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Research in Writing: Implications for Adult Literacy Education

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Within the field of literacy, writing has sometimes been described as "the forgotten of the three R's" (Freedman, Flower, Hull, & Hayes, 1995, p. 1). Until as late as the 1970s, surprisingly little was known about how writing skills develop. Most people assumed that there was essentially one process of writing that served all writers for all their various purposes; writers decided on what to write in advance and primarily worked alone. The attention of most educators was directed toward how to evaluate the final product. Over the past three decades, our knowledge of what writers do when they write has changed considerably. Much progress has been made in understanding writing as a cognitive process, understanding its sociocultural dimensions, and understanding how best to teach it in the classroom. Although new research on the teaching of writing has had an impact on some adult literacy classrooms, most adult literacy educators remain unfamiliar with this body of knowledge and its potential value for adult learners.

This chapter brings the teaching of writing more sharply into focus as an integral and essential part of our work as adult literacy educators.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WRITERS DO
The shift from looking solely at the products of writing to the study of what writers do when they write is often cited as beginning in the United States with the work of Janet Emig. In The Composing Practices of Twelfth Graders (1971), she pioneered a think-aloud protocol and the use of case study methodology to observe her students as they composed. By asking students to describe how they planned what to write, what they were thinking when they paused, and how and when they reread, revised, and edited, she determined that the writing process was considerably more complex than had been realized.

In the years that followed, the number of studies related to the composing process grew. Within the Kñ12 arena, the mid- to late 1970s brought several important, detailed observations of young children as they wrote. Graves (1975), for example, studied the processes that children used to write, revise, and share their work. Read (1975) discovered that children who analyzed the sounds they could hear in their own pronunciation of sentences could invent a writing system for themselves. Calkins (1975) broke ground by closely observing how just one child learned to write. In England, Britton, Burgess, Martin, and Rosen (1975) completed a seminal work on secondary school students' writing practices, their purposes for writing, and their awareness of their reading audience. In the years that followed, a plethora of studies on the writing of Kñ12 learners emerged. (A good summary of these can be found in Dyson & Freedman, 1991.)

Of particular interest to adult literacy educators was a body of research that began to focus on remedial writing at the postsecondary level. By the early 1970s, many colleges had begun a new policy of open admissions. For the first time, college instructors were faced with large numbers of nontraditional students, many of whom had limited experiences with writing. Many students who were not prepared for the writing required of them in college were placed in noncredit remedial writing courses. With her book Errors and Expectations (1977), Shaughnessy christened an area of study that came to be known as basic writing. By looking closely at hundreds of essays written by students considered to be remedial writers, she offered a counterpoint to the view that these learners were cognitively deficient and incapable of the rigors of college-level study. The errors in their writing, she observed, made sense if looked at from the perspective of someone who is unpracticed in expressing complex ideas in writing, and she could detect predictable patterns in the kinds of errors they made. Underprepared students write the way they do, she explained, "not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes" (p. 3).

Soon other researchers, pointing out the limitations of an interpretation of writers' errors as no more than marks on the page, began to use case study methodologies to follow basic writers as they composed. At the City University of New York, a sense of urgency developed when nontraditional students flooded the campuses and teachers struggled for ways to address their needs. Sondra Perl (1979) asked five of her basic writing students to think aloud as they composed essays. She found that many began to follow a train of thought as they wrote but then lost it when they had to interrupt their thoughts to attend to more mechanical concerns, such as letter formation, punctuation, and spelling. Rose (1980) investigated more closely the experiences of basic writers with writer's

block. He found that these writers became blocked because they followed a set of rigid rules, trying to apply them to situations where they did not apply. Sommers (1980) found that basic writers typically solved problems simply by rewriting, without analyzing the problems with their text. By listening to basic writers read their essays aloud and asking them to stop to correct errors as they read, Bartholomae (1980) was able to show that his students demonstrated the use of an intermediate grammar somewhere between speech and writing. In comparing expert with more novice college writers, Flower (1979) found that while writing, expert writers thought about their reader more than did novice writers, which helped them to plan their essays and generate text. Beginning writers, on the other hand, wrote what she called "writer-based prose." They did not think about their reader while writing but were concerned primarily with the text. Taken together, the studies of this period showed that to move from the status of a basic to a more expert writer, students had to learn to revise what they write, consider the reader in their planning, and attend to more global problems, such as resequencing and rewriting units of text.

Toward a Model of the Cognitive Writing Process
By 1980, Flower and Hayes were able to gather the findings from the many studies of composing practices with varied populations then emerging and to propose a working model of the writing process (see Figure 3.1). Flower and Hayes (1980) suggested that there are essentially three cognitive writing processes: planning (deciding what to say and how to say it), text generation (turning plans into written text), and revision (improving existing text). These processes do not occur in any fixed order but proceed in an organized way that is largely determined by the individual writer's goals (Dyson & Freedman, 1991). At one moment writers might be writing, moving their ideas and their discourse forward; at the next they were backtracking, rereading, and digesting what had been written. The finding that these processes are recursive, with subprocesses such as planning and editing often interrupting each other, represented an important shift in the understanding of the writing process. An adaptation of this model of composing has often made its way into the classroom as the "writing process approach."

A key premise of the model is that writing is hierarchically organized and that it is, above all, a goal-directed, problem-solving process (Flower & Hayes, 1980). Whenever a person writes, he or she poses a problem to be solved on multiple levels. To solve the problem, the writer must set up subgoals and solve subproblems. For example, a woman writing a letter to her child's school must determine her goal for writing the letter and her subgoals for making sure she has covered all the issues she wants to address. She also has to solve subproblems related to how to form the

letters on the page and how to spell unfamiliar words. She may do a little planning, begin to write, stop and plan a bit more, interrupt her planning to consult a dictionary, spend some time worrying about her handwriting, pause to talk to a friend about her child's problem, reread and revise what she has written, and so forth. As writers gain experience, many of the lower-level processes (such as forming letters and spelling) become automatic and unconscious. Other processes require planning and skill, no matter how experienced the writer is.

Alternatives to the Hayes and Flower Model

From the beginning, this writing process model was criticized, and later even the notion that such a model could exist was questioned (Kent, 1999). Some researchers posited alternative models. One of the best known, proposed by Bereiter and Scardamalia in 1987, challenged the implication of the Hayes and Flower model that experts do the same things that less skilled writers do, only much better. Less skilled writers, they claimed, use a "retrieve-and-tell" approach to writing tasks, or a knowledge-telling model. These writers produce much less elaborate and abstract sets of prewriting notes. They concern themselves with generating content during composing and spend much less time considering goals, plans, and problems posed by the writing. This is because less experienced writers, when beginning to compose texts, need to keep the task relatively uncomplicated in order to direct their working memory to the basic task of converting oral language experiences into written form. Until these lower-level processes of putting text on the page become automatic, writers are less able to focus on the kinds of higher-level processes needed for making global revisions. For beginners, the primary goal is to tell someone what they have retrieved and to translate these thoughts into letters, words, and sentences. These strategies work especially well when recounting a personal story, where coherence can easily be created by following a basic chronology.

Taking this into account, the knowledge-telling model is an efficient means of writing for less skilled writers. In contrast, in the knowledge-transforming model, the writing task leads directly to problem analysis and goal setting. The resulting goals, and the problems anticipated, lead to plans for how to resolve them, whether they are problems of content or problems concerning the best way to organize the narrative in the light of previously presented information and the audience to be addressed (rhetorical problems). As one problem is solved, others are created, and in this way new content is generated or new ideas about how to organize the ideas are developed. As solutions to problems are formed, they feed into the knowledge-telling component of the process and are written down. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued that the writer's effort to resolve content and rhetorical problems by moving between these "problem spaces" invokes a dialectical process that allows for more

reflection. This process, they believe, may be excluded from simpler writing tasks. (In later work [1993], these researchers developed and tested strategies for teaching some of the higher-level writing processes associated with planning and revision.)

A Sociocontextual View of the Writing Process
The work of these pioneers in the writing process represented a significant shift away from a focus solely on written products toward seeing the student as the primary object of study. During the early 1980s another shift began that focused research on understanding the complex sociocultural dimensions of writing, seeing this dimension not as peripheral but as central to our understanding of composition.

