Introduction

Every school year teachers greet new classes of learners assigned by age or stage or special need. We become experienced with the populations we teach and may learn to imagine the world through their eyes. The kindergartner, the English language learner, the prepubescent, the first-year college student, the adult basic learner: students we come to know well but whose pasts we have had no hand in and whose futures are as yet unmade. Educational researchers too tend to set up their inquiries around particular, recurring populations who drive the questions that the researchers ask and the understandings that they reach. We may readily grant that learning and development are lifelong, yet we stay focused—as we must—on the immediacies of our academic locations.

But the cyclical demands and institutional segmentations that mark the professional work of educators bring drawbacks. For one thing, they may lead to uncertainty as we try to mediate standards, curricula, or assessments that typically carry more abstract or less coherent assumptions about our students than those we bring from experience. Segmentation also may lead to unwarranted certainties about the decisions we do make—certainties that may inadvertently underestimate students' capabilities or misidentify their accomplishments. Likewise, we may be deprived of a full appreciation of our own teaching efforts as those efforts come to fruition—or sputter out—beyond the confines of a semester or an academic year. We also risk forgetting that learners experience their lives as a whole, in and out of school, with a past, a present, and an aspirational future. They take the long view even when we don't. Finally, segmented conditions lead to a professional knowledge base that is fragmented and pocked with unknowns.

Nowhere are these drawbacks more visible than in the realm of writing. Writing emerges early in life but can develop well into adulthood. Writing is a productive and performative capacity, akin to craft. It requires an integration of muscle, mind, knowledge, language(s), tools, and social worlds that are themselves in dynamic change across time. Writing is effortful and remains effortful at all ages. It takes time to learn and time to do. Learners may need to backtrack before moving on. Yet there is currently no adequate accepted theory of writing development that might inform the design of the school curriculum or motivate appropriate assessment practices across the years of formal education. We know too little about how writing develops before, during, and after schooling; too little about how a person's writing experiences relate to each other developmentally across the lifespan. Lifespan perspectives could go a long way in helping teachers and researchers across locations better pull together on behalf of writing literacy. The challenges are acute. Writing is at least as difficult to teach as to do. Yet, compared to reading, writing has been given short shrift in the professional preparation of most teachers, and writing instruction struggles for time in a crowded pedagogical agenda. It does not help that research on writing remains scattered across disciplines and that longitudinal writing studies in any discipline are rare. Still we know that students face a world where writing grows ever more integral to collective practices of learning, working, participating, and interacting with others—as well as to the systems of access and reward associated with each. The challenge is to more wholly democratize a complex, slow-growing human capacity that no longer belongs in the hands of the few.

This book grows out of a four-year collaboration among a small group of writing scholars who emerged from our academic silos to share what we knew and thought about writing and writing development. Housed in university schools of education or departments of English, we were versed in different fields including cognitive psychology, educational psychology, disability studies, and neuroscience; emergent literacy; linguistic theory; second language learning; curriculum and assessment design; teacher professional development; urban education; and composition and

rhetoric. The populations we studied included preschool children; elementary and adolescent writers; special needs learners; college students; multilingual writers of various ages; workplace writers; scientific and scholarly authors; and teachers of writing. We were diverse by training, method, philosophy, and focus. Some built models; some conducted ethnographies; some employed discourse analysis; some did meta-analyses. Some focused primarily on instruction, others on theory building, or policy, or assessment, or educational equity, or teacher professional development. Our classroom teaching backgrounds were equally varied. While no doubt major perspectives were not represented in our team and in the book, we tried to be as inclusive as we could. At several points we asked ourselves whether an area or perspective were missing, and as we spotted gaps we added people to the group to broaden our vision. The brief biographies of the authors in the back matter of this book indicate the range of our experiences and interests. Yet, despite our many differences, we shared curiosity about the phenomenon of writing in its many forms and functions and a belief, strengthened by this collaboration, that multitheoretical, multidisciplinary, and multiage perspectives can enrich our work and the work of others.

Our goals were ambitious. Could we build a description of writing development that was realistic and rich, useful to researchers, teachers, and policymakers, and based on principles broad enough to capture understandings across fields, populations, and perspectives? Might these principles serve as heuristics that could be returned to different age groups or contexts in order to stimulate future research and help instructors see better the developmental possibilities alive in their classrooms? We knew these principles would be provisional. We knew they would not be prescriptive. But we hoped to show how taking long views on writing development—including recognizing the long investments it requires—could strengthen curriculum, teaching, assessment, research, and policy.

