

SECTION 3.

WRITING AT THE BORDERS OF SCHOOL AND THE WORLD

For many years, writing researchers around the world have sought to understand the ways that social and cultural influences outside of school influence writing development in school. With a variety of methodological approaches, research questions, units of analysis, and theoretical frameworks these researchers have helped us understand in much greater depth the important ways the social, cultural, and symbolic environments in which people live shape writing development and academic performance. This work has extended our understandings of a number of facets of educational practice, including the importance of effective teachers, the limitations of school systems, the many elements that contribute to writing development, the dynamic trajectories along which writers develop, and the rich interplay between text and experience.

The five chapters in this section continue this inquiry into the relationship of literacy development and lived experience beyond schooling. In Daiute's ethnographic study of a writing-based educational intervention in the circumstances of children's lives influenced by war and trauma, the author shows how engaging in different genres of writing extends pupils' engagement with the world. In particular, she highlights the ways in which writing fictional narratives compares with the writing of autobiographical narratives in illuminating student's conceptions of the complex system of relationships surrounding them, and demonstrates that educational interventions in school offer children different possibilities for engaging in life beyond school.

Romain and Robaud use a linguistic approach in investigating writing development and its relationship to students' socio-cultural backgrounds. Their study of naming practices in children's writing supports a view of writing development that includes greater diversification in grammatical and lexical choice making. Students from disadvantaged socio-cultural backgrounds, however, tend to progress along slower trajectories, with the textual markers for this kind of writing development appearing less frequently and later. Their work points to the critical ways literacy development and educational experience are intertwined with the student's lives outside of school.

Extending studies into how students writing outside of class might be relevant in designing effective learning environments for writing, Skaar's interview-based study of college writers investigates differences in student's beliefs, values, and attitudes towards the writing they do on the Internet and their academic

writing. Although he finds a significant divide exists between students perceptions of these two writing contexts, he identifies clear overlaps between the two and pedagogical possibilities for linking the two more closely in productive ways.

The next chapter provides a look into the relatively unexplored territory of writing contests, used in many regions. Based on textual and rhetorical analysis of an essay contest sponsored by the World Bank, Porter's study suggests ways that the elements of contest writing, such as the call for papers and the prompt itself, create an environment rich in intertextuality and ideology, encouraging shifts in identity and thinking.

Using interviews and textual analysis, Jones and Milson Whyte take another approach in looking at the ways cultures influences writing development. Using the lens of metaphors as an entry point, their work posits a chain of connection between the cultural practices shaping the identities of Jamaican male students and the influence of those beliefs on their academic writing performance.

—PR