One of the first substantial critiques of the cognitive approach to the study of writing came from Bartholomae (1985). After teaching nontraditional students for several years, he had come to see that the essays he read were not simply egocentric reader-based prose. They did not represent only "the interior monologue of a writer thinking and talking to himself" (Rose, 1989, citing Flower, 1981, p. 64). Another key issue, Bartholomae observed, was that his students were being asked to write in a world different from their own, an academic world of which they had never before been a part. "Students are not so much trapped in a private language," he said, "as they are shut out from one of the privileged languages of public life, a language they are aware of but cannot yet control" (1985, p. 276).

"Every time a student sits down to write for us," Bartholomae concluded, "he has to invent the university for the occasion. . . . He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (1985, p. 273). His students, he came to realize, had to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and they had to do this "as though they were easily or comfortably one with their audience" (p. 276). Looked at this way, the problem of audience awareness becomes much more complicated. To enter the world of academia, a writer has to build a bridge between his point of view and that of his readers. He must find a way both to imagine and write from a position of privilege. Basic writers must imagine for themselves the privilege of being insiders-"that is, of being both inside of an established and powerful discourse, and of being granted a special right to speak" (p. 277).

Research began to show how notions that learners have a fixed number of linguistic defects that can be pinpointed and corrected through drill and practice obscured the social and historical factors that allow some people into academia and keep others out. In Lives on the Boundaries:

The Struggles and Achievements of America's Underprepared (1989), Rose recounts the stories of adults who are trying to "cross the boundaries" and enter into the academic world. Rose's stories poignantly describe the events leading up to the decision to drop out made by many students who are underprepared for college and disoriented in the culture of higher education. They drop back into a world "in the margins" where they can expect only low-paying jobs. "Through all my experiences with people struggling to learn," Rose reflects, "the one thing that strikes me most is the ease with which we misperceive failed performance and the degree to which this misperception both reflects and reinforces the social order. Class and culture erect boundaries that hinder our vision-blind us to the logic of error and the ever-present stirring of language-and encourage the designation of otherness, difference, deficiency" (1989, p. 205). This research led to a new understanding of the role of the basic writing classroom as a site where students could begin to recognize these competing positions and interests. Researchers began to consider how the classroom could be a place where students could give voice to different and suppressed stories and where their struggles to accept (as well as resist) the dominant discourse could be made explicit and examined.

In recent composition studies, researchers have tried to integrate cognition and context and to involve learners in the interpretation of research. In The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing, Flower (1994) provides a framework for the design of studies in collaboration with learners that focus on students' interpretation of tasks, feedback, and situations, as well as sites of conflict, acts of negotiation, and the insights from students' reflections.

The Influence of New Literacy Studies
Research on the social dimensions of basic writing is just one example of a broader social turn in a number of fields concerned with literacy theory, among them developmental psychology, cultural psychology, anthropology, branches of cognitive science, and interdisciplinary social science research on learning. One researcher who was instrumental in defining the emerging field that has come to be known as new literacy studies was social anthropologist Brian Street (1984, 1995). Looking at literacy across a wide range of contexts around the world, Street rejected the notion that literacy is a set of discrete skills that exist regardless of context. The meaning of literacy, he contended, depends on the social and cultural institutions in which it is embedded. It is the processes whereby reading and writing are learned that construct the meaning of literacy for particular individuals. Literacy cannot be separated from its cultural and political significance and treated as if it is autonomous. In fact, he asserted, it is more appropriate to refer to multiple literacies rather than a single literacy.

Rather than looking at literacy in isolation from its social context, researchers within this tradition began to study literacy events (particular activities in which literacy has a role) and literacy practices (ways of using literacy that are carried from one situation to another, similar situation) (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Graff, 1987; Szwed, 1981; Street, 1984; Gee, 1989; Willinsky, 1990). Ethnographic researchers in this tradition began to study literacy practices in various communities. Heath (1983) looked closely at the functions and uses of reading and writing in three working-class communities in North and South Carolina, observing the differences and incongruities between home and mainstream school literacy. Using a similar framework, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) studied the literacy practices of African American mothers living in an urban housing project and their efforts to involve their children in literacy activities (such as making grocery lists, playing word games, and keeping journals). The authors' detailed observations challenged the common conception that low-income mothers seldom engage in literacy practices with their children. Reder (1987) asked members of Hmong, Eskimo, and Hispanic communities to describe the social organization, roles, and status of given literacy practices. He found that in these communities, reading and writing events were often shared activities. A young person, for example, might be engaged in a literacy event by taking down a letter dictated by his mother, who is functionally engaged in the same task even though her literacy skills are limited. Another family member might contribute to this same literacy event through her knowledge of the implications of the letter for the life of the community. At the Mexican-Origin Language and Literacy Project at the University of Illinois, Farr and Guerra (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of one social network of Mexican immigrant families over several years. They found that although many adult members of families had relatively limited literacy skills owing to restricted access to formal education, they nevertheless managed a variety of literacy tasks to a greater extent than most people were aware.

In a collection of articles edited by Barton and Ivanicˇ, Writing in the Community (1991), researchers took a second look at writing in a variety of community contexts. For example, Klassen (1991) studied how nine Latino men living in Toronto used written language in their everyday lives. He found that they managed to get along very effectively in some literacy domains, such as at home, in the streets, and in local shops. In fact, it was in the domain of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) literacy classes where they felt most estranged and unable to manage literacy tasks.

Barton and Padmore (1991) reported on a multiyear study that examined the role literacy plays in the everyday lives of adults living in Lancaster, a small city in northwest England. All of the adults in the study had left

school at the minimum age, fifteen or sixteen years, although many had gone back as adults. Everything the participants wrote as they went about their lives was catalogued, including writing to maintain their households, maintain communication with friends and family, and express personal feelings in forms such as poetry and journal writing.

The book Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in the Community (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) describes the results of this same study. After years of observation, researchers noted that when people talked about writing, they imbued it with power. Some adults felt frustration at the inadequacy of their written work; they knew what they wanted to say but could not find the words to express their thoughts. But others preferred writing to reading or felt they could express themselves better by writing than by speaking. They took great pleasure and comfort in writing and felt empowered by it. Although many doubted that they could effect change through writing, for a few, writing letters to newspapers or school officials was part of a process of learning to exercise their power in the community.

Researchers have also studied literacy in the social context of the workplace. In Changing Work, Changing Workers: Critical Perspectives on Language, Literacy, and Skills (Hull, 1997), chapter authors provide a critical analysis of what goes on in vocational and literacy classrooms that aim to prepare people for work as well as an analysis of the literacy demands and social practices of actual workplaces. The authors reveal a counterpoint to the common notion that workers' lack of basic skills are responsible for problems in the workplace. The chapter authors report on a wide variety of cultural, political, and economic barriers to employment, such as the way in which tests serve as gatekeepers to skilled trades, the limitations of vocational and occupational literacy programs that assume an overly simplistic understanding of the skills requirements of the workplace, and the way in which gender, class, and race influence employability. They point out that literacy educators need to pay closer attention to the complex social dimensions of literacy in the workplace, including how the writing demands of the workplace are socially constructed.

These findings about literacy in the workplace are especially important as research indicates that the amount and types of writing performed in the workplace are growing. In nearly all job categories that Mikulecky (1998) studied, significant percentages of workers, including employees without a college education, were found to write regularly as part of their job. They most frequently write memos and reports and fill in forms. Only 24 percent of workers reported that they never write memos and 36 percent that they never write reports. Tasks that once belonged to middle-level managers are now often assigned to work teams as companies

downsize. The implication that Mikulecky points out is a greater need to adjust school writing curricula to prepare individuals for workplace writing, and not just for individual writing but for work on writing tasks in teams. Hart-Landsberg and Reder (1997) found that much of the writing (and reading) that took place in one workplace they studied was done in collaboration with others. Workers often learned new workplace literacy skills by working in teams on hands-on projects and through mentoring and apprenticeship relationships.

Composing in a Second Language
Another area where research has seen a shift from product to process and then to social context is second-language composition. This body of research is important because half of all learners in adult literacy programs are enrolled in ESOL classes (Tracy-Mumford, 2000). A growing number of ESOL students also make the transition from higher-level ESOL classes to General Educational Development (GED) classes. More and more students who require training in ESOL are also enrolling in community colleges, vocational schools, and universities. In classes where all the learners are nonnative speakers, there is considerable diversity in terms of first language and cultural background, prior schooling and literacy levels, and English-language proficiency. However, college classes are also increasingly linguistically diverse, containing a mixture of native speakers, speakers of vernacular dialects of English, nonnative-speaking young people who have gone through elementary and high school in the United States, and new immigrants (see Wolfram, 1994).