It turns out there was much we could indeed agree on, and the points of agreement became the substance of the collaboratively authored framing chapters (Parts I and III). Yet we still had our distinctive views and ways of proceeding, though grown and

modified by the intense negotiations of our meetings. These distinctive views are embodied in the separately authored chapters of Part II.

We ultimately focused on eight principles. They appear in Chapter 2. However, reaching consensus on those principles involved dialogue and debate that often took us to the limits of our knowledge and did not always end in resolution. As will be elaborated below, we grappled from beginning to end with the freighted nature of our key terms, trying to differentiate *development* from norms or idealizations that too often mask, mischaracterize, or punish human variation. *Writing,* too, we recognized, manifests itself only through particular acts of language and embodied effort; in particular practices, genres, contexts, and occasions; and as part of shifting relationships with other systems of communication and meaning making. In fact, it was in the group's collaborative search for a definition of *writing development* that our disciplinary differences came most clearly to the fore. These differences did not necessarily dictate the particular definitions that each of us sought. Rather, more subtly, they affected where each of us chose to begin the search. We found ourselves gazing in different directions. It did not take long to realize, however, that these differences should not be resolved away. Rather they served as object lessons in the complexity of this task. Writing development takes its character from many sources; happens in many planes of existence; and registers in many inward and outward forms. Our four years of dialogue and debate taught us that the more places and ways one can look for writing development, the more fully it might be seen.

In the following sections of this chapter, then, we provide a kind of backstory to the book that follows, elaborating on key challenges, interchanges, and decision points that took place in three multiday retreats held at the University of California, Santa Barbara between 2013 and 2016 and in several video conferences interspersed throughout that time. Over that time we also wrote informally and formally, alone and in teams, and sometimes in response to one another. Our aim throughout was to build a capacity for developmental thinking inclusive of multiple perspectives.

Defining Terms: What Do We Mean by Development?

It was important throughout our deliberations to keep our working definitions flexible, accommodating, and critical, and this was especially true for the central term *development*. We generally agreed on associating development with a reorganization or realignment of previous experience that registers through writing or in a changed relationship to writing. We resisted strongly teleological or linear conceptions of writing development and debated the extent to which such development requires intentionality or self-perception. We worried about an ability to distinguish between self-actualized development and resignation to externally imposed expectations. We sought to locate development not merely in an achievement of change but also in actions or efforts toward change. Some argued for particular thresholds, for instance reserving for development forms of growth that can be carried into new contexts or that increase the range of resources one can call upon going forward. Still others advocated for less individualistic and more ecological criteria, taking a view of development as a mutual achievement between self and others that is sustained in shared contexts. We all recognized that writing development occurred in inextricable relationship to other forms of development—biological, cognitive, social, cultural, historical, technological—making development dynamic and not once and for all. As with so much of our deliberation, our aim in sharing these contested definitions was not to wrestle one another into agreement. Rather it was a means for remaining accountable to one another's definitions, as best we could, as the work proceeded.

Writing Development: Where and How to Look?

Several basic questions wove themselves through our deliberations. What drives writing development? What is developing and how? Where can evidence of writing development be detected? Given the multiple disciplinary and methodological perspectives we brought to the discussion, it was not surprising that we had different starting points for addressing these questions, although

these starting points sometimes cut across, overlapped with, and combined different disciplinary and theoretical orientations. When differences in emphasis arose, they did not necessarily result in disagreement or contention; rather they led to a sharper sense of the multiple dimensions along which writing develops, its multiple sources, and the multiple ways and places it can manifest itself. In other words, we came to treat our different approaches to this inquiry not only as a potential strength in theory building but as a reminder of the scope and complexity of writing development itself.

Look to the embodied act of writing. For some of us, questions of writing development began with a close-in focus on the experience of composing. Understand what a writer must do mentally to carry off an act of writing and you will find hot spots for development. Through this perspective, the focus is on inner resources (skills, knowledge, experience) that an individual gathers and individuates over time to engage in productive literacy. Writing development is associated with training of the mind for writing, including cultivating dispositions and cognitive strategies for handling the challenging work it requires. The brain as a developing organ matters to an embodied perspective on writing. A maturing brain can support automaticity, extended attention, complexity, and abstraction in handling the demands of writing. At the same time, injuries to the brain or developmental neural irregularities due to genetic influences may interfere with writing and writing development. A focus on embodiment foregrounds individuals' own contributions to their writing development, as each new writing experience potentially can be used to confirm, deepen, reorganize, discard, or refine strategies for writing going forward. From this perspective, development will manifest itself as changes in acts of writing, individual or collaborative. It will be seen in increasing self-regulation of writing processes and expanding understanding of what a writing act entails, as well as in levels of motivation to persist.

