of skills one has or does not have², but rather as various contextually-valued and contextually-shaped abilities to use symbols and languages to various community-specific ends.

In 1983, Shirley Brice Heath published *Ways With Words*, which has

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² See Langer, 1988, for a useful, three-part taxonomy of literacy perspectives.

become a milestone in literacy studies. Like Scribner and Cole, Heath looked carefully at literacy in actual use to see what forms literacy took, to see how and why it was used, and to examine how "literacy is embedded in the cultural context" (Gee 737) of different communities. Heath examined three small communities, each one racially and socio-economically distinct, in the western Carolinas. In studying these communities, Heath saw "how children in each community acquire language and literacy in the process of becoming socialized into the norms and values of their communities" (Gee 738). Heath observed that in each community, literacies were acquired to the extent that they were relevant and significant in the lives of the members of the community.

What is the significance of this research and theory? Primarily perhaps, a persuasive case is made for studying reading and writing in the various communities in which they are practised. We see the powerful shaping influence that a community has on how writing is done, what gets written, how writing is valued, etc. Second, if literacy practices and purposes are contextually bound, then the acquisition and development of these literacies may also be strongly shaped by the particularities of the community in which a person lives and/or works.

In the work of Scribner and Cole, and Heath, "community" is a term with conceptual overtones, but it used in a fairly concrete way. A community is a place where a group of people live or work. For linguists and students of writing, the term "community" is often less attached to a sense of place.

The term "speech community" was used perhaps first by linguists

interested in geographic, economic and social influences on oral language differences. The notion that language differences might relate to group or community differences was picked up by John Swales, Charles Bazerman, Lester Faigley and others interested in written language, and the term "discourse community" was born. Discourse communities, according to Faigley, are constituted either through the nexus of written texts or through membership in an organization. An example of the former is "scholars on different continents who participate in a scholarly debate" (Faigley 238). An example of the latter is a company with its own "in-house language and certain local discourse conventions" (238).

The key notion is that within a language community, people acquire specialized kinds of discourse competence that enable them to participate in specialized groups. Members know what is worth communicating, how it can be communicated, what other members of the community are likely to know and believe to be true about certain subjects, how other members can be persuaded, and so on. (Faigley 238)

While the notion of "community," discourse and otherwise, has recently come to be seen as problematic (e.g., MacKinnon 1992, Joseph Williams 1989) the notion of "discourse communities" has strong conceptual and explanatory benefits. Later, when we describe the study, we will describe the workplace in which the study was conducted as a "discourse community" with specific discursive practices.

The year 1982 can be seen as a watershed in terms of heightening and legitimizing academic interest in nonacademic writing. The October 1982 issue of *College Composition and Communication* proclaimed: "[This] issue . . . begins

the examination of an increasingly important concern among teachers of composition: the activities and needs of adult writers . . . on the job" (251). Coincidentally, the October 1982 issue of *Research in the Teaching of English* contained an essay, "Writing in a Non-Academic Setting," which foreshadowed some of the concerns that were later to preoccupy writing researchers. The RTE essay, written by Odell and Goswami, is largely an appeal to academic writing researchers to widen the purview on the kinds of writing researched: "[W]e feel that researchers need to examine writing that is not assigned by a teacher or researcher and that has a purpose . . . " (201).

[W]e know relatively little about the nature and functions of this writing. Indeed, we tend to speak of business writing (or government writing or bureaucratic writing) as though it were a single entity. We have limited information about the variety of tasks adult, non-professional writers must perform and still less information about the types of stylistic and substantive choices writers make . . . This lack seems rather serious since information about these . . . might very well influence the teaching of composition. Furthermore, this sort of information provides a basis for testing theoretical assumptions . . . (202)

Odell and Goswami strongly emphasize that the "consequences and contexts" for non-academic writing are substantially, and critically, different from the consequences and contexts of academic writing (202).

There has not been a great deal of research or theory dealing with nonacademic writing published since 1982; much of what is most important in this area appears in an anthology called *Writing in Nonacademic Settings*, edited by Lee Odell and Dixie Goswami. This volume covers a good deal of material on: the how and the what ("the structure of discourse and . . . the ways writers are influenced by new technologies") (viii) of writing in (primarily) American

business settings; the social context of institutional writing; and on suggested methodologies for further research. Interestingly, although the issue of development is often implied in this anthology (see, for example, Anderson 68-75), nowhere is the issue directly addressed or suggested as a worthwhile topic for further research.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this anthology is the concern with the social contexts of writing in organizations, a concern which permeates many of the chapters. This concern follows logically from the notion of literacy, or literacies, as embedded in community, and from the notion of "discourse communities" as a useful concept to aid in understanding writing. In "Nonacademic Writing: The Social Perspective," for example, Lester Faigley proposes that there are at least three perspectives for writing researchers -- the textual, the individual, the social -- and that the social perspective is critical to researchers interested in writing in the workplace, because "writing is an act not easily separated from its functions in a particular discourse community" (Faigley 246). Similarly, Lee Odell reminds us that writing in the workplace is not only influenced by "interaction with colleagues," but also (following Deal & Kennedy) by the organizational "culture," its "values, attitudes, knowledge, and way of acting that are shared. . . . This culture, Deal and Kennedy assert, influences 'practically everything' in the life of the organization" (Odell 1985, 250).

Stephen Doheny-Farina's 1986 article, "Writing in an Emerging Organization," examined the dynamic relationship between writing and organizational context. The article demonstrated that the organizational context

influences writers' perceptions of their "rhetorical situations" and thus of their "writing behavior," and that "rhetorical activities" in turn "influence the . . . organization" (158). Doheny-Farina's article was also significant in that it was one of the few research report on nonacademic writing to go beyond survey methods for data. His method included participant observation, open-ended interviews, and "discourse-based" interviews, akin to the methodology used in this study.

Finally, while no research appears to have been done on the what, the how, or the why of the development of on-the-job writing ability, it would be useful to point out that Brown's 1988 survey of Montreal business managers.. and Paradis et al.'s 1984 survey (Anderson 68, cited above) provide some evidence to support the idea that people can and do develop such ability. Interestingly, Brown suggests that "the process of learning through work experience seems a profitable area for further study" (14-15).

Aspects of rhetorical theory

A theoretical problem

A theoretical framework is a matrix of related beliefs in which fruitful sets of related questions may be posed and probed. The matrix often makes epistemological and methodological assumptions explicit, and thus open to scrutiny. Such a framework offers a number of advantages for the researcher. Disparities, contradictions and tensions among propositions become apparent. Claims may be meaningfully qualified and contextualized; research findings and speculation can be examined from the same theoretical perspective. As Stanley

Fish says, theory helps us deal with assumptions as we proceed in (often provisional) meaning-making.

One of the difficulties for the student of writing is the lack of a single, unifying, comprehensive and widely accepted theory to underpin research, as a number of researchers and theorists in composition studies have remarked'. Theory is, and is likely to remain, fragmentary, "performative" (as opposed to "constative") and subject to debate. As a result, the researcher will continue to face problems of interpretation.

Lack of comprehensive, explanatory, predictive theory can be seen in many areas of composition studies, but underlying this "pre-theoretical" state is an age-old division. Patricia Bizzell terms it "foundationalism" versus "anti-foundationalism," but in many ways it may be seen as the classic empiricist-rationalist division.

Using a rhetoric perspective as an interpretive tool

One body of theory, however, has much to offer in mitigating this theoretical problem. a body of theory which is experiencing a remarkable revival of interest: rhetoric. Many researchers are coming to realize that certain aspects of rhetorical theory provide a powerful interpretive framework for studies of writing. We believe this to hold for the research reported in this study, and so rhetoric will be presented as useful in characterizing both the writing-related knowledge acquired by adult writers as they develop writing

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³ See, for example, Stephen M. North, The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field for a polemic analysis of the problems that arise in a field which lacks unifying theory and common assumptions.

ability, as well as their role in acquiring this knowledge. That is to say, a rhetorical perspective will be employed as a theoretical and interpretive tool for the study at hand.

The term "rhetoric" can confuse and the domain of rhetoric is large, so first we will describe the major aspects of rhetorical thought drawn upon. When we later use rhetorical theory as a lens through which to view the study's findings, we will be drawing on four interpretive possibilities: (1) rhetoric's view of "the social" as part of a political (and ethical) context (Miller 1991, Vickers, 1988); (2) rhetoric's view of knowledge as consensual and community-bound (e.g., Harris 1991, Bazerman 1988); (3) rhetoric's view of language as interpenetrating, at times constitutive of, knowledge (e.g., Knoblauch & Brannon 1984); and (4) rhetoric's view of the individual as a potential knowledge-maker engaged in a dialogical process in a public forum (e.g., Toulmin 1958, Perelman 1979).

These possibilities are not axiomatic; rather they represent some aspects of rhetorical thought useful for the purpose of interpreting the results of this study. They draw on certain threads from both classical rhetoric and the "new rhetoric," threads which view knowledge-making as language-dependent (or language as constitutive of knowledge) and which therefore regard rhetoric as having an "epistemic" dimension. It may be worthwhile to briefly sketch this rhetoric-as-epistemic idea.

In an essay on "adequate epistemology" in composition, John Gage (1984) outlines two opposing threads in classical rhetoric, two views of the relationship

between knowledge and rhetoric:

One is that rhetoric consists of techniques for successfully communicating ideas which are either unknowable or are discovered and tested by means which are prior to or beyond rhetoric itself. [This view] owes an obvious debt to the . . . Sophists, in the sense that it treats persuasion sceptically, as having no bearing on what is finally true. [This is a] view of language use as independent of the means by which knowledge is generated and validated. . . .

The other . . . is to view rhetoric itself as a means of discovering and validating knowledge. The purposeful use of language, in other words, can be seen as what makes knowing possible. This tradition also owes something to the sophistic tradition, namely the idea that language necessarily affects the truths that it is about. From this perspective, rhetoric aims at knowledge, or makes it available. Rather than producing persuasion without reference to truth, rhetoric aims at producing mutual understandings and therefore becomes the basis for inquiry into shareable truths. The end of rhetoric from this point of view would not be to argue any case, but to assemble the means by which mutually believable conclusions can be distinguished from those that do not earn assent. In this view, rhetoric has knowledge as its goal, rather than operates on knowledge as raw material. (153-154)

It is this second view of rhetoric we are interested in as a useful interpretive framework for a study of the development of writing ability. This view of rhetoric, Aristotelian in origin some would argue⁴, sees language as constitutive, dynamic, and knowledge-making, rather than static and reflective

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⁴ "Aristotle's position on this issue has also continued to be disputed" writes Janice Lauer in "Issues in Rhetorical Invention" (133). Richard Hughes and Richard Enos are seen as supporting "Aristotelian rhetoric [as] both investigatory and exploratory" and Aristotelian heuristics "'not only as a composition framework for inventing techniques to facilitate meaning to others, but also heuristics as an epistemology for inventing knowledge within the rhetor' (Enos)." George Kennedy disagrees, according to Lauer, asserting that "Aristotle's 'orator is usually assumed to have an hypothesis he wishes to prove'" (133).

of -- or constituted by -- reality and knowledge. In other words, "knowledge needs language as much as language needs knowledge" (Gage 153). This view places epistemology and rhetoric in the realm of the probable, as opposed to the demonstrable.⁵ This epistemic view of language, and thus of epistemological possibilities for rhetoric, will inform part of the interpretation of results later.

From classical rhetoric we learn that Aristotle proposed three distinct modes of persuasion: *ethos*, which depends on the personal character of the speaker; *pathos*, which depends on putting the audience into a fit frame of mind; and *proof*, which depends on words and the form of the argument. Aristotle also proposed three divisions of rhetoric "determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making -- speaker, subject and person addressed -- it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object" (Vickers 20). Much of this still-influential framework is of interest in a study of writing done by highly educated -- but new to the "forum" -- economists and financial analysts, especially the second and third modes of audience-directedness and "proof," as well as the reader-centred ("hearer") notion of public discourse.

In modern times, Richard Fulkerson (1990) has argued that perspectives on writing tend to privilege one of four elements in the writing situation: the writer, the text, the external reality, the reader. When the writer is "privileged," then expressivism is the perspective; if the text, then formalism; if external

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⁵ The very possibility of a division between the demonstrable and the probable is extremely problematic, and perhaps untenable, but we need not address this wider issue here.

reality, and texts' correspondence to it, then mimeticism; if the reader, then rhetoric. Because, as we will see, the reader is so central and important to the writing situation described in this study, a rhetorical perspective has much to offer for the purposes of interpretation.

In situations where the reader is critical to discursive success (i.e., in rhetorical situations), modern rhetoricians have come to replace the notions of "pathos" and "proof" with the notions of: "assent" as the aim of discourse (Booth 1974), shared "warrants" as the basis of effective argument (Toulmin 1958), and the "enthymeme" as a strategy and a ground for audience-directed discourse (Gage 1991 following Aristotle). To write effectively in rhetorical situations, a writer must be able to "put the shared beliefs and values of the community into practice" (Miller 1991 57). Writers must acquire what Isocrates and Aristotle called *phronesis*, or practical wisdom -- neither a "technical skill at problem solving, nor . . . mastery of some theoretical abstractions about the nature of truth," *phronesis* is

based on a broad-based understanding of the shared experiences of the community that enables us to discover what is best in a particular situation. To be able to do this, we must interpret how the shared knowledge of the community speaks to the practical situations in which we find ourselves. . . . when we work with the practical problems of the community, we learn its shared traditions and discover our place in those traditions. (Miller 57-58)

"Rhetoric . . . as a means of discovering and validating knowledge";
 "language . . . as what makes knowing possible"; "producing mutual understandings . . . the basis for inquiry into shareable truths"; "mutually believable conclusions"; "earn[ing] assent"; learning "the shared knowledge of the

community" and "our place in [the community's] traditions" -- these ideas will be revisited in the interpretation of the results of this study.

A rhetorical perspective then, especially the threads and possibilities outlined here, can give us a stance from which to explore the progress made by an individual writing in, and to, a part of the world, a community. We hope to show that as new community members develop a better understanding of the social (and political, and ethical) context in which they write, as they come to understand that the knowledge they help build is effective to the degree that it is consensual and community-bound, these members become in effect, rhetors -- that is, writers and knowledge-makers, rhetorically engaged in the work of a knowledge-making community.

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3. The Study

Focus of the study

One of the goals of the research reported here was to see whether a group of highly educated adults, already very experienced in university writing, further developed their writing ability as they faced the unique demands of writing in a new job. To investigate this possibility, and to gain some understanding of how and why such development might occur, the researcher tried to identify and to characterize any salient changes in the writing and the writing-related knowledge of ten people, who acted as participants in the study, during their first 10-20 months working on the job. The research focused on five areas: first, useful, writing-related knowledge acquired by the participants; second, changes in the participants' writing processes; third, changes in their written products; fourth, changes in their attitudes and beliefs about writing, and fifth, means by which knowledge was acquired and changes took place. The final goal of the study was to interpret the meaning and significance of the changes/learning in terms of development theory.

Research orientation

The methodological orientation of this study is, broadly speaking, "qualitative-descriptive" and "naturalistic." In addition, elements of a "case study" approach were used to gain an appreciation of the differences in development between the individual participants.

Qualitative-descriptive research is deemed to be a reasonable approach to take in "the earlier stages of an investigation when little is known about a

phenomenon. [While] the status of this kind of empirical research varies from field to field . . . [r]ight now in composition studies, a number of researchers like Emig argue for a high priority for descriptive research" (Lauer & Asher 17).

Qualitative descriptive research tries to answer . . . questions by closely studying individuals, small groups, or whole environments. It tries to discover variables that seem important for understanding the nature of writing, its contexts, its development, and its successful pedagogy. When researchers engage in descriptive research, they examine and analyze segments or whole situations as they occur. This kind of research, therefore, does not primarily attempt to establish cause-and-effect relationships among variables . . . It is, instead, a design that, by close observation of natural conditions, helps the researcher to identify new variables and questions for further research. (Lauer & Asher 23)

The researcher believes that the advantages and suitability of qualitative-descriptive research for this study are clear, given how little we know about the development of writing ability in educated adults and about writing and learning in nonacademic settings.

"Naturalistic" inquiry implies, according to Lincoln and Guba, an anti-positivist stance. While this researcher is not certain that such an opposition is necessary, some of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) "characteristics of operational naturalistic enquiry" (39) are outlined here as being useful in explaining some of the rationale for, and the underpinnings of, the method employed in this study: (a) natural setting: "realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts" (39); (b) utilization of tacit knowledge: "because often the nuances of . . . multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way" (40); (c) qualitative methods: "because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities" (40); (d) inductive data analysis: "because this

process is more likely to describe fully the setting and . . . to identify the mutually shaping influences which interact" (40); and (e) grounded theory: "because *no* a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered" and "because a priori theory is likely to be based on a priori generalizations, which, while they may make nomothetic sense, may nevertheless provide a poor idiographic fit to the situation encountered" (41).

It is important to remember that, although qualitative-descriptive research is quite unlike, say, experimental research, it is, like any legitimate form of research, empirical in its roots and method. That is, it attempts to further knowledge from "the establishment, classification, organization, and interpretation of facts" (Lauer & Asher 7). Empirical research on reading and writing has accelerated in the past two decades, and now seems to have found a complementary relationship with theory: "empirical research refines rhetorical theory, helps verify or repudiate it, and identifies important variables that contribute to new theory formation" (Lauer & Asher 6).

Sources of data

The data in this study come primarily from three sources: interviews with the participants shortly after they arrived at the Bank, interviews with the participants ten to twenty months later, and then interviews with some of the participants' managers.

It is important to keep in mind that most of the data are based on *perceptions*: mostly the participant-writers' self-perceptions, as well as the perceptions of the writers' reviewers. No formal textual analysis was performed,

nor were think-aloud protocols conducted during the composition of the texts.¹ Much of the empirical data is therefore "emic" and the result of intro- and retrospection. It is also important to keep in mind that no quantification of writing-related learning/change was deemed possible. Rather, the changes identified and knowledge gained were *characterized, qualified*, and at times *interpreted* in an attempt to garner some understanding of what and how the participants developed in their writing.

Finally, it should be noted that by the start of the study, the researcher had worked for six years as a trainer in the institution in which the research was conducted. This experience gave the researcher some useful knowledge about

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¹ The researcher had hoped to do some kind of broad-featured comparative "discourse analysis" of some of the drafts of documents written by participants. The intention was to provide additional data and to act as a triangulating device to confirm or qualify other data. Such an analysis has not been done for several reasons. First, the collaborative nature of document production in the Bank of Canada. Often a single document, even the first draft, is the product of collaboration, and teasing out the "author's" contribution is problematic or impossible; moreover the form of collaboration -- for instigation of the document, for clarification, for collegial input, and for written and oral feedback -- often changed for each document written by each participant. Second, the variety of document types written by each of the participants. Seldom was the second-stage document similar enough in form or purpose to the first-stage document to allow comparison. In addition, participants wrote some document types often, others rarely. The first-stage document was usually, and the second-stage document occasionally, the first example of a particular genre written by a participant. Third, the variety of audiences for various texts. Many of the participants wrote to different audiences at the first and second interview stages. None of the writers wrote exactly the same type of document to exactly the same audience at the first and second interview stages.

These problems have great implications for those who would investigate -- naturalistically -- the development of writing ability in writers who work collaboratively and who face non-generic assignments, and may preclude or problematize the use of formal discourse analysis in many situations.

the complex role of writing in the institution, and about some of the expectations that senior readers have for the documents they receive. This knowledge was helpful in designing the research.

1st-stage interviews. The first interview with the participants immediately followed the writing of the final draft of their first "major" document. That is to say, it took place after participants had received all feedback, and all revisions had been made. (Sometimes feedback came from several people; the write-and-review cycle can therefore take a considerable period of time.)

The interview was "discourse-based" in that it was scheduled by, and centred on, the production of a single document. The document and its writing formed the discrete, empirical artifact and process which informed the interview. Four areas were probed: the writing process, the written product, the writer's attitudes and beliefs about writing, and the writer's knowledge of the organizational context as it related to writing. Two parts of the interview -- "the written product," and most of "the writing process" -- referred specifically to the document at hand. "Attitudes and beliefs" and "knowledge of the organizational context" drew on the writer's larger experience. The final draft, and often notes and previous drafts, were at hand for the participant's and researcher's reference.

2nd-stage interviews. Eight to ten months after the first interview, participants were asked to start thinking about their upcoming writing assignments so that the second-stage interview could also be held after the writing of a major paper. With the exception of two participants who had no

long papers to write for such a long time that relatively minor papers formed the basis of the interviews, the second-stage interviews also focussed on the writing of "major papers." Again, the timing was such that participants had just dealt with the final round of feedback from their reviewers.

The second interview was divided into eight sections: a section on writing since the first interview; a global section in which the participants were asked to comment quite generally on whether there had been any significant changes in their writing; sections for each of the same four areas probed in the first interview; a section on how changes came about and knowledge was acquired, and a final section asking the participant to tell a hypothetical new employee about any differences between writing in a university and writing at work, and to advise a new employee about adjusting to writing at work. In each of the four thematic sections, in addition to stock questions, the participants were read quotations from their first interviews as prompts to provoke comments on possible changes.

In different ways, the second-stage interview had internal checks for validating assertions. First, open questions about possible change early in the interview often obliged participants to say what they had been doing earlier. If these retrospective contextualizing remarks appeared to contradict statements made in the first interview, they could be explored. Second, in responding to quotations from the earlier interview, participants were often obliged to substantiate or clarify perceptions of change. Third, topics were explored from various perspectives and probed at different points in the second-stage interview.

For example, the participants were asked whether they thought their bosses had a role in helping them develop as writers in the first interview; they were asked the same question in the second interview; later, their first-stage answer was fed back to them in the second interview to see if what had happened matched their earlier beliefs.

The "written product" section of the second-stage interview asked the participant in various ways to point to evidence of change. This was done directly by asking the participant to substantiate assertions about change by pointing to the textual features which evidenced the assertion. It was also done indirectly in the "thought experiment" question: "If you had written this document a year ago, would it have been much the same, or has your experience affected the writing of this paper?" For each posited change, the participant was asked to point to evidence in the paper where possible.

Interviews with the managers. Six of the participants' supervisors or managers consented to be interviewed shortly after the participants' second interview. Two supervisors declined to be interviewed because of time pressures. One busy supervisor was interviewed only once, although he supervised three of the participants.

To initiate the interview, the researcher sent a memo to the manager requesting an interview and explaining what it would involve. The managers were asked to re-read, in advance of the interview, the two documents which formed the basis of the first- and the second-stage interviews, and to think about possible changes in the participant as a writer over the time frame.

The interviews had two parts. The first part asked for global comments on possible change, and for comments on how the changes were evidenced, and the significance or importance of the changes. The manager was then asked to describe any possible changes in the four areas studied. The second part of the interview had the manager react to comments made by the participant. The comments were usually direct quotations selected for their salience and need for verification.

Questionnaires for the managers. After the interview, managers filled in a one-page questionnaire which asked them to check off, and then prioritize, aspects of the writer's development which struck them as true and relevant for the writer in question. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide further data which a) could suggest patterns of key variables from a reviewer's point of view, and b) could corroborate or qualify comments made in the interview.

An additional source of data was the documents collected by the reviewer. While discourse analysis was not practical for the reasons outlined above, the documents did have a small role in producing data in the interviews. The interviews were not only timed by the production of the documents, but the participants were asked, especially in the second interview, to back up general statements by pointing to evidence in the texts. The participants were asked to point to features in the second-stage document which would likely have been different had it been written when the employee first arrived. While this kind of conjecture is of limited use as hard data, it acted as a form of a triangulated check on other statements.

The findings are based on the following data: approximately forty hours of taped interviews with the participants (and about two hundred and eighty pages of interview notes and transcriptions); about six hours of taped interviews with the participants' supervisors or managers (and about eighty pages of interview notes and transcriptions); the managers' questionnaires; and the documents collected by the researcher.

The setting: The Bank of Canada as a discourse community

The site of the study was the Bank of Canada in Ottawa. The brief sketch which follows focuses on four key Bank departments, plus senior management (for brevity, referred to as "the Bank"), and draws attention only to the institutional features deemed significant in influencing writing.²

Writing is one of the most important products and processes in the Bank. As a central bank, the Bank of Canada has business functions which are enabled and/or carried out through vast amounts of written analysis. Some of these major business functions include: a) analysing monetary and financial issues, b) formulating and implementing monetary policy, c) intervening in currency markets d) doing econometric projections, and e) servicing the public debt and marketing Government of Canada securities. Most of these major business functions are conducted in four "analytic" departments in the Bank:

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² The description of the Bank as a discourse community draws on: Graham Smart's "Writing..." and "Composite of Comments from Senior Management on Writing" (Smart, in-house material); an in-house video, "Writing and Decision-Making," made from a talk that the Deputy Governor, Gordon Thiessen, gave to senior staff members on the topic of "Managing the Bank of Canada"; as well as on the researcher's own experience.

International, Research, Monetary and Financial Analysis, and Securities, and by the Bank's senior managers, who work in an executive capacity. Writing has a central role in enabling the Bank's business functions for a number of reasons. First, the far-reaching consequences of implementing monetary policy create a paramount need to make sure that every policy and action is as free from risk as possible, and that actions can be deemed correct before they are undertaken. Concomitant with this observation is a belief that good decision-making requires sound analysis and careful deliberation, and that one of the best ways to facilitate analysis and deliberation is through writing. Second, the Bank's independence necessitates a form of accountability and responsibility to government and the public. Some documentation in the Bank serves as an "audit trail": a form of public, permanent responsibility for decisions taken. Interested parties may scrutinize not only the actions and policies of the Bank, but also the Bank's analysis of the events which led to the action or policy. And third, the inherent complexity of much financial, economic and econometric work demands that issues be examined in writing.

Writing is one of the central activities of an economist or analyst, and written products reflect on the employee's professional ability: promotions are often partly based on the employee's writing ability.

Good writing is perceived as an indication of both the ability to think a problem through and the willingness to take pains with a piece of work. An employee's first contact with Senior Management is often through a report; this contact can leave a lasting impression. Written reports represent a standing record of the quality of a person's work; they are also a permanent record of the reasons underlying decisions" (Smart, *Composite*).