Research in the teaching of second-language composition has often been separated from general composition research. Matsuda (1999), for example, reviewed the historical conditions that have led to what he calls a "disciplinary division of labor" between composition studies and ESOL at the university level. He found that "few composition theorists include second-language perspectives in their discussions and only a handful of empirical studies written and read by composition specialists consider second-language writers in their research" (1999, p. 699).

As in any other context where writing is learned, second-language writing is influenced by the social and educational context in which it is taught. This requires attention to what teachers and students do, think, and accomplish with writing in particular settings rather than conceiving of second-language writing in the abstract (Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997). But writing in a second language also occurs within situations of biliteracy (Cumming, 1998; Hornberger & Hardman, 1994). Biliterate situations vary according to individuals' personal histories and proficiencies in the first and second languages, as well as according to issues such as the differing status of the languages within a society and

the degrees of difference between the first and second language (Cumming, 1998). In addition, the language difficulties ESOL writers face often continue long after students move out of ESOL classes. For example, in a study of students in public schools, Ramirez (1992) found that the ability to use English in abstract and decontextualized situations (such as writing) may lag considerably behind the ability to communicate effectively in face-to-face, contextualized situations. The students he studied often took many years to become proficient in the use of English in abstract contexts such as academic writing and the taking of standardized tests.

Second-language writing researchers now criticize scholars who conduct studies that describe what they believe to be first-language rhetorical practices and then contrast these practices with those of the second language, as well as studies that compare students of differing linguistic groups (Raimes, 1998). These contrastive studies, Raimes points out, "tend to lead to a normative, essentializing stance; observations of different students in different settings are generalized to all students of the same linguistic background regardless of the contexts and purpose of their learning to write, or their age, race, class, gender, education and prior experience" (p. 143). One example she cites is a survey by Hedgcock and Atkinson (1993). This study of 272 university students revealed a correlation between first-language writing proficiency and school reading experiences in the first language but found no correlation between writing proficiency in the second language and reading skills in either the first or second language. Raimes (1998) points out that this contradicts findings with younger ESOL students (Elley, 1994) and reinforces the need to distinguish research populations before making teaching recommendations.

Current studies (Zamel, 1997) reflect an increasing trend to replace a transmission mode of second-language education (which involves showing second-language students how the language should be used and how the first language causes "problems" in the second language) to a "transculturation" mode (in which students select, absorb, and adapt features of another language and culture). Case studies have illuminated the circumstances of former ESOL students writing in the specific milieu of university courses and the kinds of socialization into literate practices they require (Raimes, 1998). One study of special interest to adult literacy educators is Spack's detailed observation (1997) of one Japanese student's three-year process of acquiring academic literacy across various courses and disciplines, from ESOL to major courses. This study used multiple sources of data to show how this student became not so much a product of academic culture but a creator of her own multiculturalism. In another case study, Guerra (1996) looked at the autobiographical narratives of the lives of three young women in the Mexican-origin

community of Pilsen in Chicago to understand the barriers they faced in trying to continue their education and the ways they negotiated life in dual cultures.

Reviews of trends in the teaching of writing as a second language can be found in Cumming (1998) and Raimes (1998), as well as in texts that prepare educators to teach ESOL writing, including Reid (1993), Leki (1992), Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), and Campbell (1998).

Recent Research in Handwriting and Spelling
Work in the cognitive dimensions of writing has continued to evolve. In particular, adult literacy educators should not overlook recent research in handwriting and spelling. In the current understanding of the writing process, handwriting and spelling are considered lower-level processes. Processes for planning, generating language at the sentence and text levels, and reviewing and revising written text are considered higher-level processes (Berninger & Swanson, 1994). For beginners, "the goal is to automatize the lower-level processes so that working memory resources are freed for the higher-level constructive aspects of composing" (Berninger et al., 1998, p. 652). Increasingly, researchers are seeking to understand better how these lower-level processes can best be acquired within the context of composing.

In a study of handwriting with beginning elementary school writers, Berninger and her colleagues (1997) compared the effects of different teaching approaches. They found that brief (ten-minute) but frequent handwriting instruction within a process approach to writing was more effective than traditional strategies of isolating handwriting instruction. Visual cues (numbered arrow cues indicating the nature, order, and direction of the component strokes required to produce the letter correctly) combined with memory retrieval intervention (in which children look at each letter, then cover it up, and write it from memory) seemed to be more effective than other treatments, such as either of the above treatments alone, teacher modeling without visual cues, or simple copying.

Researchers who have attempted to trace the development of spelling ability suggest that students who experience difficulty with spelling follow the same developmental course as other students, but at a slower pace (Marcel, 1980; Bear, Truex, & Barone, 1989; Worthy & Viise, 1996; Liberman, Rubin, Duques, & Carlisle, 1985; and Viise, 1996). Learning to spell begins with learning to sound out individual letters and sounds. Students begin by developing an awareness of spoken words and creating or inventing their spelling as they write (Templeton & Morris, 1999). The students' theories of how spelling works at this stage are driven by an alphabetic expectation (Berninger et al., 1998). After they

understand the alphabetic layer, they must begin to tackle the more conceptually advanced pattern layer, in which groups or patterns of letters work together to represent sound. Over time, students move from learning that spelling represents sound to learning that it represents meaning. As in the acquisition of other language behavior, they learn that much of what is learned about spelling is gained by noticing recurring patterns and trying out and revising hypotheses about these patterns in other writing situations. Spelling, then, is not just a memorization process but an intellectual activity-a process of understanding the patterns that can be detected in the sound, structure, and meaning of words (Templeton & Morris, 1999).

A few studies compare the learning of adult beginning writers in literacy classes with that of young children (Marcel, 1980; Worthy & Viise, 1996; Viise, 1996). They have found that the adult literacy learners, not unlike beginners who were children, possessed a limited knowledge of the multilevel nature of English orthography and a limited comprehension of word structure. Many had not yet mastered basic phonological awareness.

Researchers recommend that students receive short study sessions in which they use word patterns, followed closely in time by an opportunity to use new and old spelling words in compositions. Students should also be helped to see that the processes of writing words and reading words draw on the same underlying base of word knowledge (Templeton & Morris, 1999).

Recent Studies of the Social Context of Adult Literacy Education
Research focused specifically on how adult literacy learners develop as writers is quite limited. Nevertheless, a number of more general studies of the social context of adult literacy education contain examples that allude to the development of adult literacy learners as writers. Many of these studies point to contributions that the field of adult literacy can make to a more general understanding of the role that beliefs, social identity, and personal transformation play in learning to read and write. These studies reflect the extent to which prior experiences with literacy in school construct the meaning of literacy for many adult learners (Lytle, 1990; Gillespie, 1991; Fingeret & Drennon, 1997; Merrifield, Bingman, Hemphill, & deMarrais, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Belzer, 1998; Russell, 1999).

In Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy (1995), for example, Purcell-Gates chronicles the literacy development of Jenny, a white urban Appalachian mother who first came to a university literacy lab asking for help with her seven-year-old son, who was failing to learn to read in school. Jenny herself had struggled with reading and writing

throughout her school years, dropping out in the seventh grade. At age thirty-one, she and her husband had created a full life for themselves, but one in which reading and writing played a small part. When Purcell-Gates met her, Jenny had been attending adult education classes off and on for four years. She showed Purcell-Gates her books, which contained short reading passages, comprehension questions, and fill-in-the-blank language arts exercises. Although she was able to read workbooks written at the fourth-grade level, she had transferred none of this reading and writing knowledge to her everyday life. "She had never written anything on her own, for her own purposes besides her name, a few notations on the calendar and her address on the few occasions when she had been required to do so" (Purcell-Gates, 1993, p. 213).

When Purcell-Gates suggested to Jenny that she write in a journal and then read her own writing, "She looked at me with an expression of stunned awareness. ëWhy I ain't never read my own words before!' she exclaimed softly.... ëThat's all I ever really did was copy stuff, you know, from a book.'" It is hard to believe, Purcell-Gates remarks, "that Jenny had never-in 7 years of school, 4 years of adult school, and 31 years of life-never written or read her own words at the text level" (1993, p. 218).