Look to the medium of written language(s). Language is the medium through which writers make meaning for themselves and others. So exploring how language and language development matter to writing and writing development was an important

starting point for some project members. From this perspective the focus is on processes by which developing writers gain access to and control over a range of linguistic resources that their surrounding societies have developed for carrying out written meaning making. Appropriating these socially shared textual resources requires figuring out how they are related to particular contexts of use and communities of practice, including academic disciplines. It requires figuring out how textual language works to address the separation in time and distance between writers and their readers and the ways that genres, vocabularies, and grammatical constructions in particular languages are geared for carrying out the sometimes specialized work of written communication in various domains. From this perspective, development can be detected in written texts. Development will register as changes in textual features over time, as writers gather and creatively employ more options for written meaning making and learn to take them into an expanding number of contexts. When approached analytically from a developmental perspective, written texts can be a window into relationships between language growth and writing growth.

Look to contexts of participation. For some of us, defining writing development began by gazing outward toward the social worlds of writers and the ways writing works as a medium of social participation in those worlds. From this perspective writing and its development appear as social achievements that are made and sustained through human relationships. Other people—parents, caregivers, teachers, siblings, friends, colleagues, interested readers—become important figures from this perspective as they serve as co-participants in social practices that involve writing. Writers' development at any age or stage proceeds through opportunities to engage with responsive others who bestow meaning and value on their efforts. From this angle, development appears as collaborative and mutual. Local contexts are the hot spots for development as they manifest organized practices through which the activity of writing takes its meanings. This perspective illuminates how cultural and ideological variation, group identities, and socioeconomic and political forces all bear on the human experience of writing development. Development from this angle will be detected in the changing ways by which a person partici-

pates with others in writing environments and events—new and recurring—across the life course. This perspective brings a deeply relational approach to understandings of writing development.

Look to the historical and cultural catalysts of writing development. To the question of what drives writing development, some of us looked first to the large-scale forces that pull people into the technologies of writing at different times and places. Here the gaze turns toward the historical and cultural processes as well as the institutional and material infrastructures that generate writing literacy and condition its character. These include tools, technologies, and circulatory systems that stimulate and regulate writing across local contexts. If individual writers change themselves from within, catalysts of writing development change them from without. This perspective brings emphasis to the contingency of writing development, how it is not a universal, invariable, natural, or inevitable process. The cultural, political, and economic development of writing as a technology has its own history that precedes and will succeed individuals in time. Where, when, and how one enters that stream of history matters to developmental experience and outcomes. The course of a generation's literacy development can be changed, sometimes radically, by innovations or disruptions—as the arrival of digital media can attest. The educational system to which one is exposed also is a major catalyst and conditioner of writing development. As a technology for teaching and learning, school curriculum sets horizons and expectations that will have formative bearing. From this perspective, writing development registers as a potentiality of time, place, and position.

Out of the pluralistic backgrounds we brought to the project we were able to conceptualize multiple dimensions of writing development. Writing is an embodied process of mental assertion *and* a language act *and* a participatory event with others in context *and* an encounter with cultural-historical potentials of writing as a technology. These dimensions interact with one another, all from within the biosocial life of the writer. Writing requires attention to and orchestration of these multiple dimensions. Yet they may be in different discrete states of development at any age or stage

of the life course. Further, by choice or necessity, individual writers will give these dimensions more or less conscious attention during a particular writing event.

Even as we conceptualized multiple dimensions of development we realized how much more needs to be understood about their interactions across the lifespan. How might growth in one dimension pull along another? How might struggles in one dimension deter or spur growth in others? How do achieved integrations of these developmental dimensions fare when writers enter a new context or encounter a new demand or seek to deepen or expand their repertoires of writing skills? What travels, what falls away, and why? How do life transitions (biological and social) relate to the experience of writing development? What happens to writing development in the migration to a different language environment or when society-wide changes scramble the relationship of writing to other systems of communication and meaning making? Is it possible to identify developmental processes that remain relevant across contexts and ages? While chapters to come offer partial answers to some of these questions, we confronted limitations in our knowledge at nearly every turn in our deliberations. We were confronted with the fact that research on lifespan writing development is itself underdeveloped, even as it is key to arriving at more insightful approaches to theory, policy, pedagogy, and assessment.