Given that entry-level economists and analysts are likely to spend more than 50% of their working hours writing (see Appendix B), and given that more senior employees can also spend a significant portion of their time writing and managing staff writing, it is easy to see the Bank of Canada as a "writing-intensive" institution.

Most of the important writing done by economists and analysts in the Bank is instigated and shaped by the information needs of senior decision-makers. This tends to make writing quite "reader-centred" and necessitates learning, on the part of a junior staff member, a good deal about an audience which may be fairly distant, a consideration we will look at later.

"Document cycling" (Paradis et al, 293) is a characteristic of most writing in the Bank. A document on the "shop floor" of the analytic departments is typically assigned to an employee who produces a draft and gives it to the assignment-giver, typically the immediate boss. The boss, a "supervisor" or "manager," reads this draft, provides feedback, which is usually a mix of written marginalia and oral explanation, and asks the employee to make some changes. The employee produces a second draft, and the process may be (and usually is) repeated. The changes required range from substantive suggestions for major revision to minor changes in diction and mechanics. Often the suggestions are in the form of written commentary or marginalia; often this commentary is elucidated in face-to-face "feedback" sessions. Commentary, written and oral, ranges widely in terms of the degree of control exhibited: from imperative, to directive, to suggestive, to questioning. Writing is thus highly "collaborative," but

not in the usual sense of "group writing" (e.g., Ede & Lunsford 1990).

When the reviewer is satisfied with the document, (s)he usually passes it on to his/her boss, the "manager" or "officer." Thus the document is "cycled" upward in the hierarchy. The process can be slow, but positive effects include the transmission of corporate values, a degree of consensus-building, and the "shaping" of documents to meet senior decision-makers' needs.

The writing assigned to newly arrived economists and analysts often forms a progression. Typically, new employees are first given regularly scheduled, fairly formulaic papers to write: a monthly update of some statistics with minimal textual explication, for example. Over time, they will be given less formulaic, more *ad hoc*, papers to write. Eventually, most economists and analysts will volunteer to do an *ad hoc* paper, that is, they will instigate a paper themselves. Depending on circumstances, writing *ad hoc* papers and initiating papers can happen in four to twelve months. While early papers may be limited to audiences fairly close to the writer in the hierarchy, later papers may reach senior executive levels.

The Bank's prominent role in the regulation of the Canadian economy, the academic-research background of many of its employees, as well as the hierarchic structure and the information needs of extremely busy senior management (as readers) all tend to influence the nature of the Bank as a "discourse community." In addition, much of the writing done by analysts and economists has characteristic traits which help to describe the Bank as a discourse community. While none of these traits are unique to the Bank, some

of them tend to distinguish Bank writing from the writing that many recently graduated, newly hired employees would have done at university. Four of these qualities are:

Sound problem posing and analysis. The writing of analysts and economists is valued to the extent that it addresses problems of concern and consequence to senior managers, explores these problems rigorously, and (often) suggests ways of responding to them.

Reader-centredness. Generally this means sound audience analysis: the ability to select data and to devise a narrative which meets the narrow information needs of various audiences. Documents are successful to the extent that they give the readers the information and analysis they need to perform their jobs. Because readers are often physically and organizationally distant from an entry-level economist, audience analysis can be difficult. Most long analytic papers have a "deductive" pattern, or more accurately, they place conclusions, as well as a clear statement of the issue and its context, right at the start of the paper.

Conservatism. New employees, coming from university or the private sector, often remark on "conservatism" in the propositional content and the writing style of Bank documents. The serious responsibilities given the Bank, and the serious consequences of its actions, especially the risk of negative reaction in the markets to Bank actions seen as precipitate or ill-thought, may help explain this conservatism.

Meaning and value ascription. The pejorative term "elevator economics"

is often heard in the Bank. Elevator economics -- e.g., the Canadian dollar is up; the commodity markets are down -- refers to *mere* description of markets or underlying economic fundamentals. Managers say that they don't need their employees to merely report or describe events; they want a meaning ascribed to events. Do figures present a trend? Is the trend significant? And even more important: Is it good or bad? Something to worry about? For whom? Why? etc. Ascribing meanings and values can be difficult for junior employees because to do this, they must "go out on a limb" and then discover that the meaning or value ascribed is wrong. Consequently, the writer can lose face and confidence.

In contrast to the notion of "elevator economics" is the notion implied in the term "story," which is used in the Bank to denote the analytic interpretation of events and/or data created by a writer. The reading load of senior managers is enormous, and much of what they read is to help them prepare for discussions with other senior managers or government officials. The senior managers' ability to absorb and remember this consequential written material is enhanced when the documents contain "simple" stories: the issue at hand clearly delineated, adequate context provided, numbers limited to essential ones, implications of the issue to the Bank described, and often, a suggestion or recommendation as to a preferred course of action. Understanding the need for a "story" and developing the ability to create one is an important part of the development of a Bank economist.

A melange of some aspects of these features is called "the Bank style," a

plastic term which connotes different things to different people. To be told "it's not in the Bank style" can frustrate writers who might benefit from a more precise and concrete reaction to a text. The existence of the term, however, does point to a local-cultural notion of writing, and to the fact that newcomers are likely to have accommodations to make in their writing.

One final characteristic of the Bank as a discourse community should be noted. The Bank is relatively "mature" as an organization and very hierarchic in structure. The Bank has been in existence for more than fifty years. Its functions have evolved over this period, but gradually. Compared with many organizations in the 1990s, the Bank is extremely hierarchic. The organization chart shows departments organized into traditional pyramids, and the lines of authority and responsibility (to and for) are generally unambiguous and freighted with meaning for social and professional conduct.

The implications for writers here are many, but one implication is worth stating. The Bank's maturity, stability, and its set-in-its-ways-ness, mean that a single document, particularly from a junior employee, is unlikely to radically change the status quo. This contrasts with what Doheny-Farina (1986) terms writing in an "emerging" organization, wherein documentation can have the effect of goal-seeking and goal-establishing, of discovering direction for the company to follow.

Doheny-Farina has pointed to the dynamic, interactive relationship between writers and the functioning of, even the direction of, business in a young "emergent" organization. A small or emergent business can easily be

shaped by different and competing mental constructs of the people who constitute the business's community. The competing constructs sometimes have roughly equal opportunity to designate reality. This equal opportunity might be the result of roughly equal access to data and information which feed into mental constructs; it might be the result of roughly equal prior knowledge; it might be the result of roughly equal power or opportunity of expression.

None of these equalities hold at the Bank. The hierarchy at the Bank represents a differentiation of knowledge (as valued internally), of access to information, and of opportunity of expression (both *on* any given topic, and *of* the agenda, or what the topics should be). This hierarchy and differentiation serve the Bank's needs well, but our concern here is the effect of these inequalities on the dynamics of discourse and learning: these dynamics generally flow in one direction.

In the Bank, the agenda for research, the ideology, the norms and frames of reference, as well as the lines of authority and communication are all fairly set, predetermined to an extent by the Bank's organizational history and by its mandate. This implies that an entry-level person's writing typically does not shape or change the organization significantly. Rather, the reverse is often the case: writing is an activity which tends to acculturate and acclimatize the newcomer into the ways of the Bank.

The Participants

The participants in this study were ten recently hired employees of the Bank of Canada. The ten participants were "random" in the sense that they

were the first economists and financial analysts to start work at the Bank in the period when research began. The researcher was given a list of eleven newly recruited economists and analysts from the Bank's Personnel Department; one of the eleven employees did no significant writing in the first six months of the study and was therefore eliminated as a participant.

All of the participants had recently graduated from university. Several of them had Masters degrees. All were under the age of thirty; all were working in their first major jobs upon graduating from university; all worked in the four key "analytic" departments of the Bank described above. The participants were two women and eight men. Four of the participants were francophone, four were anglophones, one was a trilingual Farsi speaker for whom French was the favoured language of writing, and one was a trilingual Sinhalese speaker who wrote in English.

None of the participants, save one perhaps, had written to a significant extent outside of school. In university, the most common document types written by the participants were short analytic essays, often technical or mathematical in nature, and tests. Some had written "research reports" alone, and occasionally in groups. Five had written either a thesis or "mini thesis." About half the participants said that they had not done much writing in university -- "not a whole lot" was a representative comment. The purpose of most of this writing was to demonstrate mastery of method (e.g., statistical, econometric), or to demonstrate that the writer had learned a body of knowledge (e.g., macroeconomic theory). One of the participants, Amar,

received some formal writing training during the research period; the others had none. One participant, Patrice, had some English as a Second Language Training classes in which the focus was oral/aural skills.

There is a degree of homogeneity, then, in this small group: young, highly educated, new to the Bank (and the workplace), and virtually new to writing in a business setting.

Analysis of the data

Initially, from listening and re-listening to the interview tapes, the researcher made three sets of structured interview notes: one for each participant at the first-interview stage, and another for the second-interview stage, and one for each of the six reviewers who were interviewed.

From these notes, the researcher wrote a "profile" of each participant, describing the major apparent writing-related changes each had experienced. The structured notes and the profiles then formed the basis of a catalogue of writing-related changes in the participants viewed as a group. These changes were organized into a taxonomy, roughly following the structure of the interviews. In this taxonomy, the range and character of the participants' attitudes and beliefs, writing processes, written products, and knowledge of the organizational context were outlined at the first interview stage, and then the range and nature of apparent changes at the second-interview stage were described. Comments were then added where helpful.

4. Findings

A variety of possibilities exist for presenting the findings of a qualitative-descriptive study. The findings below are presented in a fashion analogous to the research method. First we will look closely at "profiles" of change in four individual participants. Then, based on an analysis of the various areas examined, the findings for all participants are presented in a thematic taxonomy, to show apparent patterns of change. Both forms of presentation are deemed useful. The individual profiles emphasize differences and narrow contexts; the thematic taxonomy highlights the range of change experienced, as well as pattern and wider contexts. The six other participant profiles have been placed in Appendix A.

Profiles of Individual Development: Four Participants

The sketches, or "profiles," of the four participants which follow are intended to give a sense of the individual experience of writing-related change over the research period. They highlight the most important or interesting writing-related changes in four individuals. Discrepancies between participant perceptions and manager perceptions are noted where relevant, but these were rare. The profiles are "emic" sketches, at least in part, and by distilling a good deal of information, attempt to capture the essentials of change in each participant. The profiles are intended to show the minutiae and the particulars of individual development as suggested by looking closely at the participants at two moments in time.

The profiles which follow were selected because the participants appeared to develop a good deal, and because together they illustrate some of the patterns of development outlined later. The patterns of change in the six participants described in Appendix A are largely similar to the patterns sketched below (although one or two participants who appeared to develop less dramatically invite speculation as to why).

Patrice: "Like going to China"

Patrice appeared to have learned/changed a good deal in the area of writing in his first year. In response to the question "Has your writing changed much in the past 9-12 months?" he replied "Yes, a lot. My writing has definitely changed a lot."

Patrice evolved from not being sure whether there was a Bank-specific culture to saying, "definitely there is." This belief, together with increased cultural-contextual knowledge, was perhaps significant in explaining other developments. He said that if "you don't know the culture, if you don't know the people you're working with, then you don't know your 'clients'," (i.e., readers). "It's a marketing strategy: if you don't know your readers, then your paper is not marketable."

I believe that writing has to reach clients. You have to write taking into account the environment in which you are working. This is definitely a change in the last year. You know in school you say 'This is a bright guy; he'll be brilliant in life.' But this is not true. You have to adapt to new environments and change your behaviour. It's like going to China. The change was a shock for me, perhaps because this was my first real job.

Although he had said that he thought he was clear about the purpose of

and the audience for his documents in the first interview, Patrice later said: "I definitely wasn't clear about the readership and how readers used my earlier documents . . . Sometimes you're wrong, you know." He said that it "takes time" in a large organization to "know what people know and don't know," but that some aspects of the organizational/social structure of the Bank and his department facilitated this growing understanding, for example: "At university you see your teachers every so often, but here you see your boss every day."

Like most other participants, Patrice was fairly self-confident about his writing when he was new to the Bank, but even more self-confident later. Looking back on his earlier self-confidence however, he, like most participants, thought the earlier confidence misplaced. When he was asked whether he still felt as confident about "emphasizing the main ideas" as he had been a year earlier, Patrice said "I think I was totally wrong. My answer must have been based on university style. My style then was not adapted for this work, this place." Because of increasingly positive feedback from his supervisors just before the second interview, he felt that his later self-confidence was justified.

Overall then, Patrice believed that he had learned a good deal about the organizational context, including a better idea of his readers' jobs and thus their information needs, and about departmental or Bank-wide conventions regarding structure, analytic style and formatting devices. "What they want" is how Patrice termed these conventions and expectations. Some of what he learned in this regard appears to be significant knowledge for a writer: "They want opinion but it must be supported by reasonable facts. They need to be able to rely on your

conclusions. They have to be credible."

An important result of this learning, Patrice thought, and his supervisor confirmed, was more much focused and reader-centred documents. "The most important change is that I go directly to the point. This is what they want." Comparing the second-stage document with the earlier one, Patrice said that the second one was clearer, going more directly to the point, with better, more reader-oriented formatting (more sub-headings, more short paragraphs, more boldface and underlining, more use of bullets, better "divided" and "organized." Patrice also said that the reader would find the earlier paper too detailed and verbose: "it's too long. I realize now that when you have a lot of papers to read, you want it short and sweet. [It's] so heavy, so long, I had to write a two-page summary"; "Last year I wouldn't sacrifice a piece of information." Finally, he thought that he had learned to provide the necessary context for a given document: you have to show "why you are doing" what you are doing.

Patrice developed a clear mental template of structure for the long reports he wrote. These reports, he said, had three parts: the introduction, the middle and the end. Each of these parts had three parts: the introduction was composed of "the 'blah-blah,' what I'm doing, why I'm doing it"; the middle was composed of the overview, the thesis-antithesis, and the "empirical verification," and the end was composed of a short summary, the conclusions (which could be results or recommendations) and "potential extensions."

Changes in Patrice's writing process, some of which seem to follow a better understanding of his readers' expectations, included: a) greater likelihood

of initiating his own writing projects; b) more effective, more efficient and more "linear" procedures: planning more and in greater detail, then completing whole drafts which follow the plan (a change from a year earlier), and revising more effectively, more from the reader's point of view: "When I revise I think I am the reader . . . A year ago I didn't know my readers," and c) better preparation for receiving feedback: "I have to be well-prepared, get clear questions ready."

Patrice was one of two participants who, in talking about the importance of feedback and the role of the supervisor, mentioned that different reviewers can have greatly different effects on how or even whether a writer develops. When Patrice started work, he did not believe that a boss had a role in helping a writer develop other than in "just pointing out some weaknesses." He received "no feedback" at this time and therefore, he felt in retrospect, did not develop as a writer.

Shortly after the first interview, Patrice got a new supervisor and a new manager ("a brilliant guy"), and he quickly began to learn some of the aspects outlined above. He also started to seek out feedback on his own. He learned that he had to prepare himself better (e.g., to have questions ready) for feedback sessions. He learned that "if you use feedback well, the result is good." He thought that his supervisor helped him to question things better and to look at topics from different perspectives. He came to believe over the course of his first fifteen months that a boss can have a significant role in helping the writer to develop *if* the boss "communicates clearly what's wanted."

Patrice also developed, he thought, through reading other Bank

documents, especially his superiors', as models.

In sum, Patrice had come to believe that his development was the result of what he termed an "interaction" among experience, growing job knowledge, and the effects of his superiors' influence: "these are interdependent things." Patrice's manager, two levels above him, agreed with most of Patrice's observations, certainly the key ones about Patrice's gains in understanding the cultural and the organizational context, and in writing more focused, more reader-centred documents. Two points are worth noting. First, like another reviewer, Patrice's manager saw less dramatic change than that described by Patrice: "I didn't notice as dramatic changes as perhaps he did." But, like other reviewers, Patrice's manager agreed with almost all of the specific changes mentioned by Patrice and passed on by the researcher. This may be attributed, perhaps, to the difficulty of noticing change in people over long periods of time, especially when in this case the manager is two levels removed, and thus seeing papers that have usually already been "massaged" by Patrice's supervisor.

Second, Patrice's manager was "quite surprised by [Patrice's] statement that [Patrice's supervisor] and I have had a large impact on his writing, because first of all, I don't supervise him directly, and second, the major part of what we talk about is *substantive* [?!]. But maybe my offhand comments are used by Patrice . . . Maybe he took the odd comment I *did* make very seriously." The manager went on to say, "But as I remember them, they were on specific things . . . Maybe he's applied that in other places, and if so, that's great."

The manager's apparent belief that "substantive" comments would be

unlikely to help a writer develop seems to imply a belletristic view of writing, which in turn implies a notion of development as merely linguistic-stylistic. Perhaps an appreciation of writing's epistemic possibilities (writing as knowledge-based and knowledge-making) is necessary to appreciate or even to notice the kinds of far-reaching developments described by Patrice, and to understand the kind of impact that substantive feedback can have on a writer's development.

Blair: "You learn through doing"

Blair is an interesting study in the complexities and dissonances inherent in the development of writing ability.

In the first interview, Blair predicted that his writing would change only "a little" in the Bank. He thought that his writing would become more concise, and that he would be "a little more familiar with terminology, but that's not really a change." Fifteen months after the first interview, Blair believed that he had learned a good deal about writing. In a revealing comment during the second interview, Blair said: "Before I started at the Bank, I would have definitely said that my writing wouldn't and needn't change all that much. But there have been significant changes and there needs to be more changes . . . I see that there is a lot of learning to be done and a lot of improvement to be made . . . I guess I was being too conceited."

Blair thought that changes in his attitudes and beliefs about writing were perhaps the most important of the four areas probed. Changes here included a curious mix of: a feeling of improvement ("feedback seems to suggest improvement"); frustration with, yet a better understanding of, the document

cycling process (which Blair termed "multiple authoring"); an increase in confidence about eliciting and using feedback; and a decrease in overall writing confidence.

Blair was one of only two participants to rate his self-confidence as lower in the second interview than in the first. Surprised and sometimes overwhelmed by the quantity and the detail of the feedback on his drafts, Blair learned that he had a lot to learn as an economist and writer. In the first interview, Blair said that he felt confident about his writing ability, and based on his past experience in school, he thought he wrote a "good product." In particular, he felt confident about "presenting ideas clearly, and about originality and creativity." Fifteen months later, he felt "a little less confident" about these aspects. While he was less confident about these aspects and "in a general way about writing [ability]", he felt "more confident that [he] could obtain useful feedback and use it to advantage."

Blair thought when he started work at the Bank that writing was "fairly important" in his job. Fifteen months later he believed that writing was even more important than he had previously thought: "writing is very important. I don't know why I said 'fairly' important." He also seemed to have gained a more concrete sense of why writing was important in the Bank: he said that "the importance" still lay in "communicating and documenting information," but, he added, "I'm not here for my personal satisfaction; I'm here for the [Governor's] satisfaction." "They want me to answer their questions, so I do, and I try to anticipate others. Sometimes I'm not very good at it." In other

words, Blair appeared to have gained a less egocentric understanding of writing, and to see writing as successful to the extent that it met senior readers' needs.

Overall, the changes in Blair's attitudes and beliefs about writing seem to represent a more complex understanding of what writing is or can be in business: less a "product" from an individual reflecting "originality" and "creativity," more a process in which writers feed into larger business function processes through understanding and satisfying readers' needs. "You have less autonomy here," [compared with school] Blair said. "What you have to say may not be what someone else wants said."

More than other participants, Blair seemed aware that some of his development came *through* writing. Researcher: "When I asked you how good on-the-job writers get that way, you said that it was experience, and an attitude that writing is important. Do you still feel the same way?" Blair: "Yes. You learn through doing, and you have to believe that what you are doing is important. Experience can be both reading and writing; I think you get more benefit out of doing it, though." It's interesting that Blair links experience -- "doing it" -- with attitude -- believing that his writing is important -- to explain the development of workplace writing ability. Presumably, the belief that "what you're doing is important" would follow a greater understanding of how one's own work fit in with the larger organizational functions.

He also said that feedback was important to his development as a writer: that he learned much from it, and that he was better at seeking it out, at accepting, using, and learning from it. Blair valued written feedback from his

bosses the most, but he also valued oral feedback and interaction with peers and superiors.

Blair appeared to learn that document cycling was more a complex, dynamic and dialogic process than merely a product-driven editing/finetuning procedure:

I get more involved in discussing in preparation for the paper [than when I started]. When they say 'Cover this and this' I say 'Maybe we can do this'. . . I year ago I would probably have been given the assignment and run away to my office and started writing. I'm better now at probing uncertainties in my mind and at speaking up. I did this a year ago, but not very much in depth; it was more surface information, just enough to get by.

In the first interview, Blair already believed that feedback was "there to help" him, and that the purpose of the feedback was to "help [him] conform to Bank expectations" and to "produce a better document." But fifteen months later, he was "clearer now about the uses of feedback." "More than just correcting your spelling," feedback helped Blair "learn what people like and don't like . . . as well as their goals for the next draft." He had broadened his understanding of the purpose of feedback from being to "help in producing a better text" to include "making sure the paper addresses the salient points . . . content that addresses all the questions."

Like many of the participants, he also found feedback enormously frustrating and often puzzling.

Blair also made significant gains in understanding his audiences and their information needs, and more broadly speaking, the organizational context of writing in the Bank. "I have a better knowledge of my readers' positions"; "I

know more about who c.c.'s go to; I know who to be impressed by if a request comes down" are comments which indicate a better understanding of the organizational context and the power structure in a hierarchic organization.

Although it was clear to the researcher and to Blair's manager that Blair's increased understanding of the organizational context was significant and useful, Blair himself belittled the utility of such an understanding: "I wouldn't put much value on knowing the organizational format . . . It doesn't help you a whole lot. It certainly doesn't improve my writing."

And yet Blair came to believe there was a specific Bank culture and that this culture was important to writing. In the first interview, Blair said that he "hadn't really observed a specific Bank culture different from other work places." In the second interview he said, "I feel the place and the processes are slightly different here, but it's hard to put a finger on it." Whereas earlier he thought that the culture of any workplace would affect only *what* you write about." In the second interview, he said that this belief was "definitely wrong." The "Bank style," he said, was an example of how local culture could affect writing in different ways. Blair also came to believe that, compared with earlier, his understanding of the culture was apt to affect the content and sometimes the style of his writing: "I am more willing to act on it."

Blair thought that over the fifteen months he had increased both his job-specific knowledge and his feel for the work of others in his department, and that this paid off in better written products: "I know the area better and I know what 'extra stories' to look for." Blair said that in addition to learning through

feedback, he learned about the organizational context in two other ways: first, from asking colleagues "Who is X?" and second, from gossip: for example, "They say [the deputy governor] is interested in this topic."

In sum, Blair attributed his development to many factors: to writing itself and to feedback, to learning how to participate more effectively in the document cycling process, to acquiring greater job-related knowledge, to speaking and listening, and to a changed attitude about the possibility and desirability of change in his writing.

Blair's manager's views accorded with Blair's, except he thought Blair evaluated himself and his progress too harshly: "He shouldn't feel less confident . . . I think he's really saying he knows more of the weaknesses": "He's too hard on himself . . . He's much better than he was to begin with." In general, the manager thought that Blair had made real gains in "acclimatiz[ing] himself to what the needs are of management, both middle and senior, and the need to get a 'story' out"

Blair's manager emphasized that much of Blair's learning was due to his good social skills. "Blair is one of the best economists I've seen in terms of accommodating the sometimes devastating critiques of first drafts. He's a good listener . . . He's not argumentative. He doesn't get himself cornered into untenable situations." These abilities, especially Blair's good listening skills, the manager said, helped Blair develop as a writer. Blair was lucky, the manager said, to be able to sit in on certain weekly meetings:

He's in a good position in this section because as part of the weekly briefing for departmental management, he does this note. Every Friday he's at this meeting with the other . . . economists,

and the Chief, and/or deputy Chief . . . and some other senior people, and there's a discussion of the numbers . . . and you could see how [these numbers] fit into the Bank's overall policy setting. That's a unique insight that a lot of other economists in other departments . . . don't get to see. [He sees] what people are doing with the information he is giving.

The manager saw Blair as on a developmental continuum. After mentioning that Blair had improved in anticipating readers' questions, he said: "This is going to be the next stage of his development . . . He sees himself as someone paid to answer questions. Well, you know, as he moves up, he's going to be paid to *ask* questions." The manager confirmed that part of this progress was due to an increase in job expertise: "he has made progress because he is comfortable with the data."

Two weaknesses or gaps the manager pointed to would, he thought, "close through time." "Like many other economists [at his stage] he still concentrates too much on descriptive rather than analytic [writing]." Second, he thought Blair did not adequately contextualize, or "locate" or "motivate" a paper. But, "he's making progress and he'll continue to make progress," the manager said. "It's the fellow who comes in saying 'Hey look! I did very well in English in university and I write poetry. You can't teach me. What are you, some bureaucrat?' Those guys don't do so well."

Christine: "Keeping the reader in mind"

Christine had a similar pattern of development in that her writing process became more audience-driven, and her written drafts more audience-sensitive. Christine believed that the most important development in her writing in her year at the Bank was in "keeping the reader in mind while I write." Christine

described the cause of this development in concrete terms: "On the last paper . . . I went through so many drafting changes as a result of suggestions . . . that I began to think that there must be an easier way of making the paper acceptable to the reader earlier in the process. So, 'would he [my manager] consider this acceptable?' became my standard, my benchmark."

In addition to increased audience awareness, Christine's writing process changed in several other ways. She was more apt to initiate her own revisions. She wrote more independently, getting less guidance, and talking less to colleagues about the document (few participants reported this). She stopped "over-writing" (something she did deliberately when she first arrived, letting her reviewer decide if the paper needed paring down), partly because "I know my readers have a pretty good knowledge of the issue." She was "much more casual about sitting down and doing it [writing] . . . more comfortable facing the task." and "more relaxed getting feedback, so . . . more receptive to it." Finally, she said that she was better able to "take [her] eyes off the line on the road and look at the big picture."