That is because her words were never acknowledged and affirmed, never allowed. Since people think, conceptualize, and learn with their language-with their words-Jenny was effectively shut out from the literate world. The fact that she was allowed to fail year after year until she finally dropped out of the system in frustration is part of the immorality of the story. . . . Jenny's world and Jenny's language did not fit with the language of the schools. Moreover, the texts given to her to read were not real to her. Not only could she not relate to them on the content level, she was so stuck at the word level that she was effectively paralyzed. She continued year after year, trying to memorize rules, trying to memorize terms like adverb and pronoun. None of these words, these rules, these linguistic terms were hers . . . and thus she could not succeed. [1993, p. 218]

Many adults never have the opportunity to "make words their own" within the context of typical adult education programs. Alisa Belzer (1998), in a case study of students preparing for their GED tests, studied young African American women who "consistently maintained a line of self-blame that left little room for any other explanations for failure to achieve. . . . Not only did they have little or no opportunity in school to construct knowledge, the information that was conveyed to them was of the most simplistic and shallow nature. . . . School neither engaged their intellects, nor, with 20/20 hindsight, did it have much or any connection to the lives they would lead once they left it" (p. 274).

Forester (1988) came to similar conclusions in her study of Laura, an adult literacy student who seemed unable to make progress. Forester made a breakthrough when she was able to help Laura make the connection between how she had learned to ice skate (her favorite hobby) and how she could learn to write: by allowing herself to fall down and make mistakes. "There can be no question that Laura's sudden move forward, after years of limited progress," Forester observed, "is due to the personal involvement and active thinking-trying she now brings to her writing" (p. 605).

In their in-depth study of the lives of five adult literacy learners, Fingeret and Drennon (1997) connect literacy beliefs and social identity with the notion of personal change. They seek to create a framework for thinking about literacy learning and personal change "as inextricably bound up together" (p. 67) with adults' transformation of their identity as they move into literate culture. The authors elaborate on the way in which adults move at varying rates through several stages of change. Many less literate adults, they believe, experience prolonged tension, feeling a discrepancy between the way life is and the way they think it could be. Shame often holds them back from resolving the tension. Often this sense of shame is learned early on, as they are left behind in elementary school and internalize a belief that their literacy problems are their "fault." As adults, this sense of shame, embarrassment, and self-consciousness related to literacy is pervasive. Although it does not define their lives and identities, the authors say that "it remains a force to be dealt with" (p. 69). At the same time, these learners often experience themselves as competent workers, parents, citizens, and friends. The dissonance between these two views of their own identity creates an internal tension.

Many adults remain in this stressful condition. For others, however, something happens to disrupt their coping patterns, and new possibilities open up. These turning points can take many forms, but each leads to a time of reflection and problem solving. At this time, many adults turn to educational programs for help in relieving the tension they are experiencing. Adults often are ambivalent about these programs. They may want to change in order to relieve tension in their lives but also fear the change in social relationships that the new situation may bring about. As adults explore educational opportunities, Fingeret and Drennon (1997) note, supportive relationships assume greater importance. Positive, accepting relationships with others inside the literacy program can mediate the sense of shame and isolation and support the development of enhanced self-esteem. The authors' data also show that the adults who experienced the deepest and most profound life changes engaged in new literacy practices in both public and private situations:

As adults experience success with learning and listen to the similarities between their stories and those of their fellow students, they may begin to develop a more critical perspective on literacy and literacy development. Placing their experience in a broader framework and seeing the extent to which social and political conditions share responsibility for their problems with literacy can begin to mediate self-blame. [Fingeret & Drennon, 1997, pp. 83ñ84]

Fingeret and Drennon draw links between their work and the notion of perspective transformation that Mezirow (1991) and Taylor (1998) elaborated. They suggest that adult educators need to learn more about the sources of tension in students' lives (personal, cultural, economic, and social) and how programs can help students deal with these tensions. Armed with this understanding, adult literacy programs can become more deliberate about helping students move through the process of changing their lives. Although the role that writing plays in this transformation process was not a focus of the Fingeret and Drennon study, all of these learners attended classes at Literacy Volunteers of New York City (LVNYC), a program in which collaborative writing workshops are an integral, if not central, part of literacy instruction. (See Fingeret & Danin, 1991, for a description of the writing program at LVNYC.) A close reading of the five case studies reveals the extent to which these adults used writing as part of the process of examining their previous beliefs with respect to literacy and developing alternate images and possibilities for themselves.

In a related study (Gillespie, 1991), I conducted in-depth interviews with eighteen adult literacy students in three literacy programs in New England. All of these adults had engaged in writing over a period of time and had "published" their work in student anthologies or individual books. I asked these adults to describe their life histories with respect to literacy, trace the history of their writing as adults, and describe the purposes that writing fulfilled in their lives. The study revealed that these adults used writing to fulfill a variety of purposes related to reconceptualizing their identities as literate adults. In many cases, the first piece of writing they undertook was a description of their previous experience with school and their reasons for going back to school as an adult. This kind of writing appeared to play a role in the goal-setting process of these beginning writers as they made a commitment to become more literate. Writing was a public way to affirm to teachers, fellow students, and themselves that "I believe I can do it."

Subsequent writing by the adults I studied was often a way to relieve the tension of previous negative experiences. For example, one student wrote about being locked in a closet as a child by a teacher as punishment for being left-handed. Another used writing to acknowledge publicly for the

first time that she had been abused as a child. Still another recounted his early experiences with stuttering. As many of these adults gained experience with publishing, the topics of their writing moved from telling their stories to giving advice to others in areas where they felt that perspectives like theirs had not been heard. They wrote to advise teenagers who were thinking of dropping out of school, mothers of children who abused drugs, and people living in poverty. Several of the adults I interviewed observed that developing an image of themselves as capable of producing knowledge was even more important than developing the actual tools for independent writing. As one learner put it, seeing herself as "someone who matters . . . my words matter" was the most important lesson she derived from her writing experiences.

Fingeret and Drennon (1997) suggest that many adult learners "never develop a critical analysis of their social world in which poor schooling, poverty, discrimination, crime, family situations or other social and structural conditions share the responsibility for slow progress in learning" (p. 66). Indeed, as the story of Jenny showed, the development of a more critical understanding of the world is often a slow process. Jenny required repeated experience with literacy to free herself of the notion that her failure in school was due to her Appalachian language patterns. "That's why it was a little hard for me startin' to . . . sound my words out . . . 'cause I talk different . . . 'cause I'm, you know . . . countrified. And my words don't come out the way they're supposed to" (Purcell-Gates, 1993, p. 212). Jenny had a long road ahead of her to acknowledge the integrity and value of her culture and language, distinguishing it from the powerful negative images of Appalachian adults found in the dominant culture. Writing, and talking about her writing, was a key tool in this process.

Taken together, these studies point to the strong connections between changing beliefs and personal identity and adult literacy learning. Further studies along these lines may help us to understand the potential role that writing can play in the personal transformation process of adult learners in varied contexts. Such studies may also illuminate instructional strategies that help teachers to bridge the gap better between students' previous conceptions of literacy and their emerging literacy practices.

WRITING RESEARCH IN PRACTICE
The way writing was taught in the Kñ12 arena began to change during the late 1970s and the 1980s (Freedman et al., 1995). In elementary schools, teachers began setting aside time during the class day for writing. Based on research on emergent literacy, even very young children began to be encouraged to use "invented" spelling and drawing to convey meaning through words and pictures. As they progressed

through the elementary grades, students were taught how to rehearse, or "prewrite," using idea webs, brainstorming, peer discussion, and other techniques. Students were given more time to work on their drafts in the classroom and urged to write multiple drafts. Teachers discovered ways to encourage students to collaborate to reflect on and revise their work. "Author's corners," a process through which students read their writing to their peers, became popular. In some classrooms, the teaching of the mechanical skills of writing, such as spelling, writing conventions, and handwriting, was integrated as mini-lessons within the context of writing. Many teachers began to encourage journal writing, even among the neophyte writers, as a way for students to learn the process of "talking on paper" without the pressure of writing "correctly" for an outside audience.

In the higher grades, writing took on new prominence as a problem-solving tool. Teachers from various disciplines were encouraged to see that

writing possesses many qualities that make it a particularly good tool for learning. The permanence of written text allows writers to step back and read their ideas, to rethink them, and to revise over time. The act of writing can often help the writer to discover ideas that would not have been discovered without the experience of the writing process. Writing also demands that the writer be explicit, so that it can be understood by a reader outside the context in which it was written. It draws on both intellect and imagination. [Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 3]

Teachers, especially at the middle and high school levels, began to learn how to work in teams across subject areas to foster writing across the curriculum (Healy & Barr, 1991). Content standards began to be written with an eye to using writing as a tool in science, social studies, history, and other subjects.