Problems of Norms and Normativity

Throughout our discussions, we struggled with questions of norms and normativity. Social norms exert a strong influence on writing and writing development. In literacy-reliant societies, expectations for writing accompany the roles that people play across the life course (as students, breadwinners, etc.). The need and desire to participate with others, make contributions, build identity, succeed in school, earn a living, and seek knowledge, pleasure, or expression—all of these can pull people toward writing and build up their experiences with it over time. Social norms also figure prominently in educational curricula, standards, and assess-

ments, all of which carry assumptions about students' maturity, experience, and proficiency by grade level. Indeed, social norms are expressed in the very conventions of written language itself as those conventions embody what is expected or demanded of textual communication in particular contexts or on particular occasions.

But it is important to remember that norms are not synonymous with what is normal in writing development. At best, norms are incomplete descriptions of development. As abstract milestones, they do not often account for the heterogeneous processes and timing by which writers reach them. They often obscure aspects of writing development (biological, linguistic, intellectual, social) that, as we said, are in shifting configurations with one another over the course of a writing life, making a developmental journey fitful and uneven but no less normal. Most troublesome, norms are laden with values and assumptions that overlook the cultural and linguistic differences, variations in circumstances, and social inequities that characterize life as people experience it. In the unexamined gap between what is ideal and what is real, between what is expected and what is enabled, it is possible for deficit thinking to creep in. It is also possible to develop models of writing development with glaring blind spots.

Problems of norms and normativity arose at several points in our work, for instance, in discussions of monolingual and multilingual writing development. In most situations, children are exposed to reading and writing after the fundamental functions of language capacity have been developed through talk. Monolinguals learn to speak and write in the same language, and some multilingual students who start developing their second or third language early in their lives will have somewhat similar experiences. The latter individuals may experience speech delay or a "silent period" in their first language acquisition but will soon have more robust and well-developed language both in L1 and L2 that can be taken into encounters with literacy. However, when individuals acquire a second language for the first time in adolescence or adulthood, this sequence is not in place. L2 language and literacy will be developing simultaneously. Limited language resources may restrict what can be expressed and how writing can be facilitated. In some cases, in fact, literacy experiences will scaf-

fold oral language development. As another example, congenitally deaf learners will have a different path to written literacy than hearing learners, as there is no written version of sign language. Deaf learners have to learn to write in the spoken languages of their contexts and so they begin writing in an L2. These cases illustrate that paths to writing development defy generalizations and might be interrupted and facilitated in different ways.

Balancing the powerful pull of social norms against the dangers of normativity remained a recurring tension in our work. It ultimately turned us away from attempting a general, typified, age- or stage-based account of writing development across the lifespan. Age and life stage do matter to the experience of writing development—as later chapters will explore. But how they matter will be a function of their relationship to many other factors.

Cross Talk

We spent large portions of our meeting time together sharing research from our multiple fields and focal populations. These listening sessions helped to sensitize us to a longer view of writing development as well as to a more inclusive view of the world of writing research. We swapped articles and papers, wrote research summaries, asked one another questions, traded citations, argued and quibbled at times, and developed lists of convergence points. Sometimes we found ourselves translating findings or perspectives from one area into another as a way to forge new connections. We sought to treat writing and development in ways that related to all the populations with which we were collectively familiar. If one of us offered a too-narrow characterization or assertion, it was identified and reworked. We searched for principles of writing development that, while perhaps associated with a particular research base or methodology, held relevance and heuristic value across populations, contexts, and theoretical orientations. This search required all of us to revisit the knowledge bases of our particular disciplines through the perspectives of our colleagues (as we were coming to understand them) either to identify candidate concepts for the group to consider or to fact-check someone else's candidate concept against the scholarship we knew best.

The aim in this endeavor was not to downplay our differences but to identify concepts robust enough to address them. The overall aim was to stimulate fuller developmental vision.

