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Afterword

As editors of this volume, we sought a range of viewpoints, including examples of new empirical research, to illuminate the nature of writer identity and its relationship to the teaching of writing. In reflecting on the contributions published here, we draw a number of implications which, taken collectively, constitute a kind of call for action - for teacher education and research.

It is clear that all of us, who are members of literate societies, have histories as writers which contribute to the process whereby we construct personal narratives about what it means to write and be a writer. Some of these narratives are stories of struggle, classroom alienation, indifferent response and failure. Others are stories of writing as a portal to self-realisation, empowerment and mastery in relation to various domains of learning. There is, of course, a wealth of hard and anecdotal evidence linking the classroom experiences of students, the behaviour and practices of teachers, and the narratives of writing identity that form and reform in our students as they travel through the compulsory school sector and into adulthood – where some of them decide to become teachers.

These personal narratives matter for a range of reasons. They constitute the baggage that teachers take into their pre-service education, and will for good or ill impact on their formation as teachers of writing. They also matter because they will shape the predispositions of all adults, who have been subject to the formal education system, in respect of writing as an activity (personal or professional) and a potential dimension of their identity. These predispositions will inevitably have a role in determining the nature of the literacy practices in many homes, and in part may determine the relationship between these and local school practices.

Let us be clear that while all of us have writing identities of one sort or another, based on our personal narratives and our subscribed-to discourses or stories about what it means to be a writer that are implicit in our beliefs and practices, *positioning* ourselves as writers in our relationships with others, especially in our work settings, is a different matter – an assertion of a different order. We might call this our performed or enacted writing identity, it involves the subtle or overt claiming of a dimension of self that asserts that writing is a crucial element of who we are (ontology) and how we come to know (epistemology). It is also political, because it signifies that *being* a writer, and *articulating* my understandings as a writer, are a warrant for my claiming that what I say is valid and worthy of note.

As a number of studies in this volume testify, there is evidence for the transformative effect on teachers of engagement in sustained, systematic writing workshops, both in pre-service and in-service settings. There is thus a case for the development of courses in the tertiary education sector that provide undergraduates (including pre-service teachers)

with opportunities to engage in writing, investigate their own writing histories, learn from the practices of established writers, and reflect critically and productively on the processes they engage in when writing different kinds of text. Many university and college campuses, it should be noted, have developed policies that privilege the development of writing-across-the-curriculum programmes, especially given the current, global realization of the importance of fostering disciplinary literacies, including disciplinary writer identities.

There is also clear evidence of the importance of framing (professional) writing development as participation in a community or practice. The identities we develop as constituting our complex, contemporary selves are always socially situated, and responses to the challenges and resources characterizing the times in which we live. Sociocultural understandings of literacy and learning, which underpin most of the contributions to the book, highlight the fluid and dynamic nature of identity formation. It is not surprising then, that the stories about professional learning in the context of writing workshops documented in this volume emphasise the key role of participants sharing and responding to their own and each other's writing.

However, the role of formative assessment and metalinguistic understanding in the development of writing and the enactment of writer identities warrants further attention. The importance of both formative teacher and peer response in the development of writers is routinely acknowledged in the research literature, as are strategies such as self-reflection and goal-setting. Also acknowledged is the long and contentious history related to the place and propriety of grammar in the service of writing pedagogy. We suggest, therefore, that the nature of the language that both novice and expert writers employ as they reflect on their own writing during the various stages of production is an area worthy of investigation. This metalinguistic understanding will both contribute to and constitute a component of their writing identity, and will also have a role to play in the performance of writer identity in the context of a community of practice - for example when a teacher uses think-aloud protocols to reflect with students on the first draft of a poem.

While many, though not all of our contributors have focused on teachers' identities as writers, we believe there is more work to be done on the question of what it *means* to perform a writer identity in the classroom context and invite educators and researchers to respond to our call for action. We consider more research studies need to observe teachers in action and interaction with their students, in order that the complex positioning and repositioning of both as writers within lessons and over time can be examined. In the high-school context many teachers still resist the mantra that all teachers are teachers of writing, so we hope the book will also prompt more classroom-based research and practical support in a range of disciplines. Future research might valuably explore questions such as: What is the nature of the interplay between teachers and student writer identities? How do teachers share and validate their own and their students' writer identities from beyond school and to what extent, if at all, might this make a difference to the community of writers in the classroom? Additionally, what does it look like to perform a writer identity as a chemistry (or other subject) teacher? What

kinds of texts (genres) would such a teacher model and what metalanguage might be particularly pertinent in different disciplinary contexts?

And then there are our students. What we can say is that influenced by their own engagement and experience, and by the identity positions made available to them in schools, their writing identities will be in flux. All of them will bring their own *funds of knowledge and identity* from their own homes and community settings which will either be capitalized on or marginalized, depending on the ethos of the formal schooling situation in which they find themselves. Whether their teachers enact and perform identities as writers will be a matter of chance of course. This raises another range of questions for further investigation, including: What are the consequences of writer identity positioning for teachers' pedagogic practice, the quality of student writing, their motivation, attitudes and outcomes? To what extent is writing identity age- and/or discipline-specific? If teachers position themselves as writers and draw on their own writing identities to teach, does this make it more likely that students will also either develop positive writing identities and/or begin performing identities as writers themselves? We perceive this is possible but recognize the salience of personal, interpersonal and institutional influences uniquely present in each context. We would like to see more studies that specifically investigate these questions.

To conclude, we consider this volume, drawing on studies of professional writers' identities and those of teachers' and students', makes a new and strongly theorised contribution to the field. However, we are the first to acknowledge that it is effectively a work in progress. While collectively our contributors have done a fine job of mining the present moment, offering nuanced understandings of how writer identities are shaped and formed, we are left with tantalizing glimpses of research that is yet to be done and theoretical understandings that await us over the horizon.