A key part of Christine's development was her increased understanding of the organizational context. This included a better understanding of expectations for written documents: stylistic considerations such as precision and conciseness, as well as broader considerations such as acceptable forms of analysis and the need for a tight, well-structured argument. It also included a better understanding of the jobs her readers did, and thus of their information needs. Her manager confirmed this development, saying "That's an interesting insight. I

think I would say the same thing. You want to understand what your reader is going to be doing with the information you're giving him in order to give it to him in a useful way."

Some of these changes were promoted by the feedback process which she deemed a useful opportunity to learn. "In school you don't get a chance to improve papers. Here you get to bounce around ideas and to use them in improving a paper." The most useful form of feedback for Christine was oral, especially when it's "reacting to the global content. I learn more from a high-level reaction than from a word-by-word edit." In reacting to this statement, her supervisor said:

I think a bright person would make a statement like that. That's great. Fantastic . . . You know we don't get feedback on our feedback. I'm pleased. You don't necessarily see the benefit. Of course the next paper you see also needs to be worked on. You don't know that it would have been a lot worse had you not had that hour-long discussion and perhaps some shouting and screaming . . .

As she gained in confidence, her reaction to feedback changed. She became "more receptive" to it, and "better at being active in the process." Christine said that she had also become "more willing to defend her ideas" in the sessions. Presumably, being more active and receptive meant that Christine made progress in being able to learn from the feedback sessions.

Christine also learned by seeing "other people writing and what they go through, and how long it takes," as well as by reading "papers circulating in the department" which let her see "what is expected, what the standard is."

Developing job-specific knowledge triggered other writing-related change:

"knowing more about the workings of financial institutions may have helped me to make hypotheses or draw conclusions myself rather than going to [my manager]." Christine's manager thought she had also learned by having "a very good network of peers with whom she could talk and learn a lot." "I think that's perhaps the major route through which people learn about this organization," he said. "It's as much from their peer network as from their supervisor."

Christine's understanding of the function of writing in her department broadened from a sense that it was to "inform people about events and ideas" to a more dialogical, less egocentric sense of promoting "reaction to ideas in hope of producing more research."

An interesting gap between Christine's view of the Bank culture and her manager's concerned the speed of document production and the allowable strength of claim in a text. From Christine's point of view, document cycling meant that "things are so slow, it's demoralizing. A paper can sit on a desk for a month." She also perceived and disliked a sense of "not taking a strong stand on anything for fear of being criticized later. Claims are weak . . ."

From her manager's point of view: "I could see where she'd get that impression . . . I too could have made that remark not too long ago." But, "it's not necessarily the result of a cautious approach; it may be the result of a precise framework . . . It's the nature and the nuances of economics . . . probabilities . . . precision." Christine's manager saw the slowness and the weakening of strong claims as part of a deliberate "managerial technique": "if

we were Japanese we'd call it the Japanese managerial technique. What you end up with is consensus. You end up with something you're both part of. It may take longer to get there, but when you're there, everybody's on side . . . It may make us appear cumbersome and slow to react, but when we do react, having achieved that consensus . . . you start at a higher base when you do react."

The result of these developments could be seen in Christine's papers, according to her, and with a few reservations, her manager. The key developments in her papers were: a greater tendency to "go straight to the point"; a greater tendency to go beyond the findings and to interpret: earlier she "would have stated [her] findings without going further"; a greater tendency to focus on "interesting" variables; and, papers that were more reader-centred and more focused, especially in later drafts.

Christine's manager thought that Christine still needed to learn more about her secondary audiences, and about how to contextualize a document for future readers, how to make a paper "stand on its own."

There were no major changes in Christine's attitudes or beliefs. She gained in overall confidence ("certainly has not diminished. I think I can hold my own"), but she still lacked confidence in her "technical competence." In commenting on how people develop on-the-job writing ability, Christine qualified her earlier remark -- "practice" -- by saying "but not the same document type; you need to write different types . . . Writing to different audiences may [also help] develop the writer."

Daniel: "Becoming a member of the group"

Daniel thought his writing had changed significantly in his first year on the job, and attributed most of the change to his greater knowledge of the institutional and social context. Daniel's comments in the "general impressions" section of the second interview provide a fair summary of what he learned in his first year at the Bank:

First, I understand the Bank better and my readers. I understand their tastes and preferences better . . . I've learned how to lead my readers gradually to the point I'm making. I really keep my readers more firmly in mind as I write . . . I've developed my understanding of the power structure, of the organization of work in the Bank. This helps me know how to convince my readers. Knowing both my readers personally and how they fit into the workflow is very important.

Daniel was articulate and thoughtful about how some of his writing development had come about. In the second interview, he said that the key ways by which he had acquired his writing-related knowledge were by "speaking to people" and "becoming a member of the group." He said this happened both formally and informally. He noted that the degree of fruitful social interaction depended partly on bilingual ability (which helps employees to "learn faster" from more people), as well as on the dynamics or structure of the section an employee works in: "Some people are quite isolated in their sections."

Daniel also said that he learned by studying samples of Bank genres; for example, he read some "briefing notes" and a few short reports before writing them himself to see "how they accomplished the conciseness" and to look at structure and style. In the first interview, Daniel thought that on-the-job writers learned by reading, by "discussing aspects of a document" and by "thinking about

how arguments are made and structured." In the second interview he held by this list, but he added "a growing understanding of the environment" and "a growing, more mature sense of one's own self as a person." Daniel also said in the second interview that his boss had been a "key factor in helping me understand the Bank environment . . . her key contribution was in helping me understand the workings of the department . . . She often said 'the Bank thinks this way' on certain matters "

In the first interview Daniel said that the purpose of feedback was to help the writer develop and to ensure that the written document was good. In the second interview he agreed with his earlier comments, but added "to ensure that a text meets a reader's needs" -- a more rhetorical idea than that of simply making a text "good." Daniel volunteered that in his first year on the job, he had become less self-defensive and more willing to use feedback to revise. Interestingly, he said that he had learned how to learn from feedback.

Some of Daniel's attitudes and beliefs about writing changed during his first year on the job. His confidence in his writing had increased. Like other participants, he thought his earlier confidence was "naive" and "too high." He felt more confident partly because he had "more tools, more techniques to write." He said "I've got other ways of writing now." While in the first interview he had commented on occasional anxiety regarding feedback -- he felt that *he* was being evaluated -- this anxiety had disappeared by the second interview: "Now I understand that it is just the text that is being criticized. I like criticism now." In the first interview, he indicated that he was uncertain

whether his writing met the needs of his superiors; in the second interview he said he "played with" this uncertainty. Like some participants, Daniel was more apt to "say no to suggestions" or to "argue with" his boss as a result of his increased self-confidence.

In the first interview, Daniel said that he believed that writing was important in his job. In the second interview, he said that oral communication was also important. In addition, he had refined his characterization of "good writing": he was "beginning to realize that good writing is not necessarily elaborate, but something that is clear and simple and able to be understood by your readers." In the first interview, Daniel thought that the function of writing in his department was to "transfer information" and to help provide a means of evaluating people. In the second interview he added: to help in "managing or regulating problems," and to help enhance and clarify his thinking.

A significant change in Daniel's writing process was in taking "a lot less time" to write a text and thus he was more apt to meet deadlines. Part of this gain in efficiency was in moving from pencil drafting to microcomputer use. Other than this gain, Daniel didn't think that using the computer had changed his writing process. He thought his writing process had become less linear because he was more familiar with topics and thus "it mattered less to start at the beginning."

Daniel believed that as a result of his better knowledge of the organizational context and of his readers, his written products had changed a good deal. Some of the changes Daniel identified were: more focused, more

reader-centred structure, displaying the "essentials right away" and subordinating (e.g., in appendices) material which is subordinate when the readers' needs are considered ("I've got a much better idea of what is needed"); shorter sentences and greater conciseness; graphs more appropriate to readers' interests, and better integrated into text; and, more "prudence" or caution in his writing: "writing is permanent so you've got to be very careful."

Daniel said several times that the biggest change overall was in his understanding of the organizational context, and that this increased understanding had had a variety of effects. An important aspect of this context was "the Bank view" of the world, and the Bank's way of doing things. His gains in understanding this context were manifest in anything from making a graph focus temporally on periods of interest to the Bank, to being able "to change [the] purpose [of the document] to meet the Bank's needs." He said that he had come to believe in the existence of the "Bank style," which he described as "conservative, scientific, rigorously analytic." Like some other participants, Daniel said that the Bank was less conservative and more "creative" than it had originally appeared to him.

Daniel emphasized that an important part of the contextual knowledge he had gained was increased specific knowledge of individuals in the Bank (his senior-level readers and his superiors generally) and "knowing what they know and what they don't know." He thought that this more concrete understanding of his readers, their knowledge and their information needs helped him to develop ... to synthesize and present ideas. Another effect of increased

knowledge of the institutional context mentioned by Daniel was in "not making the Bank look bad when I was interpreting results." He also thought that he was "better able to convince people now. I lead the readers to accept my ideas better."

Many of Daniel's most important changes appear to be closely interrelated. Three major aspects of writing-related change illustrate the complex relationships between or among aspects of development. "Understand[ing] the Bank better," "really keep[ing] my readers in mind as I write," and "becoming a member of the group" are three components of rhetorical growth which would likely affect each other dynamically, perhaps catalytically.

Patterns of Change

While these four participant portraits give us a sense of the individual experience of on-the-job writing development, we also need a "before and after" sense of aspects of change in the participants considered as a group. That is, we need a picture of the participants' writing-related attitudes and beliefs, writing processes, written products, and understanding of the social/organizational context for writing, both when they started work, and ten-twenty months later. This picture is sketched below. Where possible, the extent and the range of change among the participants has been indicated, and comments have been added where useful. Further detail and comment, as well as description of other patterns of change can be found in Appendix B, "Additional aspects of development."

Attitudes and Beliefs about writing and development

Predicted change; later perceptions of change

First interview. In the first interview, four of the participants were sceptical that their writing "would change much" in the coming year. They, and perhaps some of the other participants, appeared to believe that writing in the Bank would be an unproblematic extension of their earlier academic writing. They said that "change would be very small" (Micheline); that there might be "slight changes" (Christine) or changes in "small technical aspects" (Pierre). One said bluntly: "Nope [my approach to writing won't change]. Quite frankly, they're the same writing skills I've had since grade school" (Greg).

Five of the participants thought that writing was largely "learnable" as opposed to something "you have or don't have." Five said that writing ability was partly or largely innate; two participants volunteered that "technical" writing was learnable while other forms of writing were not.

Of the six who were more open to the possibility of change, three had trouble articulating the nature of possible change, or predicted fairly trivial change: "Not sure what changes: maybe style, but probably not" (John); "something will change in relation to changing readerships" (Patrice), and "better terminology" and "choice of words" (Amar) which may reflect an understanding of writing as a function of vocabulary. Three of the six who predicted at least some development showed some insight into what might *cause* the change: "a growing awareness of what is required from feedback" (John); "a better understanding of the Bank's textual needs" (Daniel); "knowledge and experience"

(Patrice).

Second interview. In the second interview, all of the participants reported a variety of writing-related changes, and these changes were greater in number and more far-reaching than the participants had earlier predicted.

The participants' perception of the degree of overall, writing-related change varied widely, from "no major changes in my writing" (Pierre, but see below), to "Yes, a lot: my writing has definitely changed a lot" (Patrice). Two or three participants appeared to develop much more than they were aware. This lack of awareness appeared to be a consequence, at least in part, of these participants having narrow, rather belletristic notions of writing.

Those who in the early "General impressions" part of the second interview reported little overall change in their writing reported many specific aspects of change in the later, more detailed part of the interview. Pierre, for example, who reported "no major changes" overall, reported quite a few specific changes which appear to contradict his overall assessment. Among the specific changes were: more writing confidence, less "flowery" text, changes in global organization (putting "the conclusion in the first paragraph"), a greater tendency to quantify and qualify an assertion, and less use of "value judgments."

Seven or eight of the participants were clearly aware of having acquired significant writing-related knowledge and/or developing as a writer over the ten-twenty month research period. Daniel's long general remark, quoted in the profile above, illustrates this awareness. Micheline also articulated this overall sense of development:

I think I have a much more important role now . . . I know the

interests of the section, so [proposals are] usually successful . . . I think [my sense of purpose] is much clearer now . . . [My ideas are] much clearer in my mind before I start . . . [and I] certainly, certainly [think about my readers more early in the process] because I know [them] better, and I know mostly what are their interests. . . .

By the second interview, the participants no longer saw writing as an unproblematic extension of their earlier university writing. When the researcher asked the participants if there were any differences between writing in the Bank and writing in university, all of the participants said that there were. Daniel, for example, said that there was a "very, very, very big difference." In the Bank, he said, writing had to support the corporate goals and help management to make decisions, and therefore had to be much more "specific" and more "precise" than in university. John said "You're not trying to get a grade. You're just trying to give people a wrap-up of what they want to know. In university they want to see how much you know; here . . . they don't care about your understanding, they just want to know [what is essential to them]." Bruce said "In university you can write a lot of B.S. and hope you find your idea. Here it wouldn't get paid any attention . . . In university you can throw numbers off the top of your head. Here if you do that and somebody questions it and you don't have an answer for it, you look silly." Christine said that "it's more important to take the reader through a logical progression than to be a good speller." (See "Participant views on differences . . ." in Appendix B for further detail.)

A few of the participants were clearly stunned by the scope and the impact of the changes. As Patrice said, "it's like going to China."

Comments. To generalize about the participants' beliefs about

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development: as new employees, the participants did not anticipate the number, nature or broad effect of the writing-related changes they would experience in their first year or two on the job. In the second interview, most participants understood that they had acquired a good deal of writing-related knowledge and some had a sense of the importance of this knowledge. The participants who had earlier predicted rather picayune changes, e.g., "choice of words" etc., appeared to develop in far more significant ways than predicted. To the researcher, it appeared that all of the participants acquired significant writing-related knowledge and developed various important aspects of writing ability. It seemed clear that all of the participants developed more, and in more far-reaching ways than they had predicted in the first-stage interview.

Some of the participants came to see over time that writing is a complex, multifaceted, context-specific activity, and that "good" writing is neither abstract nor fully generalizable. They came to see that in the Bank, writing is "good" to the extent that it satisfies the specific information needs of specific audiences, or more broadly, to the extent that it helps the readers to do their jobs. When the participants were new to the Bank, they appeared to have a tacit view of writing as a discrete, "portable" (i.e., acontextual), have-or-have-not skill. With this view of writing, reinforced by the confidence engendered by doing well in university, the participants could not foresee the kinds of difficulties they would encounter, or the degree of accommodation and learning required to adapt to the new writing demands of their jobs. (See also "Managers' perceptions" in Appendix B for related information.)

The importance and functions of writing

First interview. Almost all of the participants reported writing as being "important" or "very important" in their jobs in the first interview.

John seemed to have a clear idea of at least one major function of writing in his department: "feeding information to others so that they can make decisions." Likewise, Patrice seemed to understand how writing can help enable or carry out business functions: "to help the operations side [of the department]." Patrice and John also seemed to have developed a clearer understanding of the possible relationships between the document they had written and other documents in the area. Patrice, for example, saw his paper as part of his boss's information-gathering on a large subject; he also realized that other people were working on the same subject.

The other eight participants were less clear about the various functions of writing in their departments and of possible relationships between the document just written and other documents. Interestingly, many of the participants saw the role of writing generally, or the purpose of the document at hand, in egocentric terms, e.g., "to help other people know what you're doing" (Micheline); "communicating accurate information" (Amar); the role generally is "conveying information" and "the purpose of the paper is to aggregate information you get from other sources" (Greg); the role is "information transferring" (Daniel); "inform[ing] people about recent events, inform[ing] about ideas" (Christine).

Second interview. Participants' perceptions of the importance of writing

i their jobs remained much the same. Two participants, John and Blair, said in the second interview that writing had turned out to be even more important than they had thought. Pierre said that writing was "the most important thing I'm doing."

All of the participants were clearer by the second interview *why* writing was important in their jobs. For some, writing was the major means of showing their professional "face" in a large organization. For Greg, writing was the "chief means through which I can disseminate information to senior management." Daniel spoke of the "element of visibility: your papers circulate and people see your name." Patrice and John were aware of writing as important for performance appraisals and promotions. Amar spoke of the "recognition" one received for writing.

These statements show a clearer, more concrete appreciation of the personal and professional importance of writing; five or six of the participants appeared to gain a broader and less egocentric understanding of the functions of writing as well. In describing the importance of writing in his second interview, Blair said the "importance lies in communicating and documenting" but he added, "I'm not here for my personal satisfaction; I'm here for the Governor's satisfaction." In his second interview, Daniel showed insight when he added this function to his earlier list: writing as a way to get a grip on and manage problems. In Christine's second interview, she noted that she had realized an additional function of writing: "to get reaction to ideas in hope of producing more research, using feedback to continue research." Over his first twenty

months in the Bank, Bruce learned how some of the papers being written related to each other, especially how technical papers related to more general policy-oriented papers.

Comments. These less egocentric notions of the functions of writing in the Bank show increased understanding of the dynamic role of writing in analysing and responding to problems in a research- and policy-oriented institution. They also suggest a more rhetorical, more reader-centred understanding of what writing is and does in a business setting. None of the participants, however, put forward the following functions, which were mentioned by some of the managers: to build consensus, to co-ordinate and regulate employee efforts, to build a corporate understanding of economic events and Bank actions.

Self-confidence

First interview. Virtually all of the participants were self-confident about their writing in the first interview: "Oh, yes, I've always been able to write well" (Greg); "I've been told I write well and I believe I do" (Blair) were two of the stronger comments. This is not surprising in an organization which recruits selectively from Canadian universities.

Second interview. Self-confident to begin with, eight or nine of the participants appeared to *gain* in self-confidence as time passed, and thought this increased confidence justified. Some of the participants noted that their earlier self-confidence was not justified, for example: "I was over self-confident" (Amar); "I was totally wrong" (Patrice).

Comments. See Appendix B, "Self-confidence," for elaboration.

Knowledge of the organizational context

Notions of context and its influence on writing

First interview. Not surprisingly, shortly after arriving at the Bank, the participants were not very clear about important features of the context in which they wrote. Related perhaps to a view of writing as a discrete and portable skill, participants had trouble responding to questions about corporate culture and its possible affect on writing. Most participants were unsure whether they had observed something which might be termed a "Bank culture." When asked "Have you observed a Bank of Canada culture, with specific values and belief systems?" most respondents said something like Patrice: "Difficult to say." Those who thought there might be such a culture had trouble describing it: "Hard to say . . . that's a tough question" (Greg); "hard to articulate" (Amar). Two participants thought the culture "conservative." One described it as "bureaucratic and slow moving" (John).

Seven of the participants couldn't say whether the local culture had any effect on writing. Of the three who thought it did, one remarked that "quality is more important than quantity" (Christine). Daniel said "you have to justify claims . . . everything must have a narrow applied focus." Likewise, Bruce said that "you can't do university bullshit . . . you can't ramble on about nothing."

Interestingly, while seven of the ten participants said that their understanding of Bank or departmental policy had no influence on the paper just written, eight participants said that reading other Bank documents,

particularly same-genre documents, was an important influence. Seven participants said that speaking to "other people" was an important influence, and an eighth wished he could have spoken to more people about writing.

Second interview. Over time, all of the participants appeared to gain a sense that the Bank had a unique culture and a specific organizational context which affected writing in discernible ways. The participant's sense of the importance of this knowledge to writing was often evident from the participant's comments in the early, "general impressions" section of the second interview. Here, where participants were asked to comment generally on possible change in any of the four areas investigated, eight participants volunteered comments related to gains in understanding the organizational context. For example: "First, I understand the Bank better and my readers . . . I've developed my understanding of the power structure, of the organization of work in the Bank. This helps me know how to convince my readers. Knowing my readers personally and how they fit into the workflow is very important" (Daniel).

Others comments show how a better understanding of the organizational context influenced the participants' writing: "people don't have time to read everything . . . things get summarized anyway, so you might as well be brief . . . in the first place" (John); "I understand [now] how the Department works . . . what my readers are looking for: very specific ideas expressed in simple, concise form, accuracy, everything you write has to be backed up, no mistakes" (Amar); "I guess the Bank is more careful than most places about what we say . . . the Bank does not have one homogenous culture. There are differences in the

different areas" (Bruce).

Christine, one of two participants who, in the "General impressions" section of the interview, did not speak about gains in understanding the context for writing, clearly did make gains in this area, as her later comments (supported by her manager's comments) made clear: "My background knowledge and my understanding of the context of the paper is greater . . . If I had written it a year ago, I wouldn't have known what to interpret from all this. I wouldn't have known which variables were interesting. I would have stated my findings without going any further." Greg, the other participant, also acquired some knowledge of the organizational context, but not as much, perhaps, as the other participants, and not as much as his supervisor would have liked. Greg noticed the need for a "story" in Bank analytical writing: "Everyone remembers a story; no one remembers what happened to consumer credit two months ago," and he had learned that "there has to be consistency in the stories coming out of your department." These observations and others show that Greg had acquired useful knowledge about some aspects of the context for writing in the Bank. His supervisor, however, while agreeing that Greg had made some progress in this regard, saw Greg's incomplete grasp of the Bank context as important, and frustrating for him as a supervisor: " [Greg] wasn't sure . . . of the implications [of a paper], or why he was doing it, or why it's an interesting question . . . [he couldn't see] where it would fit into the big picture " Overall, the other participants' managers saw very strong gains in this area, and saw these gains as highly significant (See the "Managers' perceptions" section of Appendix B).

Comments. Most of the participants learned a good deal about the organizational context, and this learning was generally valued highly. This learning appeared to involve a number of aspects including: a realization that the Bank is a unique workplace/community; a realization that the unique features of the Bank are important in determining or influencing various aspects of writing in the Bank; a better understanding of the business functions of their departments; greater knowledge of the jobs done by -- and thus of the information needs of -- their readers; as well as an increased familiarity with their readers (who are also typically their superiors, directly or indirectly) on a personal and professional level.

Sense of audience and purpose

First interview. All of the participants responded in some fashion to the question "What purpose does this paper serve?", but few appeared to have a real sense of why the paper needed to be written, or of how it might help the Bank or the readers in their work -- in other words, few participants had a reader-centred sense of purpose. "It's purely analytical" (Patrice); and "to aggregate information . . . and to make sense of the data (Greg); are responses which betray a very passive sense of purpose, of writing as something that "gets done," to manage data in some abstract sense. "It says what we should be doing within our . . . area" (John); "to show people the result of the appreciation of the Canadian dollar" (Micheline) are rather writer-centred notions of purpose.

Most participants were "very certain" (John, Patrice, Amar, Greg) or "fairly certain" (Blair, Christine, Daniel, Bruce) about their sense of the purpose

of the first-stage paper. Pierre and Micheline were the least certain about the purpose of their first-stage papers. Pierre said that he *thought* the purpose of his paper was to "advise readers about the utility" of bailing out troubled companies, but he said that he was not very confident about this, and that therefore he had tried to clarify the purpose with his manager three times, but with limited success. Micheline said that she was only "fifty per cent" sure about her purpose, and that this uncertainty had affected the content of the paper.

The participants' understanding of audience for the first-stage papers was often hazy. An exception was John, who was one of two participants who seemed very clear about the audience: "It will be circulated first to the Pension Fund, then to my boss's boss, then the summary will go to the Board of Trustees." Most participants, however, were very vague. To the question "Now that you've finished this paper, can you describe what will happen to it?" eight participants said something like "I'm not completely clear, but my assumption is that it will somehow help my superiors" (Blair), or "I don't know" (Micheline). Christine was obviously gaining an initial understanding of her higher-level audiences when she said: "I'm not sure. The fact that the departmental chief edited it is a good sign" [that the paper may find readers among senior management].

Second interview. Only two participants, Christine and Bruce, said that they had always clear about the purpose of the papers they had written since the first interview. Bruce, however, said that he was not "always clear about who the readers [are] going to be," indicating that his sense of a paper's purpose

would not always match his superiors'. Most participants said that they were somewhat clearer about the purpose of the papers they wrote, ranging from "much clearer, maybe ninety per cent" (Micheline) to "[My sense of purpose is] clearer because I ask a lot of questions, but there is still a lot of room for improvement, because [my manager] doesn't tell me everything, or maybe he doesn't know. Maybe *he* isn't clear about what those people above him want" (Pierre). Pierre was the only participant who remarked on the possibility that the manager might be working with incomplete knowledge of some of the social or organizational parameters which affect writing. Like Pierre, other participants also indicated that there was progress yet to be made about understanding the purposes of writing given documents: "Generally I know, but it can still be obscure" (John).

Most participants indicated that they had a somewhat better sense of their higher-level audience, a better sense of their gaps in this knowledge, and a better sense of the importance of this knowledge. Participants said that they had developed a better sense of their audience as individuals, and as "consumers" of information needed to perform their jobs.

Some comments from participants on gains in knowing their audience: "I'm fairly clear [now] about who reads [my papers]. I'm less clear about why some people are as concerned as they are about some topics" (Blair). "I understand . . . better . . . my readers . . . their tastes and preferences . . . I keep my readers more firmly in mind as I write" (Daniel). "I think there are certain . . . ways that senior management looks at things . . . you have to adapt

a little bit to that way of thinking, or it's pointless" (Bruce). Most of the participants understood that they still had a number of uncertainties about their audiences, and thus about the purpose of documents they wrote, and they expressed some frustration about this.

Four or five participants attributed progress they'd made in understanding their audiences, (and/or their information needs) and the purposes of the papers they wrote to being more aggressive in asking questions about these key concerns: "I'm less shy about getting clarification now" (Patrice); "I get more involved in discussing in preparation for a paper" (Blair). On the other hand, Pierre, the participant who perhaps developed the least, said that "I shouldn't have to ask [questions about audience and purpose]; my boss should let me know."

Gains in understanding audience seemed to have significant effects on participants' writing processes (e.g., see the profile of Christine above), and on their written products (e.g., see "The written product" below, and "Participant views on the how and why of change." Appendix B).