One key to the dissemination of information about the process-writing approach was the National Writing Project, a broad national staff development effort. The idea for the project grew along with the work of the National Center for the Study of Writing at the University of California at Berkeley, a U.S. Department of Education Research and Development Center that for years had spearheaded the effort to conduct and disseminate research on writing. To convey the information about how to implement the writing process and spread the information to as many teachers as possible, the project undertook an innovative "training of trainers" model. One or two teachers in each school or region were elected to attend intensive writing institutes, often held for as long as four to six weeks during the summer. At these institutes, teachers engaged in writing workshops, thus learning firsthand how to use writing as part of a

learning process. They developed plans and practiced techniques for implementing similar processes in their classrooms. These teachers were then expected to carry this information back to their schools and to train fellow teachers in what they had learned. The program also included follow-up sessions with summer institute participants and the involvement of school administrators. During the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of teachers in nearly every state participated in this program (Dyson & Freedman, 1991).

By 1992, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had begun to implement new approaches to assess writing. In 1992, a writing assessment was administered to a representative national sample of approximately 7,000 fourth-grade students, 11,000 eighth-grade students, and 11,500 twelfth-grade students from about 1,500 public and private schools across the country. The NAEP assessed student ability to write to inform others about a topic (interactive writing), to write an essay to convince others of their point of view (persuasive writing), and to write about personal experiences (narrative writing). Students were asked to respond to two writing tasks and provided with blank paper to plan their writing. Students, teachers, and administrators in all three grades were also asked about instructional content and practices. Students were asked how frequently teachers encouraged them to plan their writing (use prewriting), define their purposes for writing, and write more than one draft and revise.

The study found that several process-writing techniques were associated with higher writing proficiency. Students of teachers who always encouraged planning and defining purpose and audience were found to be generally better writers than students of teachers who reportedly never encouraged these activities. Average writing ability was higher among students whose teachers emphasized more than one process-writing strategy. In particular, the use of prewriting was found to be associated with the highest average proficiency scores (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1998). Recently questions have emerged about the reliability of the NAEP data and about using NAEP writing assessments to report trends (Kennedy Manzo, 2000). Subsequent studies have shown more limited improvement in writing among the students tested. Nevertheless, at the time of the 1992 report, the NAEP findings played a prominent role in promoting the adoption of process-oriented writing instruction.

Although considerable adoption of research findings has taken place, such implementation has not been universally accepted or understood. Researchers, for example, lament that too often the writing process has been translated in the classroom into a fairly rigid set of activities in the lesson plan for the week: "Monday we plan; Tuesday we draft;

Wednesday we respond to drafts; Thursday we revise" (Dyson & Freedman, 1991, p. 761). Langer and Applebee (1987) suggest a conflict between the forces shaping traditional instruction and the values in process-oriented instruction for writing. Curriculum theory in the United States, they point out, is often "guided by a building block or assembly line metaphor: the final product is a body of knowledge made up of discrete component parts and these parts must be assembled in a coherent, specified order if they are to function properly" (p. 553). This way of understanding learning is deeply engrained in the American education system-and has been internalized by many teachers. Process-oriented approaches to instruction, Langer and Applebee point out, are based on the assumption that learning is not linear and sequential but recursive, involving the cycling and recycling of learning processes, and so is often at odds with traditional classroom approaches.

Within higher education too, process-oriented writing approaches were extended into first-year English courses and other university departments as well. Professors began to experiment with ways to involve college students in collaborative writing activities. Within ESOL departments at the higher education level, courses in ESOL writing became more prevalent. A wide number of articles disseminating information about effective instructional strategies for teaching ESOL writing began to emerge in the Journal of ESL Writing, TESOL Quarterly, and other publications. College faculty became more aware that the process of learning to write in a second language may take many years and that there was a need to help nonnative speakers with their writing beyond first-year writing courses. The cultural dimensions of learning to write in a new language also became more widely understood.

The availability of remedial education programs in community colleges and universities continued to grow during the 1980s and early 1990s as the enrollment of nontraditional students grew and the curriculum area known as basic writing became more established. Such courses were usually offered as noncredit-bearing "preuniversity" courses and taught by nontenured and part-time faculty. Teachers at this level explored ways to give students more frequent opportunities to write for varied purposes, including narrative writing. They also implemented strategies for helping students to revise their writing, consider the reader in their planning, and address not only mechanical but content-related problems.

Addressing the sociocultural implications of academic writing for nontraditional students also became more explicit in many classrooms. Increasingly, basic writing teachers saw their role as one of helping students to cross the boundary between their own world and that of higher education. The writing classroom became a place to examine social class, ethnicity, language, gender, and other forms of difference

(Bizzell & Herzberg, 1996). Yet basic writing teachers struggled to address the competing needs of minority and nontraditional students. The dilemma was perhaps best described by educator Lisa Delpit (1986):

Let there be no doubt: a "skilled" minority person who is not also capable of critical analysis becomes the trainable low level functionary of dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly. On the other hand, a critical thinker who lacks the "skills" demanded by employers and institutions of higher learning can aspire to financial and social status only within the disenfranchised underworld. Yet if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to truly progress, we must insist on "skills" within the context of critical and creative thinking.

During the late 1990s, controversies regarding budgets for remedial programs for nontraditional students became more heated, even as the numbers of students who might be considered nontraditional grew (Reder, 2000). Many higher educators and policymakers have argued for literacy selection, which advises against admitting to higher education students whose literacy skills are deemed insufficient. Critics of literacy selection have, in turn, argued for literacy development, which supports equity of opportunity and allows less prepared students additional opportunities and support. In many states, financial support for programs for students with poor basic skills has been scaled back and admissions requirements tightened. For example, the City University of New York, the site of much of the original work on remedial writing at the college level, has now ended its open admissions policy and drastically reduced its remedial programs. The state university system in California has also adopted a policy of scaling back remedial courses on its twenty-two campuses (Cooper, 1998; Reder, 2000). This trend may have important implications for the adult literacy field. As the availability of basic writing courses within higher education diminishes, the responsibility for preparing nontraditional adult students for the demands of college writing may well shift to adult education programs.

THE IMPACT OF WRITING RESEARCH ON THE ADULT LITERACY FIELD

Scant data exist about whether, how, and under what conditions writing is taking place in adult literacy classrooms. In most large-scale studies of adult education, writing has been subsumed under the more general category of literacy education rather than separated out for study (Development Associates, 1994). What little we know can be gleaned only indirectly from practitioner-written articles appearing over the years in professional journals, from learner-written publications, and from a very few research studies, all of them limited in scope and size.

Advances

One example of the way that process writing has spread to the adult literacy field can be found in the case of literacy volunteer programs in New York City. One of the first that appears to have adopted process-oriented writing is LVNYC. The first issue of the Big Apple Journal, a semiannual anthology of student writing, was published by the program in 1975. Since that time, LVNYC has continued to expand its practice of involving learners in writing workshops as part of small group instruction in adult literacy, to offer Saturday writing workshops, and to hold special events where students read their writing (Fingeret & Danin, 1991; Gillespie, 1991). Early on, New York City adult literacy teachers began attending workshops offered by the National Writing Project, and in 1986 a summer writing institute designed for adult literacy educators was held at Lehman College. Since then, shorter workshops have periodically been offered by the Literacy Assistance Center, a clearinghouse for adult literacy and other organizations. In other large cities, notably Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, workshops for teachers on how to adapt writing-process work designed for children to adult education settings became available. In Boston, for example, student writers from various community-based programs began to contribute their work to a citywide anthology, Need I Say More. A student editorial board was initiated, and during the late 1980s and early 1990s, two overnight writers' weekends were held. New writers began visiting other classrooms to talk about their work through the Writer in the Classroom initiative (Gillespie, 1991).

Over the years, a number of journal articles have chronicled adult literacy practitioners' efforts to experiment with new ways to teach writing. Among the most popular have been articles about the effectiveness of journal writing in various adult education settings (see Kerka, 1996, and Anderson, 1995, for a summary). Dialogue journals, in which students maintain a dialogue on paper with their peers or with teachers, also became popular (see Peyton & Staton, 1991; Fallon, 1995). The language experience approach, in which students dictate their ideas to teachers, who then use the stories as a basis for teaching reading, also became more widespread, in particular with beginning ESOL students (Taylor, 1993).