Two examples will illustrate this process. As Chapter 2 elaborates, *variability* is a central feature of writing development. Variability is often associated with individual differences in personalities, dispositions, genetic makeup, or life experiences—differences that make no two students, no two writers, no two texts exactly the same. This kind of individual variability is well observed (if not always well accommodated) in classrooms. But the term also has salience from linguistic and sociocultural perspectives as variability in writing development relates to more macro, structural considerations, including the diverse social worlds people inhabit, their identities and positions in those worlds, and the range of languages and dialects they embrace. Further, variability can be an outcome of unequal flows of power and access and differential treatment that condition experience with literacy in and out of classrooms. Approaching variabilities in writing development from such a multidimensional perspective forces deeper understandings of their origins and better ways to sort them out. *Variability* will have developmental significance but that significance will deserve further analysis. Is it the kind that dissipates under conditions of fair and equal instruction? Is it the kind that flourishes under conditions of fair and equal instruction? After a sometimes heated debate on the topic, we collected into one principle the many meanings of *variability*— including its value and validity in a heterogeneous society and its more disabling association with differential or discriminatory treatment. We made this decision with the hope of stimulating more nuanced and critical attention to variability in writing development where it occurs.

As another example, we took up an insight from cognitive science that writing develops through the borrowing and redirection of general cognitive processes for the more specific demands of writing. General capacities of perception or planning, for instance, are "hijacked" into writing processes and, with experience, become more elaborated and specified as writing-based skills. During this discussion, we noticed that a move from general to specific is a pattern that also shows up in textual representations

by children, as initially they may use only a mark to stand for entire narratives or messages (and may even use the same mark on another occasion to stand for different ones). Later they will elaborate mark making as they specify meanings more discursively. Likewise, the move from the general to the specific has been noted in the processes by which college students are initiated into disciplinary writing practices. Schematic versions of arguing or knowledge making become increasingly elaborated and specialized as students become more socialized into their fields and can knowledgably take on more aspects of the work. This pattern of general to specific is an example of the kind of cross-cutting developmental process for which we searched and sought to raise up for further exploration: Whether in cognitive processes, texts, or social practices, in any language and at any age or stage, where we can see the general being made into the more specific, where we can observe "hijacking" being attempted, development, we think, will be close by.

We offer these brief examples (developed further in Chapter 2) to demonstrate how a diverse group of scholars proceeded to identify principles of writing development drawn from specific research bases but with broad generative potential. In the chapter that follows, eight principles are developed, focusing on the research bases from which they originated (i.e., cognitive psychology, linguistics, sociocultural ethnography) but pulling them across populations and contexts as much as possible. Then we offer individual chapters, some coauthored with additional scholars, that develop one or more of these principles using the research bases that we know best. In the final two individual chapters, Steve Graham demonstrates how one scholar can stretch beyond his research base to develop a more inclusive theoretical orientation to writing and writing development, and Charles Bazerman envisions a future agenda for longitudinal writing studies.

For all of our differences in this cross-disciplinary experiment, certain driving commonalities prevailed. Chief among them was the certainty that writing develops through writing. Guided opportunities for writing can and should begin early in life and, with continual relevance and engagement, development of productive literacy will continue throughout a lifetime. We also all recognize that many of the developmental principles that we

offer here pose extreme challenges to current educational policy and practice. The complexity of writing development, its slow growth, its context sensitivity and variability, its interanimation with other processes of human development, and its susceptibility to fast-moving technological and communicative change all defy many of the usual routines by which teaching, learning, and assessment are organized. But for writing to take its rightful and needed position in the educational experience, we all must confront and even potentially relish these challenges.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 presents a synthesized framework for understanding writing development across the lifespan. The framework is a culmination of four years of interaction among the authors of this book. The chapter begins by pointing out how studies on writing development have in recent decades grown in diversity and depth but remain fragmented along lines of theory, method, and age ranges or populations studied. We emphasize that meaningful, competent writing performances that meet the demands of the moment rely on many kinds of well-practiced and deeply understood capacities working together; however, these capacities can vary in their realization and developmental trajectories from one individual to another. Without an integrated framework to understand lifespan development of writing abilities in its variation, high-stakes decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment are often made in unsystematic ways that may fail to support the development they are intended to facilitate; further, research may not consider the range of issues at stake in studying writing in any particular moment. Based on research drawn from different disciplinary perspectives, the chapter proposes eight principles upon which an account of writing development consistent with research findings could be founded. These principles are proposed as a basis for further lines of inquiry into how writing develops across the lifespan.