Comments. In the second-stage interview, it seemed that most participants had gained a somewhat better sense of the purpose of the documents they wrote, but paradoxically had lost their sense of certainty about the purpose. In other words, purpose became a more problematic notion, and participants had a much better sense of their own uncertainties about the purpose of documents they wrote. Most participants also had uncertainties about the audience for many of the papers they wrote; they also seemed to

understand much better that uncertainties about audience were likely to mean uncertainties about purpose. That is, the participants' admissions of uncertainties about audience indicate important gains in understanding the complexities of audience and purpose. Overall, most participants were more thoughtful about audience and purpose than they were in the first interview, and saw these aspects of writing as more problematic.

The role of the reviewer and feedback

First interview. To the question "Do you think your boss has a role in helping you develop as a writer?" three participants gave clear and insightful affirmative answers. For example, "most of his comments were very useful. things you can learn from . . . [for example] on what should be the upshot" (Christine); "Indirectly he's showing me what's acceptable and what's not" (John); "[she shows me] what to look at, what not to: what's important, what's not . . . to help devise appropriate structure and form" (Daniel). The other participants thought their boss might have a minor role in helping them to develop as writers, e.g., "he can tone things down," (Pierre), or thought it unlikely that their boss would play such a role, e.g., "By the time you're out of university, you should be a pretty good writer. Writers shouldn't have to be hand-led" (Greg); "not really, [his role is] just [to] point out some weaknesses . . . when I was hired, they knew I was a pretty good writer" (Patrice).

Only four or five of the participants said that feedback was one way by which "good on-the-job writers [got] that way." When the participants were asked specific questions about the feedback process, most deemed the process

useful in some way: to learn about "Bank expectations" (Blair); to aid in making papers "clear" (Micheline); to make sure "everyone is on the same track" (Daniel) and so on. Two or three participants, however, saw feedback as merely "point[ing] out faults" (Amar).

Second interview. In the second interview, eight or nine of the participants saw a key role for their supervisors and managers (their reviewers), and of feedback, both written and oral, in helping them to acquire writing-related knowledge, and in helping them to develop as employees and writers. Feedback in general and from the reviewer specifically was volunteered most often as the major cause of learning when the participants were asked how they learned what they learned. "Getting comments is . . . important, at least for me, because I'm a novice" (Christine). "Written feedback was the main [vehicle] for learning" . . . "Feedback [is] the only way you'll really learn how to do it right" (John); "This is where you learn. You learn the culture through feedback . . . the form, the shape of the document. You learn what you can say to a large extent through feedback" (Greg). Change in how the participants dealt with feedback also had implications for the participants' writing processes (see "The writing process" below).

The role of the reviewer seemed to be multifaceted. Several participants had become aware of their bosses as people who knew the "hot topics": the topics, variables, literature, etc., that were considering. Some participants saw their reviewer as a lens or a conduit which could help them learn the needs, the mindsets and the work functions of senior management, people who were usually

remote physically and organizationally from the writer. "The boss tells you what part should be in or out" (John); "I think my boss is a key factor in helping me understand the Bank environment . . . Her key contribution was in helping me understand the workings of the department . . . She often said 'the Bank thinks this way' on certain matters" (Daniel). When Micheline was asked whether her supervisors had been "a window on senior management" to help her understand which issues were important, she said "Oh yes, yes, especially [my manager]; we had to present a paper to [senior management] and he helped me . . . to know in what direction to go, because the subject was very broad . . ."

Blair attributed a large part of his writing development to his manager: "My boss has had a big role" partly because the feedback was substantive: "often the feedback is on the issues . . . [and whether] the content . . . addresses all the questions." Blair noted that "the biggest change has been in how I respond[ed] to" written feedback. He said that he was better at seeking and responding to feedback to make his texts more useful and acceptable to his readers; but curiously, he also said that he had become more "callous" to feedback.

Others also pointed to the kinds of useful writing-related knowledge they had gained through feedback: "This is where you learn: you learn the culture through feedback" (Greg); "There is a research point of view and an operations point of view. These are complementary. If you use feedback well, the result is good" (Patrice); "The feedback helps me understand the people in my area" (Daniel). *Oral* feedback was cited as being important by four participants:

"Oral feedback is more geared to substance . . . Feedback is for more than correcting your spelling. I knew that before, but I'm clearer now about the uses of feedback" (Blair). Pierre pointed to the relationship between knowledge of the organizational context and feedback: "I now understand the organizational constraints on the [area], so I can deal with collaboration better."

Two or three of the participants emphasized the importance of feedback by mentioning problems caused by a *lack* of feedback. Daniel, whose comment above points to his belief in the importance of his boss as a window on the organization, was also aware of the limits of his boss's ability to comment on his writing owing to her imperfect command of Daniel's language, French. Patrice, who emphasized the tremendous influence of his second supervisor and of his manager, also pointed out that his first supervisor gave very little feedback and that he therefore learned less in his early days at the Bank.

Some participants said that feedback and the write-and-review process had provoked greater audience awareness and analysis in their writing: "I pay more attention to my manager, as I plan and draft; I try to remember the comments he made on my [earlier] paper"; "'Would he consider this acceptable?' became my standard, 'my benchmark'" (Christine). "I really keep my readers more firmly in mind as I write . . . feedback helps me understand the people in my area" (Daniel).

Interestingly, the reviewers themselves were not fully aware of just how great a role they had in sparking aspects of development. Reviewers were often surprised to learn that a participant had ascribed an important -- or even the

most important -- role to the reviewer in developing the participant's writing.

Comments. While few of the participants predicted that the reviewer would play a major role in their writing-related development in the first interview, almost all of the participants acknowledged this role in the second interview. One wonders what impact an earlier sense of the importance of feedback and the reviewer might have had.

While some participants had a sense in the first interview that feedback might prove to be important, this sense was amplified and made concrete over time. Most participants were impressed by, and at times overwhelmed by, the feedback they received. Getting and using feedback was often *learned* by the participants to be an important means of writing development. Most participants learned to respond differently to feedback: they learned to accept it (and often to chafe at it); to cope with it; to take a more active role in it; to use it in revising; as well as to learn from it aspects such as audience expectations, acceptable forms of argument and analysis, formal discourse conventions, and various important aspects of the wider context. (See "Managers' comments . . ." in Appendix B, as well as "Participant views on the how and why of change" below, for elaboration.)

The writing process

First interview. All of the documents written just before the first interview were assigned by the participants' superiors. Two or three participants were unsure about who in the hierarchy had actually originated the request. Five of the participants received little or no guidance as they planned or wrote

their first drafts. Five participants studied sample papers to get ideas for structure; the other five spoke to colleagues "to get hints" (Christine) about what to include, or "to find out . . . expectations . . . [and] about previous . . . research . . . to make sure I was on the right track. I didn't want to make a fool of myself" (Bruce).

Four of the participants appeared to do no audience analysis in the planning stage; six did some. Eight used a pen or pencil for drafting; one used a p.c.; one used both. Only two participants spoke to colleagues about their writing while they were drafting.

Second interview. In the "General impressions" part of the second interview, eight of the ten participants volunteered that there had been major changes in their writing processes. For example, Amar's first comments in this section of the interview were: "The writing process has changed. My research is more selective. I try to focus more on my topic or purpose." Likewise, Bruce emphasized the importance of changes in his writing process, and he said that he valued these changes most highly, especially because "I probably go through it a lot faster now than I would before." Christine's only comments in the "General impressions" section focused on changes in her writing process: "more planning in my head and greater care as I draft, and more attention to . . . my manager as I draft and plan. I try to remember the comments he made on my first paper."

One of the two who did not volunteer comments on the writing process in the General impressions section, Micheline, appeared to have undergone

significant changes in her writing process when it was examined in detail. For example, Micheline said that she thought for "some time" before writing about her readers and her subject, something she "really didn't do before." Micheline said she thought about her readers more, and earlier in the process simply "because I [now] know them better, and I know mostly what are their interests." In general, greater audience knowledge and a greater degree of audience sensitivity and accommodation appeared to affect the writing process of almost all the participants.

The following changes, illustrated by comments from the participants, were reported. The number of participants reporting the change is in brackets. The participants reported being more apt to initiate documents than earlier (at least 4). "I think I have a much more important role now because I know much more about it, and I've made, for some small notes, some proposals . . . I know the interests of the section, so [these proposals] are usually successful" (Micheline). Participants were more apt to clarify the writing assignment in the early stages and able to clarify more effectively (4 or 5). "I'm more sure about my job and what is expected in documents. I have a better knowledge of my readers' positions as well as my own position. When I'm assigned a paper, I'm better at probing or clarifying the assignment. A year ago I wouldn't do this in depth" (Blair). Three or four participants did not clarify the second-stage paper because they felt confident that they knew what was required. In other words, most participants seemed to know better by the second-stage interview *whether* as well as *how* to clarify. Participants were more apt to keep the readers' needs

in mind as they planned or drafted (8). "On the last paper, I went through so many drafting changes as a result of suggestions . . . that I began to think that there must be an easier way of making the paper acceptable to the reader earlier in the process. So, 'would he [the manager] consider this acceptable?' became my standard, my benchmark" (Christine); "I was aware of not making the Bank look bad when I was interpreting the results. You have to be very careful" (Daniel); ". . . focus on what my readers needed to know . . . One trick is if they ask a question one week, just to make sure I look at it, and possibly other related things the next week" (Blair). Participants were clearer about "the story" they would write, a story that economic or financial numbers would support, before starting to draft (6 or 7). "Now first I write the story, then see if it can be verified [because] I now have a better idea of what I'm going to say even before I start looking at the data" (Greg). Bruce may have spoken for others when he said that the degree to which he felt confident about the story he'd write, before he started to draft, depended on the type of paper he was writing. Participants were more efficient in researching (5). "I used to research, make an outline, then begin. Now I make an outline, do my research and then begin. This is faster and makes my research more effective" (John). Several participants pointed to greater familiarity with databases, telephone contacts, the Bank library, and previously written research. Participants were faster at writing certain document types (5). There appears to have been some automatization of the writing process for certain document types. Several participants reported greater speed in writing certain genres, particularly the more formulaic genres.

Participants were more apt to talk to colleagues about topics being written about (4-5). (Two participants, however, said that they talked *less* to colleagues than before). Participants were more apt to use a computer (see Appendix B for elaboration). Finally, participants reacted more effectively to feedback (at least 8). A better understanding of, a more active role in, and a better ability to deal with and revise on the basis of feedback appeared to be one of the most important aspects of change in the participants' writing processes (as well as an important means by which participants gained greater knowledge of the organizational context -- see "The role of the reviewer . . ." above).

The participants were about evenly split as to how they came to deal with the feedback. Some participants were much more apt to defend their ideas with their managers; others were more apt to listen carefully and sympathetically to the feedback they received. With the exception of Greg's manager, both forms of response were seen as useful by the managers; both forms of response were seen as active engagement in the cycling process. Almost all of the participants reported feeling less personally threatened and depressed by feedback as time passed: "A million red marks doesn't mean you aren't a good writer" said Blair, for example.

One indication of the importance to the participants of learning to deal with feedback is seen from how they responded to the second-stage question "What advice about writing would you give [a] new employee to make the adjustment process [of writing in the Bank versus writing at university] easier?" The seven most common responses were directly or indirectly related to dealing

with feedback (see "Participant advice . . .", Appendix B).

Causes of change. With the exception of the change to computer-based writing, most changes in the participants' writing processes were the effect of other changes. Changes in process were not happenstance. Micheline and Blair, for example, talked to colleagues more in the early stages because they had worked with them, got to know them, and found their comments useful. Pierre no longer looked at other papers as models because he had internalized the most common structures. Christine did "more planning in my head and [paid] more attention to my manager as I plan and draft" largely because of the feedback she had received from the manager. Overall, the reviewer had a large, if sometimes indirect, role in instigating changes in the writing process.

Comments. There was more change in the participants' writing processes -- when the writing process is viewed broadly to include clarifying the assignment, oral interaction with colleagues, research procedures, use of computers, dealing with feedback, etc. -- than the researcher had expected in adult writers.

It is interesting to note how many of the changes in process reflect the following: an accommodation to the larger institutional dynamics, particularly the needs of senior management for specific kinds of information; the implied need for consensus; social relations, power relations, and socializing; and the write-and-review cycle. Put simply, almost all of the participants changed various important aspects of their writing processes to reflect and/or accommodate various important institutional practices and processes. (See also, "Managers'

Comments" on the writing process.)

The written product

Problems with using documents as evidence of change. While almost all the participants thought that the second-stage documents evidenced aspects of their development as writers, it is difficult for an outsider to gather much by comparing the first- and the second-stage documents. The difficulty arises in part because virtually all of the documents were collaboratively produced (at least in some respects), and in part because differences in genre, mode and audience between the earlier and later documents made them unsuitable for comparison.

The findings below are largely the impressions of the participants as they made judgments about the earlier and the later documents, and who had both documents in front of them to refer to. Adding credibility to the participants' observations on changes in the written products were the managers' comments, which tended to substantiate the participants'.

First-stage interview. All of the participants said that the type of document just written was different in some important respect from anything they had written before. Both Blair and Greg remarked on the limited scope to show "individuality" and personal "understanding" of the topic in the papers they had just written.

Second-stage interview. In describing the second-stage text, nine of the participants pointed to substantive elements of the written product which illustrated, in their opinion, changes in their writing. For example, six pointed to

better, more knowledgeable interpretation of data, or a more complete analytic "story," e.g., Christine: "My background knowledge and my understanding of the context is greater. If I had written it a year ago, I wouldn't have known what to interpret from all this. I wouldn't have known which variables are interesting. I would have stated my findings without going any further. Now I can set about interpreting . . . "; Micheline: "[if I had written this paper earlier] it would have been much longer, because I would have felt the need to explain -- even if it's to myself -- those things I don't know much about, so it would have been much longer . . . [I've learned that technical details] are not that important because of the [senior] people I'm addressing."

For virtually all of the participants, it appeared that the second-stage texts were more reader-centred. This meant one or more of: a) information better selected to meet given readers' needs and preferences. "Defining the importance of consumer credit I would as soon leave to the reader, especially when that reader is [the Governor] . . . He may have a different opinion . . . I don't think I would have been as clear about [distinguishing among readers] fourteen months ago" (Greg); "The way the ideas are presented is different. I've got a much better idea of what is needed" (Daniel); b) better focus, with the thesis or message easier to find: "the answer to the question is right at the top. I don't think I would have done this a year ago" (Amar); c) better (as understood in the Bank) analysis. "When I make a calculation, I make it really explicit. I wouldn't have done that before" (John); d) greater use of formatting, superordinating and subordinating devices to allow readers to find relevant

information quickly: "lots of headings: I wouldn't have done that before" (John); e) evidence of the "Bank style." "Less personal: anybody could have written it" (John); and f) more conciseness. "Last year I wouldn't sacrifice a piece of information. . . . [now] the maximum information in the minimum space" (Patrice); "no beating around the bush, no fluff: this is the result of what I've learned" (John).

Different document types made different demands on the participants, and therefore may have sparked different forms of learning. (See Appendix B, 'Genres and development,' for elaboration.)

Managers' views on participant development

Before we look at other aspects of change from the participants' point of view, it is useful to look briefly at how the interviewed managers saw the development of the participants, at least in a very global sense. A more detailed outline of the managers' perceptions is presented in Appendix B.

The managers tended to corroborate the writing-related changes reported by the participants. Overall, they saw the same kinds of development as did the participants, even if the development they saw was sometimes less "dramatic" than that felt or perceived by the participants (see below).

The managers saw the development of their employee's writing ability as related to the development of other job-related knowledge and to a process of on-the-job socialization. When asked at the end of the interview to fill in a "reaction sheet" which listed fourteen possible writing-related changes in their employees, the managers thought the most important changes -- in terms of

impact on the employee's writing, and, more broadly, of making the employee a more valuable employee -- were: first, having "learned through experience more about her/his audience and their information needs"; second, having "a better understanding of the job and its requirements" and having "developed professional expertise"; and third, having "a better understanding of the major business functions of the department and of how given documents help carry them out."

Thus, increased knowledge of the social and organizational context appeared to be the most important, most highly valued aspect of writing-related development for the participants' supervisors and managers.

More than one manager linked developing writing ability with developing as an economist. Some managers appeared to have a tacit mental "template" of how employees develop and become acculturated, and to see the relevant participant as somewhere on a continuum of fairly predictable development. For example, two managers discussed how developing economists-cum-writers learn to pose increasingly fruitful questions: "Part of the maturing process of maturing as an economist is to be able to develop questions, learn how to ask interesting questions," said one manager. Another said, "This is going to be the next stage of his development: 'learning how to ask questions.'" A third manager related the development of questions to a "macro" view of the writing process: "The writing process . . . develops questions, it helps you see: how ideas flow . . . gaps in your knowledge . . . a consistent story . . . certain problems: should we think a little bit more about that. To me that is the

writing process, not just sitting down and transmitting information up. [The inability to do this better] was one of [his] weaknesses, but it's not uncommon for someone at that level."

Finally, while the managers corroborated almost all the participants' observed changes, some managers tended to notice more gradual change: "I didn't notice as dramatic changes as perhaps he did," was one comment. Two managers said that the participant in question was already a "good writer" and that therefore development was "a matter of improvement at the margin," as one of them put it. A few of the managers said that the Bank's rigorous employee selection process meant that most incoming economists and analysts already tended to have, on entry, strong writing ability relative to other university graduates. (For further comment see Appendix B. "Managers' perceptions.")

Participants' views of the how and the why of change

From the participants' point of view, two of the most general initial causes of the changes outlined above were: the new writing demands placed on them, and feedback of various kinds, especially from their reviewers. Presumably, the nature of the demands and of the feedback, and the nature of the participant's response to them, would be key factors in influencing the degree of development.

For most of the participants, learning appeared to be largely invisible, or unconscious, and often haphazard. The participant was given a writing assignment (or later, initiated it her/himself) which would vary in the kind and degree of demands it posed, depending on a variety of factors such as:

complexity of topic, heterogeneity of audience, "known-ness" of audience, degree to which a novel (non-formulaic) structure is required, amount of experience the writer has had with similar assignments, the writer's knowledge of related business functions, etc. The participant would then proceed to work on the assignment, seeking or getting various degrees of assistance and input.

Feedback at various stages and from various readers would indicate that more work needed to be done. The participant would understand that (s)he had not met some (often tacit) standard, and thus must (*specifically*) do more to make the paper more acceptable to the reviewer, and, (more *generally*), learn and develop further as a professional and a writer. Thus, whether a general feeling of deficiency, or an understanding of specific needs for improvement, a third cause of change (following the two "initial" causes above) seemed to be the writer's new-found knowledge that (s)he was not fully satisfying the reviewer's and the readers' expectations or needs.

This knowledge of a gap between the written document and the readers' needs and expectations appeared to be instrumental in sparking development. The positive examples above appeared to support this idea, as does the negative example of Pierre. Pierre, who developed the least, perhaps, of the ten participants, pointed more than once to a lack of feedback on his papers. Partly because of his supervisor's limited French, Pierre lacked the kind of engaged response which might have promoted greater change. While Pierre believed that feedback could be, and should be an important way for on-the-job writers to develop writing ability, he complained that in his situation, no one gave him

feedback.

In talking about an increased understanding of the "real purpose" of the papers he wrote, Pierre said: "It's clearer because I ask a lot of questions, but there still is room for improvement because [my manager] doesn't tell me everything, or maybe *he* doesn't know. Maybe *he* isn't clear about what these people above him want." When asked about clarifying the writing assignments he was given, Pierre said that it was often "frustrating" to do. Significantly, he said that to clarify the origin of a request for a document, "I shouldn't have to ask; my boss should let me know, but he doesn't always." Pierre's belief that it was his boss's responsibility to provide useful contextual information contrasts with other participants who learned to seek such information aggressively.

The knowledge of a gap between performance and expectations also appeared to be associated with the attitudinal changes outlined above. For writers who, in their early days at the Bank, felt confident in their abilities and thought it unlikely that they would develop further as writers on the job, this knowledge may have triggered a less self-confident attitude and a belief (tacit or conscious) that change was possible and desirable. This attitudinal change was quite apparent in Blair, and to a lesser extent in Christine, Greg and Amar. (See substantiating detail in "Participant views . . ." in Appendix B.)

Participant advice on writing for new employees

To get another perspective on the writing-related adjustments participants had made, participants were asked the following question in the second-stage interview: "What advice about writing would you give a new employee to make

the adjustment process easier?" The question was posed in the context of a discussion about differences between writing in university and writing in business. The point of the question was to have the participants distil and synthesize some of the aspects of change they had undergone, especially those aspects which are able to be articulated, and deemed to be useful and teachable. The most common responses follow, with the numbers in brackets representing the number of participants who gave the advice. The advice is paraphrased. (See Appendix B, "Participant advice on writing . . ." for further detail.) a) Don't be afraid to ask for clarification or help (5); b) Be prepared for an enormous amount of feedback for each paper you produce ("more than anything they [will] have seen in their life," Greg) (4); c) Don't take the feedback personally and don't let it get you down (4); d) Try to learn from the feedback process (4); e) Talk to lots of people; get to know lots of people; exchange opinions (4); f) Clarify the purpose and the audience of documents early in the process (2); and g) Ask colleagues for feedback (as opposed to mandatory review from a boss) (2).

It appears that the major messages here are "Be warned that your papers will be rigorously reviewed; don't let this get you down; ask colleagues for feedback, and try to learn from feedback," and "Don't be afraid to ask for help, talk to and try to get to know lots of people." Considering the apparent importance of developing an understanding of the organizational context, it may be a little surprising that only one of the comments ("clarify the purpose . . .") explicitly addresses elements of the context most useful to learn. The comments "try to learn from the feedback process," and "talk to lots of people," may cover

this some of this ground implicitly.

The advice given underlines the strong social dimensions of writing in an institution, as well as the participant-writers' awareness of this dimension.

5. Interpretation and Commentary

A brief interpretative synthesis of the findings

The findings show that the two major questions which guided the research -- what do adult professionals learn about writing as they work in a new job? and, how do they learn it? -- cannot be easily separated. The questions are imbricated: there appears to be a complex, dynamic relationship between learning more about (and through) writing and learning more about the job and the larger organization. The two forms of learning cannot, in all probability, be separated.

Because the findings outlined above cover so much ground, we will try here to distil and synthesize some of them. The purpose is to turn a large and variegated mass of descriptive findings into a concise synthetic list of the most important elements of writing-related development. This list in turn will make it easier to interpret this development in the light of theory. By necessity, the synthetic list which follows *generalizes*: it ignores the range of development in the individual participants.

1. All of the ten participants acquired a good deal of writing-related knowledge in the study timeframe. This confirms and complicates Brown's 1988 suggestion that employees develop writing ability on-the-job. It also supports the notion (Anderson 1985) that on-the-job experience is the source of this learning, although the nature of this "experience" is problematic and begs explanation.

2. For eight or nine of the participants, the learning may be described as

a significant complex of changes. For some participants, this complex of changes added up to a "sea change" with epistemic implications: a better understanding of what writing is and does in an organization, a major shift in the roles they see for themselves as writing workers / working writers, and often a major shift in how and what they write. "It's like going to China," as Patrice put it. Not all of the participants could be described as undergoing such a "sea change," but all, or almost all, the participants developed their writing ability and acquired significant and consequential writing-related knowledge. The participants' consciousness of this learning varied. Some participants appeared to develop much more than they were aware, perhaps because they had narrow, restricting notions of the nature and domain of writing.

3. Some epistemic effects of this "complex of changes" were evident in that, over time, some of the participants appeared to: (a) be more apt to test their ideas against their understanding of the organization's needs, "point of view," and culture; (b) know better the degree of concordance or dissonance between their ideas and their reviewers' and audience's ideas; (c) focus more keenly on their readers as they wrote; (d) tend to "know" or believe things of greater relevance to the organization; and (e) see the production of written knowledge more problematically.

To generalize: when they first arrived at the Bank, the participants tended to see writing egocentrically, to view it as a communicative medium -- writing to "inform" their readers of their knowledge -- and they therefore tended to see the feedback process as a judgment of the person and of his or her

knowledge and writing ability. Over time, most participants came to understand (tacitly, to a large extent, and to varying degrees) that their writing was part of a larger, organizational "knowledge-making" effort, in which propositions are often provisional. Similarly, on a personal level, some of the participants came to appreciate writing as a heuristic medium which can help the writer to learn and to make knowledge.

4. The participants' development as writers occurred as they gained knowledge about various elements of their writing context. Some of these key elements were: (a) the ways in which the activity of writing is organized (e.g., where and how writing assignments originate, the rationale and procedures for document cycling, the ways in which documents feed into decision-making, etc.); (b) the (specific and often unique) business functions related directly or indirectly to the writing task; (c) the relationship of written texts to these business functions and to the larger institutional "value-adding" processes; (d) the organizational culture and "point of view"; (e) the specific information needs of specific readers, who are often distant from the writer; (f) local genres and structural conventions; (g) the forms of argument and informal reasoning which are respected and found persuasive by their readers; (h) the organizational style; (i) the writer's role (and understanding of this role) as employee and as writer in the larger ambient social and organizational processes; and (j) the writer's field of expertise and his/her knowledge of it.

5. The participants' development was evident in changes in their writing processes (broadly defined) and in their written products. Changes in the

participants' attitudes and beliefs about writing and a growing understanding of the organizational context for writing appear to be associated with, and perhaps preceded, changes in the writing process and written products.

What the participants learned was shaped in part by their attitudes toward and beliefs about writing. One key change in attitude and/or belief was that one could, in fact, develop further as a writer, that one has not "mastered" writing simply because one had good marks in university. The participants came to see that the workplace places demands on writers which are significantly different from the demands they knew as students. Changes in attitudes and beliefs were in turn shaped by the participants' experiences in the Bank, as well as by the participants' prior histories.

Some participants came to a (largely tacit) understanding of writing as context-sensitive. Consequently, eight of the ten participants predicted that their writing ability would continue to develop in the year following the second interview, whereas soon after they arrived at the Bank, most participants doubted that they would develop much as writers in the coming year, or saw development as change in rather picayune aspects of writing, e.g., "better terminology."

6. The learning was triggered by a variety of experiences only some of which appear to be the result of overt teaching or conscious learning. Some of the experiences may be characterized as dissonance-producing: a feeling or understanding of not producing exactly what is expected (cf. Riegel 1973). Some of the experiences may be characterized as "creeping socialization": the

unconscious, invisible process of accommodation to society.