Teachers have written about unique ways in which they have adapted writing instruction to meet the varied purposes of adult learners. For example, in "Writing: The Golden Thread in Family Learning," Goethel (1995) describes her efforts to weave writing into the fabric of family literacy. Parents and children write and illustrate stories together, and parents reflect on time spent with their children in journals and use these writings in conferences with the parenting instructor. Parents also contribute to class anthologies and participate in "writing celebrations"

together with their families. Blinn (1995) describes a program piloted at a minimum-security correctional center, designed as part of an effort to reduce recidivism among high-risk inmates. Instructors used personal writing as a tool to help offenders examine the goals they had for life after prison and to teach concrete problem-solving and consequential-thinking skills. Glasgow (1994) showed how learners in prison writing classes improved when their learning styles were taken into account. Other work has chronicled the use of writing as a tool in workplace literacy programs (Rhoder & French, 1995), ESOL programs (Peyton, 1993; McGrail, 1995; Wales, 1994; Weinstein, 1992), community-based centers (Himley, Madden, Hoffman, & Penrod, 1996; Kazemek, 1984), and computer-based contexts (Scheffer, 1995). Of particular note is a text for teachers entitled Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy (Auerbach, 1992). The author at once describes the work of an English family literacy project in Boston and offers a compendium of participatory education strategies, many of which are writing based. In a companion book, Talking Shop (Nash, Carson, Rhum, McGrail, & Gomez-Sanford, 1992), teachers associated with this same family literacy project document their struggle to introduce writing to beginning-level ESOL students, to use students' native language for writing in the classroom, and to employ varied forms of photo stories, oral histories, and language experience in their teaching.

Another major influence on the field was the introduction of a direct assessment of writing ability into the 1988 edition of the GED test. Up to 1987, language arts were measured indirectly through multiple-choice questions related to the conventions of written English. The new test did include a multiple-choice component that measured students' ability to edit and revise sentences for structure, usage, and mechanics, but it also required students to complete an essay within a forty-five-minute time frame. Students were asked to present an opinion or explanation regarding a situation familiar to adults. The introduction of the essay test was considered quite innovative at the time and marked a dramatic revision of the GED test. The test developers, basing their work on NAEP results related to the writing abilities of young adults, encouraged adult educators to teach the writing process explicitly, provide students with broad-based experiences in reading to develop their understanding of good writing, and provide writing experiences in different rhetorical modes, such as description, persuasion, and exposition, each of which, they pointed out, requires different skills (Dauzat & Dauzat, 1987). A number of articles suggesting approaches to teaching students to prepare for the GED essay test appeared during this period (Taylor, 1987; Fadale & Hammond, 1987). Since that time, however, there have been surprisingly few reports in adult education journals regarding successful preparation of students for the GED essay test. (One exception is a 1996

issue of Connections: A Journal of Adult Literacy, which devoted an entire issue to teachers' reflections on this topic.) No empirical studies of how GED teachers prepare adults for the GED test appear to have been undertaken.

One more key influence on the spread of writing in adult basic education is community writing, or what has come to be known as learner-generated writing. This movement has its roots in Britain, where various kinds of community-based writing and local publishing groups sprang up in working-class British neighborhoods in the 1970s. The groups promoted the local publication and distribution of individual biographies, poetry, fiction, oral histories, and community action materials that allowed working-class people to give voice to their individual and collective experiences. Eventually these organizations united to form the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers. (The history of this movement is described in Morley & Worpole, 1982.)

Soon the notion of involving adult literacy students in the worker writing movement gained momentum. By 1974, plans were under way to produce a national newsletter by and for adult literacy learners. For more than a decade, the Write First Time newspaper was published three times a year. At its height, more than sixty local programs contributed articles to this publication. Production was moved from one region to another to give larger numbers of adults experience with the publication and production process. In 1985, however, the government-based funding for the newspaper was withdrawn. A growing centralization of control of adult literacy education during the 1990s led to a considerable reduction in the number of projects engaged in community writing (see Gardener, 1985; Gillespie, 1991; Mace, 1995; Hamilton & Merrifield, 2000).

Some of the British publications made their way into the hands of adult literacy practitioners in the United States and Canada and provided inspiration for a growing number of learner-generated publications during the 1980s. (See Gillespie, 1991, and Peyton, 1993, for summaries of this movement.) One project of note was Voices, a quarterly magazine consisting of writing by adult beginning readers and ESOL students, primarily from the United States and Canada. Accompanying each article was a biography and photograph of the student writer. The magazine, edited and published by the Lower Mainland Society for Literacy and Employment in British Columbia, was distributed to subscribers in Canada and the United States and did much to promote the idea that beginning readers can write sophisticated and meaningful text. Lack of sufficient financial support led to the demise of the project in the late 1990s.

In a few innovative cases, adult literacy learners have been involved in

developing curriculum materials to teach other adults how to write. One good example is Opening Time (Frost & Hoy, 1987). This text presents a fresh look at learning to write through the eyes of adult beginning writers. The titles of the learning modules these adults created reflect the level of analysis that can be attained when adults are given the time and power to create their own curriculum materials-for example: "A Beginning Reader Is Not a Beginning Thinker," "It Helps to Discover Myself," "A Sense of Relief," "School: A Wasted Childhood," "The Student Is the Expert," and "It Doesn't Have to Be Perfect." Conversations with Strangers (Gardener, 1985) provides another example of students' and teachers' documenting their work together as writers.

Community writing projects for working-class adults have also taken place outside the arena of adult basic education classrooms. One powerful example is a community writing project that took place in an inner-city neighborhood in San Francisco. This work is documented in the book Until We Are Strong Together (Heller, 1997). Two other examples are the Amherst Writers and Artists Institute in Massachusetts (Schneider, 1989) and the Neighborhood Writing Alliance in Chicago, which publishes the Journal of Ordinary Thought.

Stasis
Although some programs have made efforts to apply new research on writing in their adult literacy classrooms, many others continue to focus on lower-order writing process skills (such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling) and to give less attention to higher-order processes (such as planning what to write and making revisions). In one of the few studies to look at how writing is taught in adult literacy classrooms, Padak and Padak (1988) studied five adult education sites in Michigan. They found that some form of writing activity occurred at all the sites. At three of the five sites, students sometimes wrote in response to a teacher-assigned topic. However, Padak and Padak noted that the vast majority of interactions about writing involved the teacher and a single student and was focused on mechanics. Discussion of ideas or the content of writing did not occur at any of the three sites and accounted for only 7 percent and 22 percent of interactions about writing at the other two sites. Teachers rarely assigned or even suggested writing outside the classroom. "Throughout all forty-one hours of instruction," the researchers noted, " we observed only four interactions about writing that students had completed independently. In all four cases, students had written poems and stories outside of class" (p. 5).

Interviews with teachers revealed that their definition of "good" writing supported a mechanics-oriented view. Only three of eleven teachers mentioned purpose or content as characteristics of good writing. Teachers' primary goal was to help students learn the skills required to

pass the GED test. "I may be in a rut," one teacher said, "but I know how to get them through. I know what books to use so they can pass the test" (p. 6).

A more recent survey, also of teachers in Michigan, was conducted by Young (1997). Her study, which looked at the use of computers in the classroom, revealed that participants primarily used drill and practice software for language arts. Students working at the computer were typically ignored by teachers until their scores appeared on the screen. Teachers and students engaged in only superficial exchanges with little educational substance. Students engaged in word processing solely to type in their own previously written texts as corrected by teachers. Young found a remarkable disparity between the research literature on the sociocontextual nature of literacy and the reality she observed in the classroom. Drawing on the work of Schˆn, Young noted that some teachers possessed "espoused theories" that reflected an understanding of recent process-centered instruction. When they got into the classroom, however, their "theory-in-use" reverted back to a more traditional approach. Another study on computer use (Hopey, Harvey-Morgan, & Rethemeyer, 1996) also found drill and practice to be the predominant use for computers in adult literacy classrooms.