Chapter 3 explores the beginnings of writing in early childhood. Using longitudinal and cross-sectional data from 2½- to 6-year-olds, Deborah Rowe re-examines the common portrayal of

early writing development as progress toward convention, finding children's writing marked as much by variability as by ordered progress. She proposes that early childhood writing might be more profitably conceptualized as overlapping waves of development in which children simultaneously add more advanced writing strategies to their repertoires, reduce the use of less sophisticated ones, and simultaneously draw on both to participate as writers. The chapter discusses ways that our developmental storylines affect assessment and instruction and argues against the use of single age-related norms to assess young children's writing progress.

In Chapter 4, Mary Schleppegrell and Frances Christie describe a linguistic trajectory of writing development across the years of schooling, drawing on research on the writing development of first and second language writers. Using theory and constructs from systemic functional linguistics, they illustrate how a meaning-oriented perspective can be used to track growth in writing across genres and disciplines. The authors connect this functional description to findings of writing research from other traditions and draw implications for assessment and pedagogy.

In Chapter 5, Virginia W. Berninger, Kira Geselowitz, and Peter Wallis explore how students' definitions of writing change across early childhood, middle childhood, and early adolescence. Comparisons from grade 1 to grade 5 or from grade 3 to grade 7 show an early focus on transcription, writing tools, and medium to later focus on meaning making, translation across multiple levels of language, communication with others, multiple cognitive processes, and integration of multiple writing components. These perspectives are then compared to those of writing researchers and students in grades 4 to 9 with persisting writing disabilities to identify commonalities and contrasts. Overall, the findings are consistent with the overall theme of this book that the complexities of writing development at target times and across the lifespan are best understood from multiple perspectives.

In Chapter 6, Kristen Wilcox and Jill Jeffery highlight the role of agency in adolescents' writing development. They draw upon the National Study of Writing Instruction to illustrate through a diverse array of adolescents' own voices how they experience the affordances and constraints for the development of their writing in their secondary school English, mathematics, science, and

social studies classes. Wilcox and Jeffery assert that middle and high school teachers play a crucial role in inviting adolescents who come to school with a variety of prior writing experiences and language backgrounds to see writing as a way to be part of important and increasingly complex disciplinary conversations.

In Chapter 7, Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith challenge the idea of a uniform or standardized curriculum. They argue instead that highly skilled teachers are best positioned to intentionally and purposefully fashion a curriculum that takes their students into account. Drawing on data collected during their work with exemplary teachers of writing, Murphy and Smith illustrate how knowledgeable teachers adapt curricula to address their students' individual strengths, needs, abilities, and interests.

In Chapter 8, Deborah Brandt draws on the interdisciplinary field of life-course human development to explore sources of diversity, stability, and unevenness in the writing development of working adults. The chapter is based on a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted between 2005 and 2012 with a diverse, multiaged group of sixty adults whose occupations engage them in daily writing at work. As individuals discussed the writing they do, how they learned to do it, and what effect it has on them and others, they illuminated contingent, sometimes fragile relationships between their personal efforts at writing development and their working conditions over time. The chapter concludes by arguing for the generative role that the life-course perspective can play in writing studies and its analytic relevance in other contexts, including schools.

In Chapter 9, Steve Graham presents a writer(s)-within-community model that situates writing within the context of multiple writing communities. It is proposed that the writing conducted within a specific writing community is driven, shaped, and constrained by the characteristics of said community and the cognitive resources and dispositions of the members of the community involved in the writing task. Graham further specifies factors that shape the development of the writing community as well as the development of individual writers. This model of writing encompasses both social contextual and cognitive motivational views of writing.

In Chapter 10, Charles Bazerman proposes, as a thought experiment, considerations that would go into designing a true longitudinal study of writing across the lifespan, drawing on principles and practices of longitudinal studies in other domains. Such a study would need to collect rich multidimensional data including linguistic, textual, social, interactional, psychological, economic, cultural, and even neurological data in order to look at all dimensions potentially relevant to writing development. Despite the difficulties, commitments, and massive resources associated with such a study, thinking through its designs can give guidance and perspective to less ambitious and more practicable studies.

A final collaborative chapter sums up themes and issues of writing development to be investigated in future research, in particular the multiple interacting developmental dimensions of writing, how they may be related to other aspects of development, and how they emerge under varying life conditions and participations to form individualized trajectories for each developing writer. We then draw out the implications of this complex and variable view of writing for policy.