7. The participants learned through various activities and media: through writing itself; through getting and dealing with oral and written feedback on papers, (from reviewers primarily, but also from colleagues), especially substantive, questioning feedback, and from the larger input-feedback process: clarifying expectations for a paper, discussing a topic formally and informally, and revising on the basis of feedback; through reading, talking, listening, and observing; through developing subject-matter expertise; and through being questioned, encouraged, admonished and directed as an employee.

8. A significant aspect of what the participants learned was how they could use and/or manipulate a social/organizational process -- document cycling and complex feedback -- both to produce satisfactory documents and to learn more about the organizational context which shapes written products and aspects of the writing process.

9. In accepting and initiating writing assignments, in submitting drafts at various stages of development to their reviewers, in voluntarily seeking formal and informal feedback from colleagues, in testing assumptions about their authority to make claims, in responding in various fashions to feedback, and in a plethora of other actions, the participants were in fact assuming and adjusting writing-related roles for themselves, and learning and accepting the writing-related roles of others.

10. In sum, all of the participants acquired a wealth of writing-related knowledge, and most appeared to significantly develop their ability to satisfy the

complex rhetorical demands placed upon them, over their first year or two on the job. This development is complex and difficult to characterize.

Interpreting the findings from two perspectives

Close examination of the findings presented in the previous chapter reveals extraordinary complexity: the "messiness," perhaps, inherent in any naturalistic study of real change in human individuals over time. The changes in these writers *are* messy, that is to say, difficult to define, difficult to analyse, and difficult to interpret, especially causally. And yet patterns, we have already suggested, do emerge. The findings are messy, but apparently not random. However, when we try to make sense of the patterns, or of the anomalies and exceptions, we are faced with tremendous difficulties in interpretation. Part of the difficulty is simply that of making sense of rich naturalistic data, without overinterpreting or oversimplifying. An additional underlying difficulty is the problem with theory.

Deep schisms in composition theory, briefly described in the review of the literature, have serious consequences, not only for the credibility and utility of theory itself, but also for the conduct of research and the contribution it can make. Some researchers have reacted to the lack of a unitary theoretical underpinning by limiting their research focus to areas which can be interpreted from a given theoretical perspective. Others have reacted by attempting, unsuccessfully it often seems, to conflate a variety of competing perspectives. Another way to react to the problem of theory, one which we will adopt here, is to acknowledge the impossibility of finding or using a suitable, unified theory

constatively, and using instead two theoretical perspectives, pragmatically and *performatively*.

To the two key research questions -- what writing-related knowledge, if any, do highly-educated employees acquire in the first year or two on the job in a large, "writing-intensive" organization? and, how do they learn what they learn? -- we have provided some tentative answers. This study also posed a third question: How best to characterize and interpret the learning process and the knowledge gained? To this interpretive question we will attempt to apply the two different theoretical perspectives.

First we will look at the *roots* and the *process* of the participants' development in terms of a perspective here called "social-cognitive." No attempt will be made to undo the hyphen. That is to say, no attempt will be made to untangle the complex relationship between individual learning and the ambient social factors which promote and influence it. Such an attempt is beyond the scope of this study, and the ken of the researcher. Like nature-nurture, the social and cognitive aspects of learning may well be "interactionist" and inseparable in any case. We will then look at the *outcome* of the participants' development, as well as the participants' roles, from a "rhetorical" perspective, particularly those epistemic threads of rhetoric outlined at the end of Chapter 2.

A "social-cognitive" perspective

In the review of the literature, we saw that there has been increasing interest in the social dimensions of writing in the past decade. Theoreticians are beginning to see writing as a process or an activity deeply embedded in, and

affected by, a variety of ambient social processes. When writers write, they are touched and affected by a variety of discursive relationships to other people, near and far.

As interest in the social context of writing has increased, so has a friction between the cognitive perspective which sees writing primarily as an individual act (with affective and social dimensions sometimes acknowledged) and the social perspective, which at its purest sees writing as part of a conversation, with the writer him/herself largely "inscribed" by social forces. Part of the social-cognitive conflict can be seen as a search for "higher ground": do cognitive processes "precede" and "mediate" social processes or vice versa? Is writing "essentially" a cognitive activity with social influences and implications at the margin, or "essentially" a social activity with differences among individuals of relatively minor import? This "either-or" may be a false dichotomy, and choosing sides is not likely to prove useful here in interpreting the results of this study. Rather, we will attribute much of the developmental process to the participants' (cognitive) readings of (largely) social factors, and assume that consequent cognitive change (with possible attendant social reverberations) simply happens, but is not subject to fruitful scrutiny here.

The developmental process appears to have been instigated and informed by the new writing-related demands of a new social-organizational context. If expertise in writing is "not categorical" but relatively domain specific (Nystrand 1989; Freedman 1987), and cognitive strategies are less "portable" than previously assumed (Rogoff 1984), then novel writing demands are likely first to

elicit inappropriate responses, and then to spark new social and cognitive response strategies.

In the Bank, the writing process is intertwined with a number of social processes, document cycling in particular. Through engagement in these social processes, the participants became aware that aspects of their writing and *modus operandi* for writing were inadequate or inappropriate, and that they lacked important information about the social, organizational and rhetorical context for their writing. Then, by reacting to suggestions, by accommodating to the larger "macro" writing processes, and by inventing their own new responses, strategies and ways of proceeding, the participants made changes in their writing processes and written products.

Engagement in various social processes was also the way, it would seem, in which the participants acquired most of their higher-level contextualizing knowledge. This knowledge, in turn, became manifest in new cognitive and social strategies and/or procedures for dealing with the writing-related world, and for writing itself, as well as in a new sense of role for the participant. These complex changes, accommodations and processes were the social and cognitive underpinnings of the development of the participants' writing ability.

We should note as well that the participants appeared to learn not only *from* various social influences on-the-job, but also *that* this learning was possible and desirable. In other words, they not only learned more about a given organizational context and specific audiences' needs for information, and how to apply this understanding to their texts, they also learned, more abstractly

perhaps, that writing and writing ability are, at least to an extent, a function of context. They learned, almost in spite of their previous academic success, that writing ability is not fully "portable," nor is it a have-or-have-not skill, but rather a context-dependent developmental ability. Patrice said, for example, "you have to adapt to new environments and change your behaviour. . . . The change was a shock for me, perhaps because this was my first real job."

Over the research period, most of the participants gained a wealth of knowledge which allowed them to function more effectively as writers. The most important knowledge gained, because of its catalytic nature, appeared to be knowledge which helped the writers *to contextualize* their writing.

Listed (roughly) from high-level (and perhaps abstract and distant) forms of context to lower-level, more immediate forms of context, the important elements of this knowledge included: (a) unique aspects of the Bank as a discourse community which accomplishes specific, at times unique, business functions through specific discourse practices, and which has a specific and historicized culture and point of view; (b) the information needs of senior, often remote readers; (c) the business functions enabled through writing and the relationship of written texts to various larger institutional value-adding processes; (d) the forms of argument and informal reasoning conventional to and found persuasive in the Bank; (e) the participant's role as an employee and writer in the larger, ambient business function processes; (f) the rationale for and the mechanics of the document cycling process; and (g) the participant's growing, job-specific, professional knowledge.

Given the apparent importance of acquiring this knowledge of the social and organizational context, it may be useful to list factors which appear to affect the degree of contextual knowledge gained. Following are a few which appear to be significant:

a) the variety and the "contextuality" of writing done: the degree to which the document type and its particular demands lead the writer to, for example, talk to others, read previously written papers, research and try to accommodate policy, receive substantive feedback, etc.;

b) the degree and the nature of writing-related exposure to other people (Blair's manager, for example, pointed to the importance of the Friday meetings he attended where he would meet a number of senior people, and "see how [the numbers] fit into the Bank's overall policy setting" and thereby gain "unique insight[s]");

c) following this, a willingness to seek feedback, and to establish friendly or collegial relations with people etc., requiring what various managers termed "good personality," "good listener," "not shy," etc.;

d) the ability to "read," to learn from, and to act upon writing-related social messages (Greg exemplified the cost of poor ability in this regard according to his supervisor: for example, because "he failed to appreciate" the import of feedback, he developed more slowly as a writer); and

e) the local factors which influence the degree and nature of social interaction: the local power structure, opportunities for social contact, second language ability, etc.

This list of factors would seem to lend support to the notion that "social cognitive ability" (Piché & Roen 81) may indeed be important for writers. Also, Vygotsky's idea that egocentrism persists in writing because writing and text are abstract and remote from "perceptual immediacy" may support the idea that developing a powerful sense of context is essential for a writer to write "reader-centred" text in a new setting, especially a setting in which some of the most important context -- the information and analytic needs of senior decision-makers and tacit policy to name but two -- are not proximate or readily seen.

The participants seemed to be developing their "social cognition" as a result of explicit or tacit social influences, imperatives and relations. They appear to have developed, to varying degrees, their ability and their willingness, to "read" the larger social world in which, and to which, they were writing. That is to say, they developed an increasingly accurate, increasingly fruitful sense of audience and the larger social-organizational context within the organization. Given the nature of writing in a business setting, this may be one of the most significant results of this study. While Odell, Faigley and others have pointed to the different "contexts" and "consequences" of academic writing and nonacademic writing, the significance of these differences has perhaps not yet been fully realized.

As recent graduates working in their first major jobs, the participants were writing, perhaps for the first time in their lives: a) to an audience with real needs to know (and, because this audience is extremely busy, needs *not* to know), and b) in order to make things happen. Instead of writing to display

mastery of knowledge as they had done in university, they were writing as they came to understand over time, to promote action and to inform decision-making. That is to say, the participants were doing "real" transactional writing. The progression apparent here parallels Britton's notion that student writers often start in an (egocentric) "expressive" mode, and develop to a "transactional" mode or higher-level expressive mode. For the participants in this study, the progression was likely instigated by the concrete "transactional" demands placed upon the writers, and the feedback which let them know that their "expression" was valued to the extent that it helped senior managers make informed decisions about matters of consequence to them.

Trying to make their written texts instrumentally useful to their readers required, on the part of the participants, increasingly sophisticated audience analysis, and the suppression of much of what the writer knew about a topic when it was not relevant to the readers' information needs.

A key to the participants' development, then, was a greater awareness of, and sensitivity and adaptiveness to, the particular audience-bound writing demands placed on writing in the Bank. The growing *awareness* of these unique demands came as a surprise to some of the participants, and appeared to be a precursor to writing more audience-sensitive text.

In other words, the participants were not merely developing on some abstract continuum of audience awareness or "social decentration." Rather, some of them seemed to have come to an explicit understanding, perhaps for the first time in their lives, that audience counts. Indeed, some of the

participants (Daniel and Christine are good examples) came to understand that meeting their readers' specific needs was the only determinant of success in written communication in the Bank. The participants developed as they grew to understand some of the complexities and demands of the social structure in which they were writing. Christine: "I began to think that there must be an easier way of making the paper acceptable to the reader earlier in the process. So, 'would [my manager] consider this acceptable' became my standard, my benchmark."

Most of the participants contrasted their on-the-job writing with university writing by referring to the specificity of audience requirements in the Bank. And a few participants referred to the feeling of becoming a member of a group. It is tempting to speculate that in schoolchildren, a gradual, perhaps integratively motivated increase in language "decentration" occurs, in university students, a gradual, more instrumentally (marks) motivated further increase in decentration occurs, while initiation into an adult knowledge-working community might provoke a more sudden increase in social cognition, both integratively *and* instrumentally motivated.

The importance of understanding the unique social and organizational context for the participants, and the difficulty for a new employee of gaining this understanding (given the hierarchy in the Bank and the distances between writer and higher level audiences and business functions) are apparent. In a large, hierarchic organization in which written analysis serves the decision-making of senior management, and where key aspects of decision-making are often

unknown by and invisible to new, lower-ranking employees, a new employee-writer's ability to perceive, interpret and thus serve the high-level policies, decision-making processes and business functions (all of which are often tacit, and which contextualize, feed, and are fed by writing) will depend on, be enhanced or inhibited by, the writer's local organizational structure and forms of social interaction, and the writer's ability and willingness to exploit them.

While theoreticians are starting to understand just how complex and multi-dimensional context can be (e.g., Piazza 1987), it is useful to remember that writers and employees always start with the context at hand. In a large, hierarchic organization, "high-level" context (e.g., the decision-making of senior executives) is likely to be unknown and largely invisible to new employees (and perhaps even to senior-level people: see, for example Freed and Broadhead 1987).

Because so much of the important, high-level, rhetorical context is remote, the writer is likely to develop by engaging and being engaged by a more immediate, "mid-level" context: the local organizational structure, the feedback process, forms of social interaction, etc. Depending on the individual writer's ability to perceive, manipulate and interpret that more immediate context, and depending on supportive or inhibiting features in that context, he or she will gain, over time, a sense of the less immediate, though rhetorically important, high-level context. That is, the developing writer interacts primarily with an immediate (cognitively apprehended) context which inter-mediate information about and from higher-level (highly rhetorical) contexts.

Overall, then, we can see that the social dimension, as well as other organizational aspects of the writing context, plus the individual participant's ability and willingness to understand and engage them (the cognitive and attitudinal dimensions) are very important to the overall development of the participants' writing ability, and perhaps to which aspects of development occur as well.

While the social-cognitive lens helps make sense of the developmental process, questions remain. We still have not adequately accounted for the individual's role in the developmental process. And while social interaction and the demands of a new social-organizational context account in part for instigating and shaping the developmental process, we still need to better characterize the *outcome* of the participants' development. To help us here, we'll turn to the world of rhetoric. Viewing the findings of the study as rhetorical phenomena will ascribe a meaningful role for the individual in the developmental process, and will help to characterize the significance and the outcome of the participants' learning.

Becoming a "rhetor": a rhetorical perspective

The participants of the study were not only developing as writers, but as members of a community they were still coming to understand. In accepting -- and later initiating -- writing assignments, in submitting drafts at various stages of development to their reviewers, in seeking informal feedback, in testing assumptions about their authority to make interpretive claims, in responding in various fashions to feedback, and in a plethora of other actions, the participants

were in fact assuming and adjusting writing-related roles for themselves, and conceptualizing the writing-related roles of others. They were enhancing their ability to engage the work community and to carry out various tasks through discourse. The wide-ranging, role-related, epistemic and audience-driven character of these developments strongly suggests important *rhetorical* development in most of the participants.

"Rhetorical development" here connotes two overlapping ideas. The first idea is that the development detected can be characterized as significant and wide-ranging -- an increased ability to use written language to practical and intellectual ends: perhaps to enhance the writer's own thinking, perhaps to more effectively "move the world" (i.e., inform decision-making and promote action) through writing. In other words, the development can be characterized as much more significant than "mere" linguistic development -- enhanced diction, better grammar, etc. The second idea is that some of the development can be characterized as a change of role for the participants, a change that occurred largely through the participants' more efficacious use of language. This larger, more dynamic role can be described, at least in part, as that of a *rhetor*, in which the writer-employee is better able to understand the business and the people of the community (the Bank), and of his/her own role in it, and thus can engage the community and help with its business through writing more effectively and persuasively.

The Bank of Canada is an extremely wordy domain, a work community in which members use language to discover, posit, confirm, refute and wrestle with

ideas. In this wordy community, individual roles and prospects are largely influenced by the individual's ability to use language to pose and solve problems. The Bank, like many other communities and organizations, functions as a distinct rhetorical domain. As McCloskey (1985, 1987) and others have pointed out, writing in economics is highly rhetorical. Most writing done by economists and financial analysts in the Bank is analytic and argues a case. Writers pose and defend contestable ideas, and they analyse and evaluate other people's ideas, all within the unique institutional forum that is the Bank.

Senior managers have a pejorative term to describe writing that is *merely* descriptive: "elevator economics" (housing starts are up; inflation is down, etc.) The young economists and analysts are often told that their (senior) readers want sound analysis and evaluation, persuasive argument, and the meaning of data signified -- "stories" -- but this must mystify new employees at times. After all, the making of persuasive stories in a community requires an understanding of the community's shared assumptions, beliefs, and values, as well as the forms of argument seen as legitimate in that community. That is, effective writing requires an understanding of *phronesis* -- the practical wisdom of a community (Miller 1991), as well as of one's own role in the community.

The participants of this study developed much of this knowledge *rhetorically*, by jumping into the fray, by joining the conversation, by making their own arguments. When the arguments failed to persuade, they knew so immediately, concretely and consequentially. When their arguments succeeded, it meant that they had succeeded in understanding the rhetorical dynamics and

parameters of the Bank, and the demands of their own rhetorical situation.

[Micheline's manager] There was never any need to improve her writing, but rather indicate what the important issues were, and how they could be more effectively presented . . . It's difficult to separate the material from the culture, if I may use those terms. [Learning about the 'Bank point of view' is] sort of an indirect osmotic process. I don't think you say, "Now here is the policy" because often it isn't that clear. . . . There is no need to know the Party Line absolutely and adhere to it. It's more important to know what people's interests and questions are, and develop a view yourself that may help in that process.

A view of the young economist or analyst as an apprenticing rhetor is a useful notion in explaining his or her *role* in developing this significant writing-related knowledge. The participants developed an effective, though largely tacit, understanding of the organization as a rhetorical domain. In acting rhetorically - in speaking, writing, talking and listening -- they were discovering what knowledge was socially significant, and which forms of reasoned argument readers found persuasive. In so doing, the participants found a voice and conceptualized and assumed roles for themselves in a rhetorically bound, rhetorically functioning community. In James Britton's words, they had developed from being spectators to being participants in the community's business.

[Micheline's manager] It's almost inevitable that the areas you develop expertise in are determined by the questions that are raised, which isn't bad, because obviously it's meeting the need.

[Christine's manager] It doesn't matter how smart you are or how great the ideas, if you can't sell it or get it across, it's not worth anything to the organization. . . . You want to understand what your reader is going to be doing with the information you're giving him in order to give it to him in a useful way.

The participants were also developing, using and testing specific professional expertise *rhetorically*. There appeared to be a close relationship between writing to the demand of the job, developing professional knowledge and learning how to carrying out the community's work. Some managers understood that the writing process (writ large) played a central role in professional development.

[Greg's manager, commenting on Greg's remark that he had not always been clear about the purpose and the audience of papers in the first year] That's part of the research function . . . an ill-defined question is meant to be ill-defined . . . we want him to develop specific questions. That's part of the process of maturing as an economist, to be able to develop questions . . . to ask interesting questions.

That's part of the writing process . . . it develops questions, it helps you see how ideas flow, are there gaps in your knowledge, does everything hang together, a consistent story, are there certain problems, should we think a little more about that. To me that is the writing process, not just sitting down and transmitting the information up.

[Blair's manager]: You see, this is going to be the next stage of his development if he stays here. He sees himself as someone who is paid to answer questions. Well you know as he move up, he's going to be paid to *ask* questions. Sometimes you're paid to ask questions and then go and answer them yourself (cf. Arlin 1975) . . . Knowing what we discuss at our meetings, he had a good sensitivity as to *why* we're interested in that range of territory.

Stephen Toulmin (1972 in LaRoche & Pearson) discusses the relationship between the individual novice and the larger public forum as the novice is enculturated, serving his/her apprenticeship in a scientific community:

In that apprenticeship . . . the primary thing to be learned, tested, put to work, criticized, and changed -- is the repertory of intellectual techniques, procedures, skills, and methods of representation, which are employed in "giving explanations" of events and phenomena within the scope of the science concerned. .

. . Described in these terms, the proof that an apprentice scientist has grasped some concept of the science is evidently tangible and "public." For he demonstrates his ability to apply the concept in a relevant manner, by solving problems or explaining phenomena using procedures whose "validity" is a communal manner.

In our brief examination of rhetoric in the review of the literature, we focused on one view of rhetoric which sees language as (at least partly) constitutive of reality. This view implies that there are important epistemic reverberations in rhetorical acts. In the findings, we saw that the "macro" writing process, at least for several of the participants, had changed significantly. For some participants, the changes in writing process and in beliefs about writing amounted to a phenomenon described above as a "significant complex of changes" with epistemic import: a better understanding of what writing is and does in an organization, as well as a clearer and more effective understanding of the roles they saw for themselves as writers/workers. We characterized these changes as significant rhetorical development. The epistemic dimension of this development was perhaps even more apparent to the researcher and to some of the writers' managers than it was to the participants themselves.

[Blair's manager] It's natural for someone to say "Look. Here's what I've produced, 15 or 20 pages." But that's not what he produced. What he produced was a *process*: a learning process for me -- I benefited working with him, I grew, I learned about this -- a learning process for the other people involved; for himself perhaps most of all, and in the process came to something written down on paper. Well, that's a lot more than just 15 pages! . . . They're paid to add value to information and one way of doing that is in the dialogue that occurs around the paper, in the *presentation* of the final paper, but not just *this* [the final draft].

It's an outrageous statement, but I believe it in part: I think we don't really know what our . . . policy was until after we write the . . . report [which describes events] . . . There's a lot of

to-ing and fro-ing . . . and the reason is, until you put it down in writing, and believe that it's going to stand on its own, you won't be able to say to the reader, "Here's what I *really* mean." . . . In the course of the discussion, through the to-ing and the fro-ing and the challenging, it turns out that what I *really* meant was this! So maybe I didn't really believe what I came in thinking I believed. I really believed something different. And at the end . . . you have a better idea of what you really believe.

Part of the participants' rhetorical growth can be accounted for by the gains in high-level context outlined above. By getting a better grip on the remote-but-critical high-level contexts, the participants were actually uncovering and learning shared warrants (to use Toulmin's language) for the enthymemes which underlie most economic (indeed, most analytic) writing. This increased knowledge would, in turn, feed into new writing on which the participants would get further feedback, and the learning/accommodation/resistance would continue. In a large organization where knowledge is *both* the "raw material" *and* the "goal" of its human activity (cf. Gage 1984), the significance of the participants' rhetorical growth cannot be underestimated.

For a writer in a rhetorically bound work community, the result of this growth is a more effective rhetor, a writer better able to contribute to the community's knowledge-making, and a worker more fully engaged in the discursive practices of the community. In becoming rhetors, employees become more active, more effective participants in the community's business.

6. Implications of the Study

This study points to the complex and multifaceted nature of writing development in educated adults. Educated adults, it seems, can, in a given context, experience and manifest significant rhetorical development. This finding and related findings have implications for theory, for the teaching of writing in schools and workplaces, for employees who write as part of their jobs, for managers who supervise employee writing, and finally, for future research.

If we "go beyond the data" of this study and speculate that educated adults in *other* contexts can, depending on a variety of factors, develop their writing ability in important ways, we can see one significant implication: Learning to write may be a life-long process. Writers may have to struggle and stumble and learn whenever they face new rhetorical demands. New demands may be as narrow and as temporary as a shift in audience or genre within a given community, or as wide-ranging and as long-term as entering a new "discourse community" or discipline. While this postulation and its implications seem reasonable, the notion that educated adults "already know how to write," is likely to persist.

This study should increase our understanding of the relationship between the development of writing ability and the contexts in which it occurs. It confirms Britton's suspicion that context is a key factor in development, especially to the most significant, audience- and function-related aspects of

development (Britton et al. 1975). And it supports Britton's warning against "mistakenly treat[ing] writing as a single kind of ability, regardless of the reader for whom it is intended and the purpose it attempts to serve" (Britton 1978).

Of course once the idea of development in context is accepted, the more difficult and problematic it is to conceive of a satisfactory *general* model of development, or even, perhaps, of "rhetorical maturity" (Miller 1980) if the idea implies a general ability. Just as schoolchildren's writing development tells us as much about schools as it does about children and development (Bereiter 1980), adult development appears to be largely determined by the specific characteristics and demands of the work context in which it occurs. Perhaps this should not be seen as a "dilemma" (Wilkinson 14), but rather as a fact of life. If context is as important as this study shows it to be for shaping the development of adult, working writers, then an adequate *general* developmental theory may prove elusive. Developing domain-specific theory may be a more realistic, if more modest, goal. Theoreticians may want to carefully examine a variety of local, situationally specific development patterns in order to test or refine existing theory to see whether any generalizations do hold. Theory may have to abandon some of its universalistic assumptions, a prospect which should not "disappoint" (Bereiter 1980, 77) but lead to a sounder, more rhetorical theory of development.

This study underscores the inadequacy of development theories based on the writing of children and adolescents in school settings to explain and interpret the development of educated adult writers in a work setting. Development

theory dealing with children's writing has had to account for other developmental threads which intertwine with children's rhetorical development, including the development of the mechanical and linguistic abilities needed to produce written text, and rapid growth in their ability to abstract, conceptualize and generalize. The development of on-the-job writing ability in highly educated adults, however, appears to be more purely a form of rhetorical development, i.e., an increased ability to move the world through written language.

If an educated adult population can show significant rhetorical development (and acquire significant writing-related knowledge) then the notion of "rhetorical maturity" may be a chimera. It may not be useful as a theoretical notion, even as a conceit, it may not be an empirical reality. "Maturity" implies a teleologic developmental process which may not hold, at least in a universalistic sense. As opposed to "maturity" it may be more useful to speak of "domain-specific rhetorical ability" and "domain-specific rhetorical development." For researchers of writing development, these should perhaps be the core concepts around which other abilities -- e.g., topic-world knowledge, "audience awareness," "social-cognitive ability," "linguistic-syntactic skill" -- could be meaningfully examined.

While development theories based on children and adolescents and school settings are clearly problematic in the context of this study, two key ideas from James Britton are worth using and refining. The first has been briefly mentioned: the idea of "spectator" and "participant" roles in communication (Britton 1970), a powerful notion in child language acquisition, may also prove

useful in describing part of the process of joining a discourse community. The second idea is Britton's three function categories: the expressive, the poetic and the transactional. "From these categories, Britton hypothesized that 'expressive writing should be regarded as a matrix from which the other two categories . . . develop'" (Tirrell 1990). Britton, moreover, "as a careful reader of Piaget, [viewed] egocentrism, not as something which must be rooted out, but as part of the normal growth pattern" (Tirrell 1990).

The development of writing ability in adults may best be viewed as (as seen by the observer) "*rhetorical development in context*," or, (as seen by the writer) "*becoming a rhetor*." As we come to a better understanding of the various forms of writing development in adults, we will be able to extend development theory by suggesting specific elements of a *theory for rhetorical development in context*.