To date, we know relatively little about how the development of writing ability in adult literacy learners compares with that of young children or of basic writers at the college level. However, we can speculate that adult literacy learners have many characteristics in common with basic, or remedial, adult writers. They may, for example, come to the classroom with a limited understanding of the higher-order processes involved in writing and thus require strategic instruction in these areas. One recent study in this regard was conducted by Russell (1999), who found that the adult learners she observed came to the task of learning to write with a mental model of writing that was different from that of their teachers. While teachers encouraged students not to worry about form, to ignore their mistakes, and to focus on the content of their writing, the students were mostly concerned with avoiding mistakes and writing the "right" way. Interviews with students revealed that they believed a "good" writer was someone who knew how to use punctuation and could write perfectly the first time. They did not fully recognize the possibility of learning from reading and then applying this new understanding to writing. Nor could they conceive of strategies that put themselves in the role of revising or correcting their own work. In effect, she observed, "teachers and learners appear to be speaking two different languages, perhaps different dialects of the language of writing instruction" (p. 20). Her work suggests the need to develop a different model of teaching writing to adult literacy learners, "one that allows learners and teachers to co-construct representations of their assumptions about the writing

process, and that makes explicit the connections that may be unclear" (p. 23).

Art Halbrook, a writing specialist at the GED Testing Service, has observed that students in many adult literacy and GED classrooms are not developing higher-order skills in the processing of writing. After reading hundreds of GED essays, Halbrook (1999) described most as a "blueprint for mediocrity." Too often, he observes, students appear to be taught simply the minimum requirements of a five-paragraph formula-introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion-and drilled in how to adapt it to nearly any assigned topic: the minimal requirement to pass the test. Learning to write a five-paragraph essay is valuable, but it appears, based on Halbrook's observations, that "writing for the test" may be the only kind of writing students learn. He saw limited evidence of the mastery of higher-order writing processes, such as planning and revising, in the content of the essays.

This conclusion is especially troubling, since, as Reder (2000) points out, moving up into well-paying jobs increasingly requires postsecondary education and credentials. Students who in the past might not have participated in postsecondary education now need to seek further education training. Without academic writing skills, students may either be screened out of or be unable to succeed in postsecondary education. The ability to pass the GED essay test, although important, may not adequately prepare adults for the demands of postsecondary writing. Moreover, as we have seen, adults increasingly may be required to do more writing on the job than in the past. Since writing skills in one rhetorical mode may not fully transfer to another mode, learning to write a short essay alone may not prepare adult GED learners for the kinds of writing they may be required to do at work, such as writing memos, short reports, and e-mail messages.

Below the GED level, the most commonly used standardized tests, such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), do not include direct measures of writing. Among the tests offered through the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), a direct test of writing does exist, but few programs appear to take advantage of it. Many of the most popular commercial workbooks available for adult literacy learners continue to offer drill and practice language arts exercises that are correlated to the kinds of questions covered by these tests.

For English-language learners, the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), designed for lower-level learners, includes a very short writing assessment that asks learners to write a note to a teacher and a thank you note. The Adult Language Assessment Scales (A-LAS) also contain a

direct measure of writing, with scores reported holistically on a scale of 0 to 5. (See Van Duzer & Berdan, 2000, for a discussion of assessment in adult ESOL instruction.)

Promising Trends
Unlike teachers in the Kñ12 system, many, and perhaps the majority, of adult literacy teachers appear to have had few opportunities to receive training in innovative approaches to the teaching of writing and thus may rely on more traditional approaches. A number of promising trends, however, emerged during the 1990s.

PROJECT-BASED INSTRUCTION. One such trend is project-based instruction. "In its simplest form, project-based learning involves a group of learners taking on an issue close to their hearts, developing a response, and presenting the results to a wider audience" (Wrigley, 1998, p. 13). Through project-based instruction, adult learners develop their language, literacy, and problem-solving skills as they research an issue of concern or interest. Writing often plays a central role in project-based instruction. For example, learners in one ESOL project discussed, researched, and wrote down traditional recipes (Gaer, 1998). Another decided on themes and then wrote and enacted short plays and skits. Yet another group of students decided to write an orientation handbook for future students of their literacy program. Still other projects have involved research and writing to create educational materials on health (Norton & Campbell, 1998). Projects may last from only a few days to several months. In some cases, projects turn into businesses, as did a student-run cafÈ at ELISAIR, an ESOL program in New York City. Others have come about spontaneously, such as when a group of ESOL learners decided to organize a fundraiser to help flood victims in Honduras (Wrigley, 1998). In some projects, students serve as apprentices, as, for example, when they learn from their teacher how to put together their own newspaper. Tasks, time lines, and responsibilities are often posted to track the status of a project and sometimes students to keep budgets. Often such projects have real audiences and a goal of effecting change in a community.

Although no research studies have yet been conducted that study this approach to instruction in adult contexts, proponents claim it helps adults to develop skills that are more closely matched to the literacy requirements of work and everyday life. Project-based instruction encourages collaborative learning and writing for authentic purposes. This form of instruction also helps to make visible the processes that are usually hidden from learners in typical programs, such as the publishing process (Wrigley, 1998).

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE. Equipped for the Future (EFF), the standards-based system reform initiative of the National Institute for

Literacy (NIFL), is another project that is encouraging the involvement of students in writing (and reading) in authentic contexts. One of EFF's most significant accomplishments has been to shift the conception of the purpose of literacy away from the acquisition of a set of skills isolated from practice and toward a conception of literacy as purposeful action rooted in the contexts of people's lives. In this respect, EFF draws on many of the same conceptual and theoretical ideas that have informed the writing-related research described in this chapter. In addition, it acknowledges the transformative qualities of adult literacy acquisition suggested by Fingeret and Drennon (1997).

The EFF standards reform initiative began in 1993, when the NIFL was asked by the National Education Goals Panel (an intergovernmental body of state and federal officials designed to assess and report on state and national progress in education) to measure and track the progress of the nation toward the following goal: "Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." This goal presented not just a technical challenge in terms of measurement but a conceptual problem: what does one have to know and be able to do to be literate? The NIFL team found that no widely held agreement on the meaning of "literate functioning" existed (Merrifield, 2000).

To try to answer this question, the NIFL team turned to adult learners, issuing a widely distributed invitation for them to respond to the following question: "What do adults need to know and be able to do in order to be literate, compete in the global economy, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?" Fifteen hundred students in a variety of adult education programs from around the United States submitted written responses, which the NIFL team used to identify four key purposes for learning: to gain access to information, give voice to ideas, act independently, and build a bridge to the future by learning how to learn (Stein, 1995).

Using these four purposes as a base, EFF has developed a framework for standards-based system reform, at each stage seeking input from as wide a range of people as possible (Merrifield, 2000, p. 8). Content standards were derived from optimal portraits (referred to as role maps) of what adults know and do when they are effective in their three key life roles of worker, parent and family member, and citizen. The process also included an analysis of the skills and knowledge required across the three life roles, referred to as generative skills. Writing represented a key generative skill in the model. Over a two-year iterative and field-based process in many states, content standards were developed. The focus of EFF is now on the development of an assessment framework and performance standards. Writing will be one of the generative skills

assessed. To date, a large number of states are involved with EFF in one way or another, including in some cases statewide adoption of the standards (Merrifield, 2000; Stein, 2000).

The EFF reform system has the potential to guide significant reform in the teaching of writing in adult literacy contexts. Its focus on "purposeful" learning "rooted in the context of people's lives" (Merrifield, 2000, p. 9) can direct teachers away from teacher-assigned writing activities with little relationship to everyday life and toward authentic writing tasks derived from needs at work, within the family, and in community life. In developing an assessment framework and performance standards, EFF designers have the potential to apply many of the writing research findings outlined in this chapter in exciting and innovative ways.

TECHNOLOGY-BASED COMMUNICATION. Innovative uses of technology may represent one of the most significant of the promising trends. In growing numbers, adult literacy learners are surfing the Web to research areas that interest them, communicating through e-mail, creating Web pages, and forming on-line groups of various kinds. (See Rosen, 2000, for a summary of technology-based activities in which students and teachers are engaged.) In ways never before available, adult students can find audiences to read and respond to their texts. They can combine visual and print literacy to communicate their ideas, and they can form long-distance collaborations with others. Each of the National Institute for Literacy's regional LINCS (Literacy Information and Communications System) sites now have links to resources by and for learners. For example, SouthernLINCS (http://hub2.coe.utk.edu.html) has links to learner-developed projects on topics such as stress, home remedies, the influence of television commercials on viewers, and ways in which inmates can keep in touch with the outside world. Brown University's literacy center maintains a site at which adult beginning readers can post their poetry, short stories, and essays (http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_ Center/Literacy_Resources/learner.html). Dave's ESL CafÈ (http://www.eslcafe.com) contains more than twenty discussion forums for ESOL students and has provided the means for thousands of ESOL students to become pen pals with other ESOL students from around the world. Some programs also publish their curriculum materials and teaching tips on-line. Write on Nashville (http://cls.coe.utk.edu/lpm/writeon.html), for example, gives teachers tips on how to prepare for a public event in which students read their stories. (The Literacy List, a comprehensive, hyperlinked list of adult literacy, basic education, and ESOL Web sites, is maintained by David Rosen and can be found at http://alri.org/literacylist.html.)