For writing teachers in colleges and universities, one clear implication of this research is that they need not -- indeed *should not* -- expect students to "master" writing before they graduate. Writing development is likely to continue "even" after students leave school if their writing situation demands and fosters rhetorical growth. Teaching "common" business genres may be less appropriate than, say, teaching certain strategies of social and organizational behaviour. Teaching student the simple, but apparently counter-intuitive fact that their writing ability is likely to develop in important ways, "even" after graduation may be the most important lesson of all.

For employees who write as part of their work, this study has several

implications. First, a recognition that writing is a situationally contextualized developmental ability, not a have-or-have not skill, appears to be necessary for rhetorical growth. Employees who think they must be "good writers" because they got high marks in school may make few gains in writing if the thinking persists and they don't receive, or deal effectively with, feedback. Second, writing and writing development may require good *social* skills, especially in organizations with write-and-review cycles. Some of these skills would include effective listening ability, and an ability to get along with, and a (professional) curiosity about, colleagues and superiors. Third, writing in many jobs is not just a vehicle for transmitting messages, but often a developmental activity, an effective means of developing professional knowledge. Fourth, new employees in a writing-intensive organization can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the writing demands placed on them, but these demands and their response to them can presage significant learning.

For on-the-job writing trainers, knowing that important aspects of writing development may naturally follow an increased understanding of audience, business functions, and corporate culture may have implications for, among other things, the timing of training. For managers who supervise employee writing, one clear implication is that whether or not they welcome the idea, they have a key role to play in helping employees to develop as writers, and as members of the corporate community, through many writing-related aspects of supervision. If writers' managers are as important as they appear to be in developing new employees' writing, training these managers in effective management of writing

and writers may be warranted.

The findings of this study have a number of implications for future research. The normal terms used to describe parts of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing) were problematic in the interviews because first, the participants, like many writers, did not view these aspects as discrete, and second, because so much of the participants' writing was collaborative. Moreover, some of the interesting process changes observed were not covered by these terms for "stages" in the writing process. Following the use of the term "macro writing process" employed in this study, researchers may want to consider the wider institutional text production processes as part of their purview, as well as the writer's role in them. The "planning, drafting, revising, editing" process is likely a simplistic fiction which cannot adequately account for actual writing practices in many areas of work.

This study hints at, but does not adequately explore, the relationship between attitudes and beliefs about writing and the development of writing ability. Self-confidence, notions about "good writing" and writing ability, and beliefs about the learnability of writing may play a key role in development. An idea which occurred to the researcher late in the study was that there may be an "optimum point" on a continuum between extremely high and low self-confidence for developing writing ability. Given the suggestive findings here, researchers may find it useful to look beyond "anxiety" to include other attitudes and beliefs in developmental research, especially those related to: a) writing as a have/have-not skill versus writing as a continually developing ability; (b) the

role of the writer (c) the functions of writing; (d) the nature and the domain of writing, i.e., what writing is and includes, and what writing does; and (e) the determinants of "good" writing.

The improvement in the participants' written products suggests a possible change of direction for researchers interested in development. The researcher had assumed that some form of formal discourse analysis would be necessary to detect and to characterize changes in the participants' texts, and that the failure to do so (albeit for good reasons) might undermine some of the research method. In retrospect, the researcher feels that the reliance on reviewers' assessments and on having the participants substantiate comments by pointing to evidence in the text was reasonable, and will likely prove necessary for future researchers. While changes in written products must be part of the development research focus, we do not need to assume the researcher to be in the best position to notice or characterize them. In a business setting, reviewers and the actual audience are likely to provide invaluable information on these changes. Indeed, for changes that are truly rhetorical, reviewers and readers are the only effective judges of whether change has occurred, and what it signifies.

For future research, it will likely prove useful to examine other local, situationally specific development patterns. Research on highly educated adults (writers who are already linguistically and syntactically adept) shows particular promise, and should be pursued. Researchers who are interested in doing similar research in the work world might consider the following possibilities. First, comparison groups. For this project, an interesting comparison group

would have been another group of participants who had just changed jobs, but who had been in the organization for some time. Another comparison group might have been made from employees who stayed in the same job and who had been in the organization for some time. This might have indicated whether development slows through time, or when genre and audience do not vary, etc. Second, "emic" feedback would have been a useful addition to this project had time allowed. Drafts of the individual profiles could have been given to the participants and their reviewers for feedback.

We have already noted the inadequacy, for this research project, of text-based ways of detecting and measuring writing development. In many naturalistic settings, particularly business settings, formal discourse analysis is not practicable. The researcher deems the method used here, with its high reliance on participants' and managers' perceptions, analysis and commentary, a reasonable one for other researchers. We have also noted the inadequacy of cognitive development models, and of models of child writing development for the development of writing ability among educated adults. For this reason, the field of rhetoric appears likely to prove an invaluable theoretical and interpretive tool to help ground research on the development of writing ability. Because rhetoric provides a historicized and wide-ranging view of language in action, it affords a powerful theory for research on development.

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Appendix A:

Profiles of writing-related change in six participants

Greg: "A note of uncertainty"

Despite scepticism in his early days as an employee that he would learn much about writing or change his approach to writing, Greg seemed to develop a good deal in both regards over the sixteen months between interviews. In response to the first-interview-stage question "Do you think your approach to writing will change much in your first year on the job?" Greg said bluntly: "Nope. Quite frankly they're the same writing skills I've had since grade school." But sixteen months later, Greg said that there had "definitely" been major, "obvious" changes in his writing process and written products. In contrast to his earlier prediction that he would not develop writing ability, he also thought that he would continue to develop his writing ability over the coming year.

Greg thought that he had made important progress in the following areas: (a) developing an understanding of his primary and secondary audiences, of the business functions of interest to his readers, and thus, to an extent, of their information needs; (b) learning how to learn from the feedback process, and how to minimize frustrations inherent in it; (c) using a word processor for efficiency and perhaps a better written product; (d) understanding some of the local writing culture: suitable strength of claim, appropriate models of analysis and forms of argument, etc.

The only one of these developments which Greg had predicted in his first

interview was the use of the word processor.

Greg had some narrow ideas about the nature of writing which may have limited his appreciation of his development as a writer over the sixteen-month period. In the first interview, Greg was very confident about his ability to write at the Bank because in school he was "always able to write well." He seemed to believe that writing was a portable set of skills, that writing in the Bank would be much like writing in school, and that the only purpose of writing is to convey information to a reader. This was the background to his confident assertion that his approach to writing would not change at all in his first year on the job.

Sixteen months later, Greg seemed to have a somewhat better understanding of writing as a developmental ability, an ability which may hinge in part on changing audiences and genres. While it was clear to the researcher that Greg used writing to discover and refine thought, Greg resisted this notion a little. He said, for example, on being asked if he still used a 'mental outline' as he did a year previously, Greg said "I'd have to say that I was guilty of writing without a mental outline." He seemed to believe that in writing, one should know in advance where one is going, and that finding and refining meaning en route was something about which one could feel guilty.

Greg attributed part of his development to "the demand from my supervisors intensif[ying] . . . the expectations intensif[ying]." The supervisor's demands certainly appeared to play a role. When Greg's supervisor said that Greg had learned to develop a "top-down approach" and to "recognize who he was writing for," the researcher asked the supervisor *how* Greg had learned

these things. The supervisor replied: "By having it driven home to him." Despite having some frustrations with the feedback process, Greg acknowledged the importance of substantive written feedback on his early drafts to his development: "this is where you learn. You learn the culture through feedback. You learn the form, the shape of the document. You learn what you can say to a large extent." He also believed that greater professional knowledge was important: "When you know more about your material and your data, you can address more." Greg thought that "a broader knowledge of the information and the possible weaknesses in the argument" helped him to produce better written documents.

While Greg had trouble articulating his understanding of the organizational context, his supervisor thought he had made progress in this area: "He's certainly learned. I think he's improved a lot in recognizing who he was writing for . . . he's much more aware of the idea of what we're trying to do here, in the sense of *why* we write things." Like Christine, Greg noted an avoidance of "strong" statements ("you don't stick your neck out"; "you don't commit yourself") as part of the writing culture, but in this there was no change from the first interview. Both Greg and his supervisor thought he had developed a sense of the precision expected in Bank documents: "he became aware that you can't get away with anything . . . you must be careful. If you do things in a haphazard way, you're going to be caught" (supervisor).

There was some change in Greg's attitudes and beliefs about writing. He believed more strongly in the importance and value of writing: "I put more

value on things I write now . . . perhaps previously I would have preferred to talk to someone. But now I would actually prefer to write it and give it to someone and say 'Here! Read this,' and this will certainly extend into the future." Although he said he felt more confident overall about his writing than earlier, he had been criticized on an aspect he had previously been confident about: "continuity," and this had "shaken" his confidence and "introduced a note of uncertainty."

According to his supervisor, Greg had begun to understand that writing is "a group process in the Bank," and that the reviewing process was necessary because a text is "viewed as a product of the department." In other words, Greg had become less of a maverick, and more of a team player in terms of how he handled the document cycling process.

The result of all these changes, according to Greg and his supervisor, was better documents: more concise and synthetic, more "top-down" and hierarchical (better at "getting at the bottom line" according to the supervisor), more reference to the statistics "that are typically referred to," and more tailoring to specific readers' needs. Overall, the supervisor had noticed "a definite improvement."

An interesting gap between Greg's perceptions and his supervisor's was in the area of expectations regarding what the writer is supposed to do with feedback. Greg, like some other participants, mentioned that his confidence had grown, so that he "could go so far as to disagree with the feedback [he] got." He also found feedback increasingly frustrating: "It's frustrating when you're

told you haven't stated something clearly, and you know you *have* stated something clearly." He also thought that after the third draft, feedback was "futile." His supervisor, on the other hand, mentioned more than once that Greg "failed to appreciate that when people commented on his work, they expected those comments to be incorporated in that work." In other words, Greg did not fully understand his superiors' expectations about the use of feedback, or perhaps Greg did not understand the limits of his *authority*. The supervisor also complained that "sometimes, when you make a comment, Greg may not take it that extra step, he'll just . . . oblige you grudgingly." The supervisor attributed these failures to Greg's independent personality, and to his own failure to supervise Greg closely enough in Greg's early days at the Bank.

Both Greg and his supervisor thought he would continue to develop as a writer in the coming year.

In summary, Greg came to realize that, contrary to his early expectations, his writing ability had developed in important ways. He believed that his written products were "more professional, more exact, more exhaustive," and that consequently he had "a readership at a higher level in the Bank . . . a reward." he thought, of his increased "professionalism." His supervisor thought that one of the important things Greg had learned was "that he didn't know it all when came out of university." Greg's development as a writer appears to have been impeded a little by early over-confidence, and by being a maverick -- failing to pick up all of his supervisor's expectations regarding Greg's role in the write-and-review cycle.

Pierre: "Still room for improvement"

Responding to the question "has your writing changed much in the past twelve months?" Pierre reported "no major changes." And in some ways, especially compared with the other nine participants, Pierre appeared to have developed less, to be closer to the same writer he was when he arrived at the Bank. In many respects, however, Pierre did develop, and he showed insight into both the changes that he did see, and into the lack of change in other areas. Many of Pierre's comments in the second interview seemed contradictory: overall, it is probably fair to say that Pierre developed more as a writer than he realized.

Pierre believed that there had been no major changes in either his writing process or his written products during his first fifteen months at the Bank. However, changes which seemed significant to the researcher were not regarded as such by Pierre. To the second-interview prompt "you said [earlier] that your writing was mostly 'in place' [but] that you might learn a few technical aspects. Is this what happened?", Pierre said, "Yes, exactly. By technical aspects I mean the structure which is expected, for example, for short notes: e.g., put the conclusion in the first paragraph. But these are not things which improve the text for the reader."

While acknowledging the impact that early-draft, substantive feedback could have on the final product, Pierre didn't believe that feedback had affected his writing *per se*; rather he thought it affected the "analysis" only, which he distinguished from writing: "There were two rounds of feedback. The first one

was substantive. I learned in terms of analysis, and this is good, but he does not change my sentences or my style and this is frustrating. You will not improve your writing if no one gives you feedback on your written style." The implication is that Pierre had a belletristic understanding of writing. He equated writing and writing development largely with style. Because he saw style as the most important facet of writing, he saw lack of feedback on style as a serious problem, and he perhaps failed to appreciate the utility of "substantive" feedback for a writer. On the other hand, it should be noted that Pierre did have trouble getting clarification of a key rhetorical concern, the audience for his first and subsequent papers. He found this frustrating.

Pierre may have learned more from his boss's interventions than he realized. In the first interview, Pierre said that a reviewer or boss could *theoretically* have a role in helping a writer to develop; in the second interview Pierre said that his boss had "not at all" had a role in helping him develop. However, he also said that his boss had "influenced that content and the questions addressed" in the paper just written; that there had been "major" revisions based in part on his boss's feedback; and that he had added two tables to the paper on the advice of his boss! Pierre seemed to think that feedback could theoretically help writers in general develop -- in the second interview Pierre added feedback to the list of ways by which on-the-job writers develop their writing ability -- but he believed that the feedback *he* had received from *his* boss had not helped him to develop.

Pierre said that his attitudes and beliefs about writing had not changed:

"I won't have much to say in this section [of the interview]." However, he believed that his confidence had grown "because of my experience." Although he described writing as "fairly important" in his job in the first interview, he came to believe that writing was "the most important thing [he was] doing" in the second interview.

One change in one of Pierre's regularly written document, the "weekly," was that it had become less "flowery," more "just the facts." In discussing the change from "flowery" weeklies to "just the facts" weeklies, Pierre acknowledged the influence of his predecessor and of colleagues who advised him.

Pierre showed insight into possible reasons for the relative stasis of his writing. When he was asked whether his boss had helped him develop his writing, he said, "No, I question him, but he says it's fine the way I'm doing it" (cf: Greg and Blair for contrast). Pierre also thought that his supervisor's limited French, the language Pierre wrote in, limited the feedback he received. Interestingly, Pierre may have hinted unconsciously at an additional reason for the relative lack of change when he described his *passive role* in dealing with feedback. In accounting for possible differences in the second-stage document versus the first, he said: "The conclusions are in the first paragraph because [my supervisor] asked me to do this"; "The two tables . . . don't add to the readability . . . They're there because I was told to put them there."

The one area in which Pierre thought there had been clear change was in his knowledge of the organizational context. An interesting example of this was his improved sense of what constrained, and what did not constrain, the

investment fund where he worked. While Pierre had initially thought that there were serious problems in the way the investment fund operated, and that these problems were partly the fault of management, he came to understand that "organizational constraints" were more to blame. He had also realized that "some of the things [he'd] assumed were unchangeable because of policy [were] actually changeable in the absence of formal policy." The result of this change in understanding was reduced frustration, and an ability to "deal with collaboration better."

Pierre said that he had developed a better sense of who originated a request for a paper, and of the "real purpose" of a paper. By the second interview, he had a greater understanding of the culture of his department and of how this culture is manifest in text: e.g., reporting "things without any value judgment, of making things appear objective."

Pierre showed insight about the nature of organizational knowledge, about ambiguity in the "location" of knowledge, and possibly about a function of writing, when he spoke about gains he had made in understanding the "real purpose" of the papers he was writing. In the first interview, Pierre indicated that he was not always clear about the purpose of papers he was writing, and that he had been frustrated in getting clarification. A year later he thought "it's clearer because I ask a lot of questions, but there is still room for improvement because [my supervisor] doesn't tell me everything, or maybe *he* doesn't know. Maybe *he* isn't clear about what these people above him want."

In addition to feedback and "talking to colleagues . . . informally," Pierre

thought that a major means of writing development was the activity itself: "Let the person learn by doing writing . . . You can't learn the difference [between university and business writing] by being told; you have to experience it."

Micheline: "Discussing things with colleagues"

Micheline appeared to develop substantially as a writer, in quite a number of ways. In her first twenty months at the Bank, Micheline learned a good deal about the social and organizational context of her writing; her writing process changed in significant ways; and her written products appeared to improve as a result.

As with other participants, one of the key developments in her understanding of the context of her writing was in her increased knowledge of her readers -- literally who they were -- and of their professional interests. As a result, she thought herself better at addressing the questions her readers would be interested in. She also developed a much keener understanding of the "Bank view of the world," and of policy, formal and tacit. She thought this understanding less important to her writing than her direct knowledge of her readers as human beings: "After all, we do research that doesn't always go outside the Bank."

She learned about the organizational context for her writing in various ways. Feedback, both written and oral, listening to other people, both informally and at meetings, observing senior people at meetings, and thinking about topics or issues that are emphasized ("put emphasis on this point") or de-emphasized ("just write one sentence") were some of the ways in which Micheline developed

her understanding of context. She thought she learned about policy by reading the newspapers, about senior readers' needs by getting clarification on writing assignments, and about the issues that are "hot" by thinking about the questions people asked her.

Micheline thought she developed her thinking and writing generally by listening to colleagues, especially at seminars, by reading their papers, especially on topics related to her own area, and by discussing things with colleagues. This last area was a change for Micheline: when she first arrived at the Bank, she did not discuss topics she was writing about with colleagues. Her manager said that he was encouraged by this observation "in terms of her writing and what she's learning." The manager intimated that Micheline's shyness may have inhibited her development in her early days at the Bank.

Micheline gained a wider understanding of the functions of writing in her department. In her first interview, she said that the role of writing was "to let other people know what you're doing," and "to get comments on your research." In the second interview, she added: "to answer questions" (decision-making function); to help "people who come after us" (archival function); and "to clarify points . . . of uncertainty . . . for ourselves" (exploratory or analytic function). There was an uncanny similarity between this expanded list of functions as perceived by Micheline, and the functions described by her manager.

Micheline's writing process changed more than most participants. Interestingly, however, to general questions about whether her writing process had changed, Micheline replied that she thought not. It was on closer

examination, when her writing process of eighteen months earlier was described in detail, that she realized her process had changed in significant ways. Major changes included: (a) a clearer idea of the whole document before she started drafting; (b) more attention to the topic and the readers before she started drafting; (c) more likelihood of initiating a paper herself, as opposed to it being assigned to her; (d) a more efficient research process, partly the result of knowing more people "who are useful" to her research; (e) a much greater willingness to talk to people about the paper, especially early in the process, both to test her own ideas and to get information and ideas; (f) a greater willingness to seek out feedback, especially from colleagues; (g) an increased tendency to defend her ideas in feedback sessions with her reviewer; and (h) a change from drafting with a pencil to drafting with a microcomputer.

These changes are wide-ranging and make one wonder if there also might have been more change in the writing process of the other participants than they thought. It is also thought-provoking to consider that such changes can occur in a major part of an employee's working life -- Micheline reported that about 60% of her time was spent in writing or in writing-related activity -- and go largely unnoticed.

Micheline and her manager both reported observable changes in her written products. Generally the papers were seen as more focused (more narrowly addressed to the readers' needs) and more hierarchic in structure (the thesis and/or conclusions revealed right at the start). They were seen as better in presenting an argument or story. They were seen as more concise and less

technical, with less tendency to explain things that she was in fact explaining to herself.

Micheline's attitudes and beliefs about writing changed in a few respects. She felt more self-confident generally, and specifically with regard to finding and developing an argument or story, and with regard to style. She also thought that she was less anxious about writing because she knew "more about the subject." In the first interview, Micheline said that her writing and her approach to writing would be unlikely to change. A year and a half later, it appeared that her writing and her approach to writing had changed a good deal, and that she was aware of many of these changes. When she was asked at the end of the second interview if she thought her writing would change much in the *next* year, she said "Yeah, surely, there's lots of places to improve."

Micheline's manager corroborated her view of her own development. In general, Micheline's manager thought that her major progress was in the areas of: (a) developing an understanding the requirements of her job and developing a professional expertise in job-knowledge; (b) learning more about individual reader's interests; (c) understanding more about the key business functions and some of the important issues in her department; (d) learning about the formal expectations for documents: "what works most effectively here, the manner in which people are used to seeing information conveyed"; and (e) getting a feel for, and using, the "Bank style."

Bruce: "Training the thinking process"

Bruce didn't think his writing had "changed a great deal" during his first

twenty months on the job. He was, however, aware of a number of changes, and an examination of Bruce's responses to specific questions suggests significant development.

Bruce's writing process was one area in which he acknowledged that there had been change. He thought his process was "faster" and more efficient, perhaps resulting from, he thought: better oral clarification of the issues in the writing assignment; better knowledge of databases and of "where to find things" when he researched; microcomputer access and use; more job-specific knowledge; and perhaps a better understanding of the document-cycling process, which "took some getting used to." He also thought that his increased speed in writing was the result of work pressures: "a natural process: as more work comes on and as you take responsibility for more things, there's less time to spend on individual tasks, so you just sort of bear down."

In his later papers Bruce received less guidance about the content and length of his papers, and he was less apt to vet his ideas with his supervisor before he started to draft. Bruce also seemed to have refined his sense of when it would be useful to test, rehearse, or modify his writing-related ideas by talking with colleagues. In the first interview, he said that he spoke to people to get ideas and to make sure he was on the right track. In the second interview, he said that it depended on the kind of paper: if the paper was "analytic" he was apt to do it in isolation; if it was related to policy, he was more apt to "discuss things orally." Bruce thought that overall, change in his writing process was the most important of the four areas explored.

Bruce thought his written documents used to be "more flowery," but had become more "concise" or "succinct"; more "to the point, the points are sort of laid out instead of hidden"; and more apt to reflect "a point I feel strongly about": he was more apt "to sort of force my views". Despite these important differences in his later papers, Bruce said that he didn't "feel a lot ha[d] changed" overall in his documents.

Similarly, in the area of attitudes and beliefs, Bruce replied to the first, most general prompt in the second-stage interview with: "I don't think my attitudes or beliefs have changed at all." But answers to specific questions contradicted this.

He said several times that his self-confidence had grown, to the point where "Now if I have something to say, I'll say it . . . and send it whether it's way out in left field or right on the button, you write it down and suffer the consequences after." In the second interview, Bruce reiterated his earlier belief that writing was important in his job: "if you can't get your ideas across on paper, you might as well forget them. That underlines the importance of it." But he appeared to have developed an appreciation for another aspect of writing's importance: "Typically papers make their way up to Deputy Governors, and we don't converse much with them, so the only way you can communicate or argue things in the hierarchy" is through writing. Bruce volunteered that oral communication was also important in his job: "more and more I notice the [oral] aspect of the job: speeches, speaking to organizations, meetings, time spent in banter."

Bruce appeared to significantly develop his understanding of the organizational context, although this too was not evident in his reply to the general prompt. The most important aspects of organizational context and its impact on writing that Bruce learned were: (a) the busy-ness of senior readers, and thus their need for "bottom line," "bang bang bang," concise texts; (b) the need to know and write to individual reader's needs and preferences; (c) the business functions of his department and of other parts of the Bank, and of the role of documentation in carrying them out; (d) the provenance of requests to have papers written; and the relationship of one paper to another (the impetus of the second-stage paper was that "other papers created a stir, which cause senior management to initiate it"); (e) the forms of argument and reasoning most acceptable to senior readers; and (f) the value placed on accuracy ("in university you kind of throw numbers off the top of your head. Here if you do that, and somebody questions it . . . you look silly."

Bruce thought he had acquired some of this contextual knowledge through feedback: "trial and error, seeing the editorial comments come back about 'maybe we don't want to say this, or maybe say it in a different way.'" It also appeared that Bruce learned a good deal through oral interaction.

It was clear that much of Bruce's interest in the organizational context was in the hierarchy above him (a useful focus in terms of learning the culture -- also a necessary focus for a writer who writes to senior management). In the collaborative process, he became

used to the idea that someone else further up the ladder would want things said in a different way, or an argument restructured in such a way so he can take it on to the next level . . . it's a little

bit of politics. I mean you don't want to be telling the Governor that interest rates should be coming down. I think there are certain processes that have been in place for God knows how long, or certain ways that senior management looks at things and handles things; you have to adapt a little bit to that way of thinking, otherwise it's pointless. I mean there's no sense coming in from left field and trying to throw wacky ideas out that aren't gonna get anywhere because you refuse to adapt to a certain style or something like that.

Bruce saw the document cycling process in part as "a quest for [knowing] what so and so above me wants to hear." Like some other participants, Bruce appeared to both *understand and resist* these strong institutional-socializing forces. Bruce's remarks quoted above were followed by this question from the interviewer: "Do you think about that feedback process at all as you write, sort of anticipate what people will say?" Bruce's answer was: "No, as I say I have my own style and I'm a little resistant to changing it, so I'll write what I think. Well, I guess I tone down a little bit more, some of my ideas; but I sort of say what I think and then let it get toned down. If it gets out the way I put it, fine, and if it doesn't, so be it."

Like Pierre, Bruce appeared to have somewhat narrow ideas about what writing is and involves, and so he may not have fully appreciated all he had learned through writing. For example, in talking about what he thought reviewers were doing as they reviewed papers, he said:

[He's] interested in seeing anything before it goes out to catch things that are controversial and things that lack substance, and I guess in that context he's concerned about what the message is. [Also] to make my style more like his style . . . I don't think that there's a lot that [my manager] can teach me about writing. . . . Sometimes a minor point is turned into a major point and your hands are bound . . . You come here and they expect that writing skills are sort of innate, and their function is not to make me a

better writer, except on clarity and making sure the points are covered. It's more training the thinking process than the writing process itself.

In sum then, Bruce appeared to learn a good deal about and through writing. Some of this learning was process-related (both his individual process and the larger social/organizational processes), some was attitudinal, and taken together, these appear significant. But because he couldn't see major changes in his written products, and because he seemed to think that changes in writing would be manifest in "style," and perhaps for other reasons as well, Bruce did not fully appreciate the nature, the scope, or the significance of these writing-related changes. Bruce appeared to be pulled in opposing directions by the forces of accommodation and resistance, and perhaps valued each of these separate dynamics in different fashions.

Amar: Being "aware of your mistakes"

Amar was the only participant who had formal ties to the researcher during the research period: Amar did some writing training with the researcher. This training amounted to ten or eleven hours of one-to-one tutorial focusing on various documents Amar had been asked to write. Amar also took a grammar-based Business Writing Course (in-house) and he did some self-study from a how-to business communications book. Although he went to university in English, English was his second language. The researcher would add a minor note of caution to a reading of Amar's self-reported development. Because he had worked with the researcher in a training context, some of his descriptions of change as a participant may have been influenced by remarks made by the

researcher during training.

Amar thought his understanding of the organizational context had developed through feedback from his boss, through getting to know some of his readers personally, and from scrutinizing documents written by other people, "especially by senior people." His gains in this understanding included "the workings of the department." and knowing "what readers are looking for." He also came to better understand the Bank "writing culture": the premium put on good writing ("quality counts more than quantity"); the "emphasis put on concise and clear writing . . . sentences carry a lot of information"; and "no bullshit. A fact has to be a fact."

Amar recognized, however, that he needed to learn much more about the context for his writing. In the first interview he said that he felt clear about the purpose of the paper he had just written, but "not too sure" about the broader functions of writing in his department. In the second interview, he said that he was still had uncertainties about purpose and audience. In the first interview he said that he was not "too sure about . . . who [actually] reads it and what they do with it"; in the second interview he said: "I think I still have the same problem. The one or two people who give you feedback I'm clear about, but other than that, I still have the same problem." In the second interview, he said he was "not too sure" about the relationship of the paper he wrote to decision-making; "not sure" about the relationship between the text he wrote and possible other texts; and while he thought that the text he wrote was "probably . . . related to policy", he didn't appear to know what the policy might be.

In other words, Amar's gains in understanding the organizational context appear limited to his immediate world, and to whatever he could pick up by reading senior employees' papers. Interestingly, when Amar was asked how long he thought it took to get an understanding of the Bank culture as it relates to writing, he said that "it depends on your department and how much writing you do. It also depends on how much contact you have with other people." It may also be worth noting that in contrast to most participants, Amar said that he never received guidance or clarification on a text after it had been assigned.

Amar thought that his writing process had changed significantly in that his research was "more selective" and in that he tried to "focus more on [his] topic or purpose" (but not much, it appeared to the researcher, on his readers and their information needs). "I think about what exactly the document has to say, and what are the expectations for it. This makes the writing simpler and easier." In discussing the second-stage paper, Amar said that the process was much shorter, perhaps "one-sixth as long", mostly because of "more focused research" and "thinking more about the topic." "Before I used to wander." Compared with the time shortly after he joined the Bank, Amar's writing process appeared to have become less linear (more "jumping around"). He was perhaps less apt to revise than earlier, perhaps because he was more "clear about his text before he started."

Like most participants, Amar's self-confidence increased between interviews. "I used to be discouraged about writing, but I think I'm improving." He thought that earlier he had perhaps been "over self-confident." He remained

anxious about peer criticism of his writing.

Amar thought that writing was largely learnable, except that "good writers always had a good background." In the first interview he said that on-the-job writers developed through practice, effort, self-training, school and perhaps training. He agreed with this list in the second interview, with the caveat that "training is the most important." Amar said several times in different ways that underachievement in writing, or problems with texts must come to the writer's attention for him or her to progress: "writing can be learned, but some things take a long, long time, especially if you are not aware of your mistakes"; "feedback motivates you to learn: you say this is a stupid thing; the next time I don't want this to escape my attention again"; "I used to be discouraged by all the red ink; now I understand that it is there to help you and to make the paper better. I used to have the idea that there would be a perfect paper; now I know that there are no perfect papers."

When Amar talked about the importance of writing in his job, to his earlier notion that "it is a key means of communicating with people you cannot see", he added in the second interview that "you get recognition for your writing".

Amar thought that after seventeen months on the job, his written products were: (a) more focussed, with information easier to find for the reader: before, "information would be here and there" while now, "the answer to the question is right at the top. I don't think I would have done this a year ago . . . I might have written a redundant conclusion a year ago"; (b) more

concise, more "unified" paragraphs," less apt to have redundancies; (c) more accurate, fewer "mistakes"; and (d) clearer and more specific, using more "simple" and precise vocabulary.

In addition to dealing with feedback and reading texts written by senior employees, Amar thought he had learned "from [making] mistakes" and by "thinking more carefully about mistakes, trying to second-guess faults readers might find." He also learned from "looking at colleagues' writing" where he got ideas about structure, format and "how much work went into it."

John: Learning "what they want"

John believed that his writing had developed in several areas. Overall, John's development might be characterized as coming to know what he termed "what they [management] want," and adjusting his writing in order to give them "what they want."

John's understanding of the organizational context, particularly in the sense of managers' expectations for written reports, seemed to have developed considerably. "People don't have time to read everthing" he noted. "Things get summarized anyway, so you might as well be brief as possible in the first place." He had learned that "you have to be very precise, explicit, so the reader knows *exactly* what you're saying." In fact, John thought that "precision, saying exactly what you want, what you mean, without running the risk of being misunderstood" was "perhaps . . . the most important" thing he had learned about writing.

One aspect of his writing context that was still unclear for John was the audience, beyond his immediate reviewer for his papers. When he was asked in

the second interview if he had always been clear about who read his papers and why, he responded: "Not really. I still don't know who's going to read this paper. Generally I know, but it can still be obscure." Interestingly, John and Amar (who also had trouble knowing about distant audiences and their information needs) shared the same supervisor. John complained in the first interview that he didn't get enough feedback to know if he was "on track" in his writing. Nine months later he said the situation had not changed.

John described the culture of the Bank as "highly conservative, bureaucratic and slow-moving" in the first interview, and qualified this slightly in the second: "not always slow-moving"; "I'd just say conservative now, not 'highly' conservative." He thought this culture, and his understanding of it -- "it's always in the back of your mind" -- had an effect on his writing, making it "impersonal," "concise," and "conservative."

John learned these expectations and this larger context through general experience and feedback. "Just being in the Bank you get to learn what they want." He said that written feedback was the main vehicle for learning: "Whole sections get struck out." Oral feedback was also important, "but there was less of it." "The boss tells you this part should be in or out. . . And my boss's boss too. They filter out what isn't needed. They strike out extraneous information. You learn from this to focus on your final conclusion and not to write about anything secondary."

John also mentioned reading colleagues' papers: "you make judgments on the positive and the negative aspects of these papers and learn from it." In

addition to "change in response to a growing awareness of what is required from feedback or seeing what other people are doing." John thought "becoming critical of [his] own writing" helped prompt changes in his own writing.

John's confidence level was "much higher" after a year in the Bank. "I know what they expect and I know that what I hand in will be okay. I don't have to prove myself anymore." Whereas he initially said that he was anxious writing a "new type" of document, he later said "I wouldn't be anxious about trying a new type of paper." One result of this increased confidence was in how he reacted to feedback. Like other participants, John said "I don't always do what [my reviewer] suggests now. If I'm convinced what I did is right, I leave it."

John believed early on that writing was very important in his job for "letting management know who was worth promoting" and because "mistakes could affect readers' job performance." A year later he said, "it was probably even more important than I thought it was then. I've been promoted ahead of people with less seniority." He pointed to one additional function of writing's importance: as a "marking of productivity, of output."

Key changes in John's writing process included using a microcomputer to write, and better, more efficient research -- two aspects of "taking less time to write the same thing," which John valued greatly. Writing on a microcomputer was "more efficient" and he "could play around with things . . . and see how alternatives look." He said that with the micro, he wrote more freely, "knowing I can revise"; "before I'd get stuck writing." Microcomputer writing allowed John

to avoid using secretaries who "slow things down": "the lags with the secretaries weren't even funny." A micro "also tells you the length" which is "useful to know for things like market reports" with their "one-page limit."

One change in the research portion of John's writing process was in when he did it. In his early days at the Bank, John researched, then made an outline, and then started drafting. A year later he said that he was more apt to write an outline before he did his research. In other words, he was more apt to research to support a known proposition rather than research to find a proposition because he was more apt to have ideas "clear in my head before I begin." He said that his research had become more efficient as he learned to "find information more quickly." An example of this was in his increased ability to quickly get the information he needed from financial statements and annual reports.

The first-stage document was initiated by his boss; John initiated the second-stage document. Throughout the year, John used colleagues to get substantive feedback. He also talked to colleagues about his writing as he planned and wrote, more to get ideas initially, and later, apparently, more to rehearse articulation of ideas. Overall, John thought his writing process had "become more efficient. Before I was beating around the bush. Now I jump right in."

John thought that there were noticeable differences in his documents over the research period. In the second interview, he thought they were more apt to go "right to the point" ("less fluff"), but that they were "more boring" and "less

entertaining" than they used to be. In discussing specifics of the second-stage paper, John said:

There's nothing artistic to it, no beating around the bush, no fluff. This is the result of what I've learned. It's very straightforward. . . . the use of appendices and of 'for an explanation of ABC, see X's paper' . . . and the use of lots of headings . . . I wouldn't have done before . . . [they] are the result of things I've learned. . . . When I make a calculation, I make it really explicit. I wouldn't have done that before. I even show where I get the numbers.

John also pointed to "the conservative tone . . . [it's] less personal: anyone could have written it", and a greater precision and conciseness as important differences in his written products after a year in the Bank.

John's supervisor's comments supported John's own notions of his development. He pointed out that nine months was not a long "period in someone's [development]," but with one minor exception, he agreed with the specific aspects of development described by John. In the unguided section of the interview, when the supervisor made general comments, it was apparent that he too thought an increased understanding of the organizational context was the most significant aspect of John's development: "What changes there were were more understanding the Bank's objectives and goals, especially for the routine, week-to-week writing. . . . After a year he knew, without having to ask, what information would help his readers."

When the supervisor was asked whether learning about the local context was important in developing writing ability, he replied:

Yeah, very much so. Because I've had experience with other writers who don't seem to perceive what their audience is, the organizational context, and it's been disastrous for them. I think MBA students have an advantage here because they are already

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trained in organizational structure, organizational goals. Whereas with economists, I think it's more difficult. Sometimes they get their own ideas lodged . . .

Appendix B:

Additional aspects of development

This appendix is an extension of "Patterns of change," in Chapter 4, providing further detail or comment on findings presented in that section, as well as some additional findings which do not fall into the thematic patterns.

Time spent writing

The participants spent a good deal of their working time writing. The following table shows the portion of the work week reported as spent in writing.

Name	per cent of time spent writing (estimated by participant)
Blair	"up to 100%, depending on how you define it"
Pierre	75%
Christine	75%
John	65%
Micheline	60%
Bruce	60%
Greg	60%
Daniel	50%
Patrice	25-55%
Amar	30-40%

The majority of participants said that the amount of writing they did was about what they had expected when they had started. Christine and Patrice were exceptions. Christine, who said that her writing was "the most I've ever done," said that the amount was "slightly more than I thought when I started." Patrice said that he was surprised by the amount of time he spent writing, perhaps because he was "a little slow."

It should be noted that the portion of time spent writing by the participants in this study is higher than reported in other studies of on-the-job writing. This is not surprising. As previously noted, the Bank is a "writing-intensive" organization, and analysts and economists do a good deal of writing as part of their jobs.

Attitude toward writing

All but one participant "generally liked" writing when they started at the Bank and reported no change twelve to eighteen months later. One participant (Greg) said in the first interview that "constraints" and the "serious consequences" of writing on-the-job had diminished his liking of writing. Sixteen months later he said this feeling had "waned" because the constraints were clearer to him ("less fuzzy"), and because he felt more confident.

Self-confidence

Although all of the participants reported feeling fairly confident about their writing during the first interviews, all but one participant reported generally higher confidence twelve to eighteen months later. John was perhaps the most extreme, who said that his confidence was "much higher now. I don't see myself as being queasy about writing anything now. I know what they expect and I know that what I hand in will be okay. I don't have to prove myself any more." Daniel's comment was representative of other participants: having said that his confidence level was higher than when he had started because he had "more tools, more techniques . . . other ways of writing," he noted that his confidence was "less naive than it was a year ago. My confidence level then was perhaps

too high."

Early in this research project, the researcher had predicted that many of the participants would be *less* self-confident after a year of working than when they began. The rationale was that new professional employees at the Bank typically have strong academic backgrounds; many were "good writers" at school. At the Bank, there is often an adjustment period as (broadly speaking) they learn that good writing in the Bank is not a well-arranged text of what they know; rather a well-arranged text of what their readers need to know. The huge amount of red ink which typically marks early drafts of many papers, especially of new employees' papers, would, the researcher thought, diminish the self confidence of many writers. Obviously, such was not the case.

Some of the pattern of increasing confidence might be explained by the timing. The second interview may have been too late to catch any of the participants in periods of doubt or diminished self-confidence.

The exception to the pattern, Blair, also casts some light on the relationship of confidence to learning.

Blair reported that he felt "less confident in a general way" about his writing, although he thought he was developing. Blair's manager, who described Blair as "one of the best economists I've seen in terms of accommodating the . . . critiques of first drafts," thought that Blair was too hard on himself, and that he was a strong and rapidly developing writer: "He shouldn't feel less confident. His ability is strong . . . He's too hard on himself there, he really is. He's much better than he was to begin with."

Blair, an economist with very high technical abilities (according to his manager), entered the Bank as a confident writer who soon discovered that his writing did not always satisfy his superiors. His first year was one of significant learning and development attended by diminished self-confidence. In discussing causes of change in their writing, other participants, Patrice and Christine for example, pointed to episodes when superiors outlined inadequacies in their writing. Presumably these would be periods of diminished self-confidence.

Change to micro-computer use

Although a change from pencil use to microcomputer use is salient and clear-cut, participants themselves did not attach great importance to this change. More than one participant moved to the predominant use of a microcomputer for writing during the first year on the job, and while certain efficiencies were noted, the change was not viewed as terribly significant by those affected: "I wouldn't put much value on that. It just saves time" (Greg).

Interestingly, the writing tool as a "means of production" was noted by more than one participant. Greg, for example, noted problems with being dependent on a secretary, and enjoyed the increased control that having his own computer gave him.

In general then, the use of a microcomputer was seen by the participants as more efficient, but without significant impact on the writing process.

Genres written and development

Most of the document types written by the participants were new to them when they arrived at the Bank. Memos, short reports, "briefing notes," and

"weeklies" were reported as being new to almost all of the writers, while some writers pointed out some similarities between long reports and some forms of university writing.

Responding to the question, "Has doing one particular type of writing helped you to develop your writing skills?" participants generally replied that they learned different things from writing different genres.

The shorter, more formulaic types, such as the "weeklies," briefing notes, and the short reports, taught them: (a) to be precise and concise (John); (b) to determine and use only "what is essential" for the readers (Daniel); and (c) to develop the "Bank of Canada style" which is "cautious", "without style or judgment" (Pierre).

Short, non-formulaic document types, i.e., memos, were mentioned by Blair, Pierre and Amar as helpful in developing the ability of "relat[ing] a lot of information quickly."

The long reports were mentioned by Amar, Patrice, Blair, John, and Daniel as helping to develop organizing ability (John) as well as knowing "how to sell your ideas . . . how to read the Bank's needs" (Daniel), how to meet "the expectations of my supervisors . . . to adapt to what's wanted" (Patrice), and how to "learn from mistakes and feedback" (Amar).

Managers' perceptions

Managers' views of the most significant changes

At the end of the interview with the writer's supervisor or manager, the

manager was asked to rank, in terms of importance, the impact on the participant's writing, and on making the writer a more valuable employee, fourteen possible writing-related changes on a reaction sheet (see Appendix C).

Following are the most frequently noted changes in the six participants whose supervisors or managers were interviewed. The managers' rankings are in parenthesis.

1. has learned through experience more about her/his audience and their information needs (1,1*,2,2,2,4*)
2. has a better understanding of the job and its requirements; has developed professional expertise (1,2,3,4*,5*)
3. has a better understanding of the major business functions of the department and of how given documents help carry them out (1,1*,5,5*)
4. is better at getting clarification on the writing assignment (1,2,5,5*)
5. has learned through experience conventions and expectations re: structure, format, tone and style (1,3,4,6)
6. takes less time producing a document (3,5*,5*)
7. understands that (s)he is writing to satisfy readers' needs, not to display his/her knowledge (2,5*)
8. has had practice in writing a given type of document (4,4,5*)
9. has gained in confidence (3,6)
10. uses feedback more effectively in revising (3,6*)
11. has a more realistic attitude about writing in a business setting (3)
12. understands that writing can assist in learning, deepening thought, and

discovering, as opposed to merely communicating information (5*)

13. has learned how to learn from feedback (6*)

5* One manager marked did not rank, but checked, three possibilities as true and significant. If ranked, these possibilities would be 4th, 5th and 6th. All were ranked as 5th.

1*, 4*, 6* One manager rated two developments as most important; another manager rated two developments as fourth most important, etc.

Interestingly, the three highest ranked and most frequently cited developments on this reaction sheet were: first, having "learned through experience more about her/his audience and their information needs," second, having "a better understanding of the job and its requirements" and having "developed professional expertise." and third, having "a better understanding of the major business functions of the department and of how given documents help carry them out."

This would appear to support the notion that developing knowledge of the organizational context is the most important or most highly valued aspect of writing-related development from the supervisors' and managers' perspective. Questionnaires generally provide quite limited information, but in this case, the questionnaires were completed following the taped interviews, and a comparison of the questionnaires with the managers' earlier comments shows that the questionnaires tend to support and encapsulate their interview comments.

Managers' comments on aspects of development

Following are some of the interesting comments made by the managers/reviewers on the development of the writing ability of the participant

in question. Some of the comments reflect a more general outlook on the development of writing ability in Bank employees. The comments have been selected for their representativeness: the comment was either repeated by some of the other five reviewers, or is representative in the sense that the manager/reviewer thought the comment applied to other writers (s)he had managed.

On knowledge of the organizational context

- "He improved a lot in recognizing who he was writing for . . . much more aware of what we're trying to do here, in the sense of *why* we write things . . ."
- "After a year, he knew, without having to ask, what information would help his readers"
- By the end of her first year "she was clear" about the readership "for close audiences . . . but for distant audiences she didn't really know. But I would not expect an entry-level person in their first year to pick up all those differences . . . purpose maybe; audience not always"
- "Inevitably, in the first year . . . you don't know what the lines of communication are, you don't know who's deciding what, and who needs what information. He has a much better feel for that now"
- "What's happened over time, as it does with all employees, is . . . a better sense of Bank style and what works most effectively here: the manner in which people are used to seeing information . . . and more important perhaps, what they are interested in . . . Understanding the organizational context is *"so important"*

- He says he has learned what supervisors do, which "is another way of saying he now knows what the section does, and thus where he fits in"
- "In putting together a paper and then running it through people, you get ideas about certain elements of [the] corporate culture, particularly the importance we attach to precision and accuracy, and to clarity of expression"
- "There was never any need to improve her writing, but rather indicate what the important issues were and how they could be effectively presented . . ."

On the writing process

- "What he produced was a *process*: a learning process for me . . . a learning process for the other people involved, for himself perhaps most of all" and this resulted in a product. But "it's a lot more than just fifteen pages! . . . they're paid to add value to information and one way of doing that is in the dialogue that occurs around the paper . . ."
- New employees improve at clarifying the writing assignment soon after they are hired, but it takes them more time to learn how to use feedback to revise
- "By the end, she realized that when she had a question, she had to study it, focus the answer, develop it, perhaps even analyse it a little bit to anticipate questions or weaknesses in the argumentation before she presented it"

On the written product

- "Things flow much smoother. I don't have to spend as much time thinking about what he was trying to say . . . It means less re-drafting. It makes my job much easier . . . clearer . . . shorter sentences . . . better at getting at the bottom line"

- "Better over the past year, but it's hard to be precise . . . a small sample of large documents . . . very different in content"
- "Difficult to judge . . . doesn't overburden the readers with details so much . . . more focused . . . an improvement in tabular and chart material and in making sure he's addressing the right audience"
- A better, though not fully developed ability to show the "motivation" of the paper, "why I am presenting you with this information"; this ability will continue to develop "through time"
- "The structure and purpose [are more] obvious . . . now," more "neatly suited to the needs, bearing in mind that time is a critical element"

On attitudes and beliefs

- "He's recognizing that it's a group process at the Bank"
- "I think he's learned that he didn't know it all about writing when he came out of university."
- "A willingness, if not eagerness, to listen and learn" is a good predictor of writing development; employees who think they learned everything in university, "those guys don't do so well"
- "Feeling more confident in her job, her knowledge of the area, as well as her position in the Bank, knowing how she can and should relate to others . . . I think . . . this goes on across the department"
- A broader knowledge of the functions of writing; a greater tendency to understand the organizational functions (e.g. archival, issue-managing etc.), but seldom an understanding of writing's function as a tool to enhance learning, to

add value to information, and to create knowledge. Some reviewers thought this understanding came later.

On how the participant learned

- "Partly through my intervention, but mostly through keeping his eyes and ears open"
- "I think a bright person would make a statement like that ["oral, high-level feedback directed at global content was the most useful in terms of development"]. That's great. I'm pleased . . ."
- The reviewer "displaying an interest in writing [and] being able to write himself."
- "A lot of oral interaction"
- "I'm quite surprised by his statement that . . . I had a large impact on his writing . . . I was mystified how [he] picked up his market knowledge"
- "Good listening skills and flexibility . . . not [being] argumentative . . . weekly briefings for management [allow him to see] what people are doing with the information . . . good personality"
- A "collegial" and "co-operative" area of the organization helps to hasten the "natural learning curve"
- "Questioning . . . asking for feedback . . . challenging"
- "She had a very good network of peers with whom she could talk and learn a lot that way . . . that's perhaps the major route through which people learn about this organization. It's as much from peer network as from their supervisor"

- "Opportunity is important, that's the key . . . time to think and formulate [about] the product . . . and about the process too . . . feedback . . . as well, a freer format" [non-formulaic genres]
- "Sort of an indirect, osmotic process"
- "The areas you develop expertise in are determined by the questions that are raised . . . to a certain extent, it makes it a matter of happenstance "

General comments on development

- "Part of the maturing process of maturing as an economist is to be able to develop questions, learn how to ask interesting questions"
- "The writing process . . . develops questions, it helps you see how ideas flow . . . gaps in your knowledge . . . a consistent story . . . certain problems: should we think a little bit more about that. To me that is the writing process, not just sitting down and transmitting information up. [The inability to do this] was one of [his] weaknesses, but it's not uncommon for someone at that level"
- "This is going to be the next stage of his development:" learning how to "ask questions"

Participants' views of the how and the why of change

"The major cause of change seems to have been feedback from supervisors and managers." For some participants, the process appeared general and largely tacit, for others, the cause of change was rather specific.

Christine, for example, started to change in various ways as a result of her reading of her writing situation: "I went through so many drafting changes as a result of suggestions made on the last paper that I began to think that

there must be an easier way of making the paper acceptable to the reader earlier in the process. So 'would he consider this acceptable' became my standard, my benchmark." Also: "You see other people writing and what they go through and how long it takes"; "papers circulated in the Department lets me see what is expected, what the standard is. This writing may influence my organization."

Greg also had specific prompts to change, but externally imposed. From Greg's point of view: "the expectations" and "the demand from my superiors intensified." Or, from Greg's supervisor's point of view (replying to the question 'How did Greg learn that?': "By having it driven home to him . . . To some extent I think that is what is required that you have to have someone say: Look, this is the way [things are]."

Patrice and John also spoke of being prompted by feedback, both written and oral, to develop. Patrice clearly believed that little change would have occurred in his writing had he kept his initial supervisor who provided "no feedback." Patrice was prompted to change by specific comments on his writing in his Performance Appraisal and by specific suggestions on writing by his manager. For John "written feedback" was the main vehicle for learning; also "oral feedback, but there was less of it." Like Christine, John said that "reading colleagues' papers" helped him to "make judgments on the positive and negative aspects of these papers and learn from it."

Participant views on differences between writing at the Bank and at university

Participants were asked at the end of the second interview: "What would

you say if [a new employee] asked if there are any differences between writing here and writing in university?" The point of the question was to see what the participants thought were the most salient differences between writing at work and writing at school after one or two years of work (and twenty-odd years in school!).

The responses which follow may provide an "emic" portrait of these differences, and thus hint at some of the adjustments the participants made. Numbers in brackets following a comment indicate the number of participants who said the same thing or something quite similar.

- **purpose, rhetorical constraints and audience.** "The main difference is your reader: it's not a professor; it's someone who asks for something specific"; "Here you go directly to the subject; you don't write useless things"; "less explanation than in school; it's got to be much more directed and to the point"; "You have to know what people know and don't know and that takes time. At university you see your teachers every so often, but here you see your boss every day"; "A very, very, very big difference. Here your writing has to support the objectives of the Bank"; "you have less autonomy here. What you have to say may not be what somebody else wants said"; Writing here helps management act or decide (paraphrase); "here you write about subjects that are not especially of interest to you, and that you don't know much about. At school, more often than not, you choose subjects that you know something about"; "writing has to be useful here or it's useless"; "you're not trying to get a grade; in university they want to see how much you know. Here they don't care about *your*

understanding, you're just trying to give people a wrap-up of what they want to know. (9-10)

- **conciseness.** "succinctness is typically not found in school; in fact with 'page limits', it's the opposite. Succinctness is valued here"; "the shortness . . . the words have to be very simple and direct"; "very concise: assume a high level of understanding or you look stupid. (6-7)

- **clarity and precision.** "In university there is more scope for ambiguity. You learn about clarity and ambiguity here"; "writing is less flowery here"; "writing here is much more specific, more precise than it is in university"; "in university, unless you are in English, no one pays any attention to your writing. Here everyone pays a lot of attention to everything in writing. In university you could get away with murder -- here you cannot"; "more polished, more refined, at a higher level than anything you've experienced." (6)

- **feedback.** "a lot of people are not prepared for [it] psychologically"; "you may be a good writer in university, but you may still get lots of red ink here"; "Don't let the red marks get you down. You probably are a good writer. A million red marks doesn't mean that you aren't. (5-6)

- **turnaround time and scheduling.** "the time it takes to get a paper out will be much slower than anything you've experienced": "you have time constraints that you don't have in school" [i.e., writing at work is radically slower and faster than at school!] (4)

- **the role of the writer.** "You have less autonomy here. What you have to say may not be what someone else wants said"; "Here you write about subjects that [may not be] of interest to you . . . At school, more

often than not, you choose subjects." (3-4)

- **the need to tell a "story."** "Everyone remembers a story; no one remembers what happened to consumer credit two months ago." (2)

Participant advice on writing for new employees

Following the question on differences between writing at the Bank and writing in university, participants were asked: "What advice about writing would you give a new employee to make the adjustment process easier?" The point of the question was to have the participants distil and synthesize some of the aspects of change they had undergone, especially those aspects which can easily articulated and are deemed useful and teachable.

There was a good deal of repetition here. Again the numbers in brackets represent the number of participants who gave the advice. The advice is paraphrased.

- a) Ask for clarification or help (5)
- b) Be prepared for an enormous amount of feedback for each paper you produce ("more than anything they have seen in their life") (4)
- c) Don't take the feedback personally and don't let it get you down (4)
- d) Try to learn from the feedback process (4)
- e) Talk to lots of people; get to know lots of people; exchange opinions (4)
- f) Clarify the purpose and the audience of documents early in the process (2)
- g) Ask colleagues for feedback (as opposed to mandatory review by a boss) (2)
- h) Get to the point right away; be concise (2)
- i) Read colleagues' papers to get an idea of structure (2)

- j) Know as much as you can about your subject (1)
- k) Think a lot before you write (1)
- l) Make sure your arguments are logical and well-supported (1)
- m) Use numbers carefully (1)
- n) Edit well before submitting (1)
- o) Stick to basics; don't try to be fancy (1)
- p) Work a lot on the first three or four pages to make sure you are clear, to make sure the purpose and the context are clear (1)
- q) Observe and think about the operation of your department (1)
- r) Consider taking an in-house writing course (1)

Degree of change among the participants

While what the participants learned cannot be measured, some of the participants appeared to develop more than others over the research period, in terms of both the variety of aspects which developed, and/or of the degree of development within an aspect. Two writers who thought they had developed a good deal over the research period were Daniel and Patrice. Two who thought they had not developed to a great extent were Pierre and Bruce.

Pierre and Bruce reported spending more time writing than did Daniel and Patrice, so in this case, time spent writing is not an explanatory factor. The major difference which appears noteworthy in contrasting these four participants is the nature and form of the feedback they received. Another factor may also be significant: the participants' perceptions of what constitutes writing and what constitutes change in one's own writing.

It should again be noted that despite Pierre's and Bruce's beliefs that they hadn't developed much overall (which may be the case in comparison with the other participants), their responses to specific questions show that they likely learned more than they were aware. It also appears that much of what they did learn was important. In the second interview, for example, Pierre said that he had developed a sense of "how the Bank communicates," that he had learned more about acceptable written analysis, and that he understood more clearly expectations for "structure and style," but he didn't acknowledge this acquired knowledge as important! Aspects of change for Bruce over the study period included: increased clarity about "who reads papers and why," increased self-confidence, a better understanding of how one paper relates or leads to another paper, knowledge of conventional structures for given papers, and a better understanding of "the ways that senior management looks at things and handles things." Thus, from the researcher's point of view, at least, Pierre and Bruce both learned a good deal *about* writing during the research period, and thus their perceived lack of development may be a matter of degree vis-a-vis the other participants.

Patrice felt that getting a new manager who gave him a good deal of feedback, especially substantive feedback, was instrumental in his development. In his case, the effect of substantive feedback on his subsequent development was particularly noticeable because an earlier supervisor had not given him "enough" feedback, and he therefore felt he was not developing. In the first interview, Patrice said that he thought a boss did not have a real role in helping

the writer develop, other than in "just pointing out some weaknesses." In the second interview, he said that he now believed that a boss did play a role, an important role "if the boss communicates clearly what is wanted."

Daniel also indicated that feedback was important in helping him develop, but his idea of feedback encompassed a good deal: "speaking to people"; "becoming a member of a group"; getting direct, writing-related feedback from his supervisor and from colleagues; and seeing or hearing people's reactions to oral presentations in departmental seminars. When he first arrived at the Bank, Daniel said that he sometimes felt anxious about feedback, that not only was the text being evaluated, but he was as well. A year later, this feeling had disappeared and he said "I like criticism now" and that he had learned how to learn from feedback. Earlier he had not liked the uncertainty of whether his writing met the needs of his superiors; a year later he said, "Now I play with this uncertainty."

By contrast, Pierre received (or thought he received: see next paragraph) little substantive feedback: "my boss is happy with my writing, so there's no need to change much now"; "he says it's fine the way I'm doing it." Pierre seemed to sense that had his boss been able to provide more concrete and substantive feedback, he might have developed more. In the first interview Pierre said that theoretically, a boss had a role in helping him develop his writing, but in reality would probably not have such a role for him because of his boss's limited French, the language in which he wrote. A year later, he said that his boss had "not at all" had a role in helping him develop, though he

volunteered that feedback was still theoretically one of the most important factors to help a writer develop.

In fact, Pierre may have received more feedback than he thought. Pierre seemed to think that the most important element of writing was "style" (see his profile in Appendix A), and thus pointed to someone showing him how to qualify a verb as important feedback. Pierre didn't regard as important, or didn't think about the larger reasons for, the more substantive feedback he received. For example: "The conclusions are in the first paragraph because [the manager] asked me to do this": "The two tables on page 4 and page 5 don't add to the readability of the text. They're there because I was told to put them there." Speaking about the early, i.e., substantive, feedback he had received on the second-stage document, Pierre said "I learned in terms of analysis, not in terms of writing. [My manager] reacts to the substance . . . but he does not change my sentences or my style, and this is frustrating. You will not improve your writing if no one gives you feedback on your written style."

In Bruce's case, his attitude, "I don't think there's a lot [my supervisor] can teach me about writing." (second-stage interview) which may be read as arrogance, but which is just as likely to reflect narrow ideas of what writing involves, may have inhibited both his development, and his sense of development. His confidence and his rather egocentric view of writing may have been obstacles to his learning from feedback. In the second interview he said that he didn't think that he had learned anything about the Bank or its culture which affected his writing, and he didn't think his writing ability would develop

in the coming year. In answer to the question, "Do you think about the feedback process at all as you write, sort of anticipate what people will say?" he replied, "No. I have my own style and I'm a little resistant to changing it, so I write what I think."

For Pierre, then, it appears that a (possible) lack of feedback, as well as an apparent failure to understand the rationale for, and the larger dimensions of, feedback, led to a missed opportunity to gain important knowledge. For Bruce, it appears that egocentrism and a failure to understand the function of writing from an organizational perspective limited his development as a writer.

While this is a cursory examination of only one factor affecting development, it does appear that meaningful, substantive feedback and the writer's ability and willingness to act upon it is an important variable in the participants' development.

Factors which appeared to influence the participants' development

For the participants in this study, the degree of development seemed to depend to an extent on:

- a) the writer's beliefs regarding the learnability of on-the-job writing, and beliefs as to whether he or she has something to learn;
- b) the writer's understanding (tacit or conscious) of what constitutes, and who determines, "good writing";
- c) the demands placed upon the writer, particularly perhaps, the variety of document types written and the audiences addressed;
- d) the degree to which the documents written serve the larger, higher-level

corporate functioning:

- e) the degree and the nature of the feedback received;
- f) the writer's attitude toward, and strategies for dealing with, feedback;
- g) the writer's social skills (and perhaps "sociability") and curiosity about the work of others;
- h) the writer's degree of "other orientation" (as opposed to egocentrism) in their work and dealings with colleagues and superiors; and
- i) the writer's understanding of the nature and functions of writing.

Appendix C:

Interview Questions and Managers' Questionnaire

1. First interview with participants

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time worked in Bank: _____

Where previous writing done:

_____

Timing: end of first or second major document written in new job, e.g., end of the entire document production cycle, after all feedback from supervisor has been incorporated and the final draft produced.

Areas to be covered:

1. attitudes and beliefs about writing
2. knowledge of the social/organizational context for writing
3. written product
- 4 writing process

1. I'd like to know something about your attitudes and beliefs about writing.
  - could you describe your general attitude toward writing, both before you came to the Bank, and now in your new job?
  - in general, do you like writing?
  - do you feel confident in your abilities as a writer? Which aspects in particular? Why?
  - do you ever feel anxious, or lacking in confidence? When? Why?
  - do you ever hate writing? when?
  - what influences have been most important in developing your abilities and habits as a writer?
  - in general, do you think that writing is learnable, or something you "have" or you "don't have"?
  - how do you think good on-the-job writers get that way?
  - how important do you think writing is in your job? In what ways is it important?
  - do you think your boss has a role in helping you develop as a writer?
    - * (if yes) What kind of a role?
  - do you think your approach to writing will change much in your first year on the job, or do you think that your writing skills and habits are pretty well formed?
    - * (if "approach to writing will change")
  - can you guess some of the things that might change?
  - what do you think will cause the change?

2. Social/organizational context. Sometimes we talk about "corporate culture", that is the values, beliefs and patterns of thought that are specific to an institution. These values beliefs and patterns of thought surround us, they're part of the air we breathe, and they may have an influence on how we operate, how we perform in our jobs. I'd like to get an idea of your early impressions of the Bank culture as it affects writing.
  - You've been here a short while. Have you observed a "Bank of Canada culture", with specific values and belief systems?
    - * (If yes) Do you think this Bank culture has an effect on writing?
Please explain.
  - Have you noticed any writing conventions which are specific to this department or to the Bank of Canada?
    - * (If yes) Please elaborate.
  - Tell me what role you think writing plays in this department: what purposes does it serve?
  - How does this piece of writing fit into the context of ongoing documentation in this Department?
  - What purpose does this paper serve? How clear are you about that?
  - Is there a relationship between this document and other documents being written in this department?
  - What influences were at work as you wrote this document? (prompt as necessary)
    - other documents in the Bank?

- other documents outside the Bank?
- other people?
- previous writing?
- your understanding of Bank or departmental policy?
- Now that you've finished this paper, can you describe what you think will happen to it?
  - further readership
  - how it will fit into decision-making
- Tell me what you understand about management attitudes toward employees' writing.

3. Comments on this piece of writing (the written product)

- can you comment on the similarity to and differences from previous things you've written
- what do you like about it?
- what weaknesses can you see or do you suspect?
- can you describe the paper's structure? Comments?
- can you describe the paper's style? Comments?

4. I'd like to know, in as much detail as possible, the process you went through to write this document, from the moment you were asked to write it to the time you submitted it.
  - a. First, can you describe everything that happened from the moment you were given this piece of writing to the time you started drafting -- any planning, talking with people, researching, thinking etc. you did to get ready to draft. Try to think of absolutely everything that could possibly be construed as related to the writing of this piece. (Prompt as necessary).
    - initiation (who, how)
    - guidance (degree, kind)
    - clarification (how, what, when)
    - research (how, when)
    - planning (strategies / methods, tools, timing)
    - audience analysis (strategies / methods, degree, quality, timing)
    - invention (strategies / methods timing)
    - talking (for planning, getting ideas etc.)
  - b. Next, can you describe the drafting of this piece, including any revisions you made, right from the moment you starting up to the final edit. Just so we're using the same vocabulary, I'd like to say that by "revising", I don't mean editing. (Explain.)
    - getting started (what was worked on first, timing in relation to planning)
    - relationship of drafting and revising (to planning, to each other in terms of discovery, timing)

- tools (pen, pencil; word-processor: access, familiarity, what parts of process; whiteboard; use of secretary)
  - use of colleagues (resources, sounding boards)
  - scope for discovery (new ideas while drafting)
  - nature and quantity of revisions
  - general strategies / techniques for drafting & revising
- c. Can you describe the editing of this paper
- strategies, rationale, process
- d. How about feedback from your boss? What happened? What is your understanding of the role of feedback? What are you clear about, and what are you still vague about? Do you have any frustrations about the nature of the feedback process? What do you like about it?
- e. What went well in the writing process?
- f. Problems or frustrations?
- g. Differences from previous writing? (& comments on these differences)
5. Final question. If you think you'll learn more about writing in your job over the coming six-nine months, can you characterize roughly what aspects, or what kind of aspects, you expect to be learning?

2. Second interview with participants: sample

[with sections 3, 5, & 6 individualized]

Name: Daniel

Date: _____

Time worked in Bank: _____

Time since 1st interview: _____

Age: _____

Timing: 1. end of the complete document production cycle of a major document, after all feedback from supervisor has been incorporated and the final draft produced; 2. ten-twenty months after first interview.

Areas to be covered:

1. writing since the last interview
2. global impressions of change
3. attitudes and beliefs about writing
4. the written document
5. the writing process
6. knowledge of the social/organizational context of writing

1. Writing since the last interview

- a. What per cent of your working time do you think you spend writing, if you include all things related to writing such as research time, thinking time, etc.?
- b. Are you surprised by the amount of time you spend writing? Is it more or less than you thought you'd spend when you started this job? How does the amount of writing you do in your job compare with other periods of your life?
- c. What types of documents have you written in the past year? (prompt: had you ever written this type of document before?)
- d. Has doing one particular type of writing helped you develop your writing skills? Which type? Why?
- e. Have you had any writing training since our last interview?
- f. In the past year, have you done any reading which you think may have influenced your writing?
  - specifically what?
  - how has this reading influenced your writing?
- g. Do you do any writing outside of your job?
- h. When you were going to university, did you do any non-university writing?
- i. Is this your first major job after university?

2. General impressions

- a. I'd like to ask you to think about your writing since the first interview. I'd like to get your general impressions of what the most important changes have been, changes in how you go about a writing task, changes in your understanding

of the Bank as possibly different from other places in terms of the values and conventions related to writing, changes in your attitudes or beliefs about writing, and changes in the documents you write, changes that a reader would notice. Can you tell me which areas seem significant to you? (Reference sheet with four areas highlighted.) Prompts:

- has your writing changed much in the past 9-12 months?
  - what has changed?
  - what have you learned?
- b. Okay, you say you've learned A, B & C. Do you think you could list what you've learned in order of importance to you?
- c. I'd like to know *how* you learned some of these things. How did you learn A? What helped you learn A? (B? etc.)

3. Attitudes and beliefs

- a. In our last conversation, when we were talking about attitudes and beliefs about writing, you said *** Do you still feel that ***?
- * you generally liked writing. Do you still feel the same way? (pause) You said you felt fairly confident in "creating a structure," and in fluency. How about your confidence level now compared to when you started? Do you still feel confident about the same things?
  - * you said you sometimes felt anxious writing at work when you felt the text, or even you, were being evaluated. Do you still have this feeling? (prompts to elaborate)

* you said you were not yet certain whether your writing met the needs of your superiors.

* you said that writing was very important in your job, because writing was the main way of disseminating your professional opinion on problems given to you by the department. Were you right? Was writing important? (pause) For the reasons you mentioned, or do you have anything to add?

* you said that you thought writing was learnable, with reading being the main way that good, on-the-job writers learned. You also said that thinking about this reading was important, discussing aspects of a document, and thinking about how arguments are made and structured. Do you still think writing is learnable?

(pause) By means of the methods you suggested then, or do you have something to add?

* you said that you thought your boss had a role in helping you develop as a writer in the sense of saying what to look at, what not to, what's important, what's not. You thought perhaps she might help you to write in English [as opposed to his mother tongue, French]. And last you said she could help you devise appropriate structures and forms, through feedback. Did your boss help you develop as a writer? (pause) In the ways you suggested or in other ways?

* when I asked you to predict the kind of things you'd learn over the coming year, you listed a few different possibilities. First: taking less time to write a text. Second, improving your vocabulary. Third, getting a better idea of good textual structure in economics. Fourth, a better ability to synthesize and present ideas. And fifth, writing in a more "neutral tone", a style which supports your

ideas and which doesn't intrude. Is this what happened? (check each)

* you said the cause of these changes would be: 1. learning more English, 2. learning better "the Bank's textual needs," 3. reading more economics, and 4. reading more for pleasure. Were these the major causes of the changes you've mentioned? Anything else? What were the most important causes?

b. Is there anything else you'd like to say about possible changes in your attitudes or feelings about writing over the past year? About possible changes in things you believe about writing?

4. The written document

a. Is this document the same type of document as the last one we talked about?

* (if yes) How many of these have you written?

- In what ways is it comparable?

- I'm trying to get an idea of the major differences between this document and the earlier one we looked at. Focusing on the document itself as a reader would, what are the major differences between this one and the one we talked about almost a year ago?

* (if no) What kind of document is this? Have you written similar documents before? How many? How often?

b. If you had written this document a year ago, would it have been much the same, or has your experience affected the writing of this paper?

* (if different) What's different? Can you point to aspects of this text

which may be the result of things you've learned in the past year?

N.B. Throughout the interview, ask for evidence in document of statements made on learning or change, always steering the person away from content differences and incidental differences.

5. The writing process

a. (General) When you think about your writing process, all the things you do to generate a text, is there anything *new*, is there anything *different* in the way you go about writing now compared with a year ago?

b. (Specific) In the last interview we talked about your writing process -- about how you proceed as you write. Here is a very brief summary of what you said about the *initial stage*, the planning & researching stage. (Check after each prompt.)

- Your boss initiated the document. She suggested that you write something to clarify your thinking.
- You received no further guidance or clarification from your boss.
- Then you did some research, and you asked some colleagues about writing policies in the Bank (both formal & informal).
- You made a plan before you started drafting, and there were some gaps or holes in it, which you tried to fill in when you drafted.
- Was the process you went through *to get ready to write* this document any different from the process just summarized?

(prompt) Why did you do that?

For *drafting, revising and editing*,

- you started at the beginning and went through to the end. You said you always do this because you depend on a good beginning or introduction to keep you on track.
- as you were writing you tried to think of your reader's reactions and needs and possible criticisms. Also as you were writing you had some new ideas which you incorporated in the text.
- then you went through the whole paper to both revise and edit.
- you went through the whole paper again to edit.
- you didn't talk to any colleagues, not by choice, but because everyone was on holidays.
- you did all the drafting, revising and editing by pencil. You put it on a micro at the end for the final edit.
- Does this describe how you drafted, revised and edited this paper, or were there differences?

(prompt) Why did you do that?

- c. (Inferences and generalization from a & b) Okay. You've said ABC (from a & b). Could you make any general statements regarding how your writing process has changed in the past year? (Prompt toward cause of change and intention of change.)
- d. I'd like to hear you talk specifically about feedback from and collaboration with your boss.

- Was "collaborative" writing (explain) new to you when you started work?
- You received both written and oral feedback from your boss, and you had no problems or frustrations with it. What was the feedback process like for this document? (pause) Have you had any problems or frustrations with feedback in the past year?
- You thought that feedback was "absolutely necessary." You thought the purpose was to help the writer develop and to ensure that the written document was good. Do you still think that feedback is necessary? (pause) For the same reasons, or do you have anything to add?
- Do you deal with this collaborative process differently now than you did a year ago?
  - Prompts: What do you do differently? Why?
- What have you learned about the feedback process?
- What do you learn from the feedback sessions?

6. Knowledge of the organizational and social context

a. In our first interview, we talked about "corporate culture," the values, beliefs and patterns of thought which are specific to the institution. You talked about your early impressions of the "Bank of Canada culture" and the organizational context as it affects writing. You said ***. What would you say now?

Prompts: Anything else? Can you elaborate?

* you said that you were too new to say much about a Bank of Canada culture except that in writing, you had to justify claims, and areas of investigation had to

have a narrow, applied focus. How true does this seem now? Have you learned anything more about a Bank culture as it affects writing?

* you said that the role of writing in your department was first, the transfer of information, and second, a means by which people are evaluated. Does this still hold? Do you have anything to add about the role of writing in your department?

* you said that you were fairly clear about the purpose of the paper you had written. Have you always been clear about the purpose of your written documents and about who reads them, and why, in the past year? How about the paper you've just written?

b. A year ago you said that your lack of understanding about decision-making and policies in your department was a possible problem in your writing. Have you learned more about the workings of your department and the Bank?

(pause) Does this understanding have any effect on your writing?

- What specifically have you learned about the organization and its culture which has affected your writing?
- What kind of an effect has this knowledge had on your writing? (Can you point to any evidence in the paper in front of you?)
- How long do you think it takes to gain an understanding of the Bank and its culture, particularly as it relates to writing?

7. I'd like to conclude this interview by asking you this question: Let's say you have a new employee in your section, someone just out of university,

who had always been a good writer in school, but was now wondering if he or she would have to make any adjustments for writing in a business setting.

- what would you say if the person asked if there are any differences between writing here and writing in university?
  - what advice about writing would you give the new employee to help make the adjustment process easier?
- b. And last, do you think your writing ability will develop in the coming year? Why or why not?'

3. Interview with supervisors/managers: sample

Employee's name: Blair

Manager's name: XXX

Date: _____

Time employee has worked in Bank: 17 months

Same supervisor as for first interview? _____

Number of months supervising employee: _____

_____

1. You've had a chance to look at Blair's latest document, as well as one he wrote some nine months ago. Thinking about these documents, and drawing on your own observations from the past 15 months, would you say that Blair has developed as a writer?

- in what ways?
- how are these changes evidenced?

b. Looking at these changes, I wonder if you could put a value on some of them. Which of these changes are the most important, the most significant in terms of making Blair most valuable to you as an employee?

The four areas of possible change I've been looking at in my research are first, the writer's process -- I'll explain this in a minute -- second, the writer's knowledge of the "corporate culture" of the Bank and the organizational context of writing here, third, the writer's attitudes and beliefs about writing, and fourth, the document itself, the written product. I'd like to ask you a few questions about each of these four areas if I may.

2. Are you in a position to comment on any changes in Blair's writing process? By the writing process I mean all the activities he does to generate a document, right from the start to the final draft, but you might be better able to comment on the public activities, such as:

- clarifying the assignment, both when he is given it and later as questions occur

- talking to other people for ideas or clarification
  - researching
  - planning
  - seeking and using various kinds of feedback from other people
  - revising on the basis of feedback?
  - (Elaborate as necessary and probe.)
- b. Any other comments on changes in how Blair manages his writing process?
3. I'm interested in how developing writing ability is in some ways a possible function of learning more about the organizational context: the major business functions of a department, of a section, and of the readers of given texts. The organizational context might also include conventions or standards regarding some aspects of writing: conventional structures for analytic or descriptive papers, level of detail for given documents, format, acceptable strength of claim in interpretation, etc. Do you have any comments in this regard?
- is learning about this Departmental or Bank context important in developing writing ability here?
  - how long does it take to learn the important features of this context?
  - how did Blair learn about this context?
  - comments on what Blair did especially well to learn about the organizational context? Comments on any problems?
4. Blair's documents (the written product). Is this last document a better one

that the one written a year ago? (Additional probes: could you generalize about Blair's written documents these days versus a year ago? Was the first draft submitted to you better than the first draft submitted a year ago? Did you have to do less re-writing or give less managerial feedback on this text that you did a year ago?)

- in what ways
- can you point to any evidence in the texts

5. One of my areas of interest is the writer's attitudes about writing. Can you think of any noticeable change in Blair's attitude regarding writing?

- b. Do you think the manager or supervisor has a significant role in helping their employees develop writing ability?
- c. Do you expect that Blair will continue to develop as a writer in the coming year?

- why or why not?
- significantly?
- what factors would it depend on?

6. Last, I'd like to get your reaction to a few of Blair's comments if I may.

- a. He thinks that his written products have improved, and that this is evident in that he gets less feedback now.
- b. He said: "Before I started at the Bank, I would have said that my writing wouldn't, and needn't, change all that much. But there have been significant

changes, and there need to be more changes . . . I see that there is a lot of learning to be done and a lot of improvement to be made.

c. It seemed to me that Blair seemed to have increased his understanding of the value of knowing the organizational context to a writer. He said that he had a better understanding of his job, and of his readers' jobs and of expectations for documents. He said in talking about his most recent paper, "If I'd known the use of interest rates elsewhere, I would have been able to anticipate better some of the changes" in the drafts, i.e., the section that was added in response to the question "What is the implication for money demand equations?"

d. He thought his confidence level was generally lower now than a year ago, that perhaps he was "conceited" about his writing ability a year ago.

e. He thinks that he is better at clarifying the writing assignment at the start, and better at getting and using feedback to make a better text. "I (now) know that certain topics are interesting, and certain ways of looking at topics are interesting" for you, as well as for other readers.

- He said the written feedback was usually editing only, and that feedback on the issues and the content was often done orally.

- He said: "they want me to answer their questions, so I do, and I try to anticipate others. Sometimes I'm not very good at it."

f. He feels you have had a big role in helping him develop as a writer.

g. Even though he thinks he has developed as a writer, he's not sure there is evidence of that in a comparison of the two papers because the content was largely determined by other people (probe).

h. He said that he had been fairly clear about the readership and the purpose of the papers he had written over the past year. He said he knew better what supervisors do in their jobs, and thus what they are interested in, but he was less clear about why some people were as concerned as they seemed to be about some topics and texts.

i. Finally, Blair thought that the function and importance of writing in his job was in "communicating," "spreading knowledge," and "relat[ing] to other people" what he is doing in his job. In other words, he seemed to think of writing as transmitting the ideas and knowledge he had. It didn't seem to occur to him that writing can be a means of learning and discovering, testing and transmuting one's own thinking, analysing.

Managers' Questionnaire: Sample

I'd like you to rank, if possible, in term of importance, in terms of impact on Blair's writing, and in terms of making him a more valuable employee, the following possible developments. Not all possibilities may be true, let alone important for Blair. Please consider only the developments you believe to be true for Blair.

Please rank them in order starting with the number one, and stop numbering when you consider the next ranking development to be insignificant.

- ___ is better at getting clarification on the writing assignment
- ___ takes less time producing a document
- ___ understands that he is writing to satisfy readers' needs, not to display his own knowledge
- ___ has learned through experience more about his audience and their information needs
- ___ has a better understanding of the job and its requirements; has developed professional expertise
- ___ understands that writing can assist in learning, deepening thought, discovery, as opposed to merely communicating information
- ___ uses feedback more effectively in revising
- ___ has learned through experience conventions and expectations re: structure, format, tone and style
- ___ has a more realistic attitude about writing in a business setting
- ___ has gained in confidence
- ___ has decreased in confidence
- ___ has learned how to learn from feedback
- ___ has a better understanding of the major business functions of the Department and of how given documents help in carrying them out
- ___ has had practice in writing a given type of document

END

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