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY

While research-based approaches to the teaching of writing have made their way into some adult literacy classrooms, progress overall has been quite limited. Adult literacy programs need guidance if writing is to move from an occasional activity to one that is at the heart of the educational process. Given the limited funding for research and program improvement in the field, attention should be given to activities of immediate value and strategic importance. The following list suggests some priorities.

- Develop a research agenda for the study of composition in adult literacy education contexts. Given funding constraints, the field needs to consider carefully what kinds of research studies are of greatest priority. Specialists in the teaching of writing should come together to establish a research agenda. This process should include experts from a number of fields, such as researchers in basic education at the postsecondary level; specialists in emergent writing; teachers and teacher trainers from adult basic education, ESOL, and vocational education; postsecondary school teachers with day-to-day experience teaching adults to write; and policymakers concerned with how best to assess progress in writing. Working together, they should make recommendations for how to select and design studies that build on existing research and are of most value to the field. In designing the studies that address this agenda, this panel of experts should employ both micro- and macrolevel analyses. If learning to write is largely a process of "personal growth in the social context" (Dyson & Freedman, 1991), then scholars will have to study varied cultural, linguistic, contextual, and individual differences that come to play in this multifaceted process. Within those social contexts, microlevel analysis of how adults develop and change as writers may help explain how adult literacy learners are both similar to and different from other populations that have been studied. Other possible topics for research include longitudinal studies of the writing development of adults who successfully make the transition into postsecondary education and work that requires writing and of the role that writing plays in the transformational process that occurs as an adult becomes literate.
- Support policies that create a bridge between GED study and preparation for the writing demands of postsecondary education. In today's world, moving beyond an entry-level job often requires further education. Adults who decide to enroll in a vocational school, community college, or university face many writing-related challenges. An essay test may serve as a gatekeeper to entry into

the program. Once enrolled, many students will be expected to pass entry-level composition classes and to engage in writing in other academic classes. Special policies and programs need to be developed to help students make the transition to writing at the postsecondary level.

Recent research has revealed that few GED holders enter or complete postsecondary education (Reder, 2000). Since data seem to indicate that adult education students who do enter college and participate in remedial programs fare relatively well compared with their peers, transitional programs have considerable potential. With diminishing financial support for remedial writing classes at the precollege level, adult basic educators may be required to fill the gap. Rance-Roney (1995) summarizes some of the factors adult educators will have to consider in designing transitional programs. Adult educators must find ways to motivate students to believe they have the ability to face the academic demands of college; help them to understand the culture, norms, and expectations of the academic community; and help them to develop their conceptual and critical thinking skills such as synthesis, analysis, and evaluation. Second-language students need to expand their vocabulary and learn to integrate and transfer first-language skills and learning strategies to English. To aid in the development of effective programs, writing teachers at the adult, vocational, and postsecondary levels need to be encouraged to sponsor professional development activities and publications jointly.

- Fund staff development models that better equip adult educators to develop and implement literacy programs that support writing. The training that most adult literacy teachers receive in the teaching of writing is minimal. Few teachers have specialized, university-level training in adult literacy education or special degrees in the teaching of writing. If teachers are to adopt the kind of process-based approach to writing that writing experts now advocate, they will require additional, specialized preservice training. In considering training options, adult literacy educators should examine the experiences of the National Writing Project to ascertain which aspects of this highly regarded training model might be adapted. Mentoring and apprenticeship programs for new teachers of writing may be useful, and Web-based networks might foster and share innovative practices. At the GED level, in particular, educators require training and support if they are to shift their focus beyond preparing students to pass the GED test and toward preparing adults for the demands of further education.

Many programs are experimenting with approaches to teaching that

support learning in the social context. Programs are using project-based instruction and other approaches that involve multitasked, collaborative practices in real-life contexts. Teachers in these programs need support to document how writing develops and is taught in these contexts. In particular, researchers should observe how curricula based on EFF content standards promote writing and how writing is woven into the content standards.

- Investigate innovative tools to assess progress in writing. Researchers and test developers are looking for ways to overcome the current mismatch between what is measured by existing standardized tests and what should be taught in the classroom. The most popular standardized tests in use today, except for the GED, only indirectly measure writing. Adult educators need to examine alternative models. The Kñ12 and postsecondary systems have developed models for both the large-scale testing of writing for accountability purposes and for smaller-scale, classroom-based assessment useful to teachers.

Since the 1960s, the College Entrance Examination Board has used holistic scoring of writing and has developed techniques to train readers to score writing samples, thus solving reliability problems (Freedman, 1991). By 1998, more than thirty-five states had begun to use some direct measures of writing in their Kñ12 assessment. In addition, for more than twenty years, the NAEP has been conducting large-scale, direct assessments of writing. The NAEP has responded to many critics, including those who have argued that it is not valid to make claims about writing achievement given the NAEP testing conditions (including the short time that students have for writing and the fact that they are writing for an artificial audience) and the way in which the writing is evaluated. Yet with each new version of its test, the NAEP has made improvements, such as lengthening the testing time, providing students with opportunities for prewriting, experimenting with the addition of a portfolio assessment system, and using varied kinds of scoring systems. Given this rich source of information, adult literacy educators should have a good foundation from which to address the inevitable question of how better to measure writing development in adult literacy programs for purposes of accountability.

The writing portfolio movement in Kñ12 settings is another valuable resource from which adult educators can draw to develop classroom-based assessment and to link classroom and large-scale assessment. Writing folders are particularly useful for revealing patterns in writing development over time and across different kinds of writing activities. For the adult literacy field, the inclusion of portfolio assessment would

be one way to nudge teachers toward involving students in more significant amounts of and varied kinds of writing. It would also allow adult learners to take a more active role in their own assessment. However, to be effective, teachers would need clear guidelines related to "what writing is to be collected, under what conditions, for what purposes, and evaluated in what ways" (Freedman, 1991, p. 8).

Testing programs often exert a powerful influence over the nature of instruction and what "counts" as literacy. Since the ability to write in varied contexts for different kinds of purposes and audiences is not tested, writing does not "count" for many adult education teachers. This may well continue to be the case until portfolio assessment and possibly some form of performance-based writing assessment begin to "count" within the literacy field. Experience in the Kñ12 system shows, however, that if teachers are simply directed to ask students to submit work, called portfolios, without being given staff development related to the teaching of writing, the student writing submitted is often dismal indeed (Freedman, 1991, p. 15). The development of writing assessment processes needs to be introduced hand in hand with staff development. Writing tasks need to be focused on the most pressing writing demands that adults face in the workplace, family and civic life, and postsecondary education.

- Support the dissemination of writing by and for adult literacy learners. Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of technology-based communication is its capacity to allow adult literacy learners entry into wider communities of discourse (Gee, 1989). Such communities represent more than a means for adult learners to publish their work. Each involves a group of people writing for a community of others, responding to one another's ideas, and building a knowledge base together. Discourse communities can provide a vehicle through which adult learners can write about and respond to issues of concern to them (Beaufort, 1997). Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education, the national organization formed in 1998 by and for adult literacy learners, has established a Web site (through the national LINCS system, at http://literacynet.org/value/) that has the potential to provide such a forum for adult literacy learners. Another example is the American Gateways Community Voice (http://gateways.unhny.org/). This site, funded by the American Gateways Technology Challenge Grant, provides adult learners with an avenue to share their stories of immigration. Teachers can support such forums by linking classroom activities to student participation, assisting students in revising their work for "publication" on the Web, and helping students see the value of sharing their viewpoints.

Up to now, adult literacy learners have far too often gone through years of schooling that involved only the reading of other people's words. Not enough opportunity has been provided for them to make words their own. In planning for the future of writing instruction in adult literacy, policymakers and program staff should consider James Boyd White's definition of literacy:

Literacy is not merely the capacity to understand the conceptual content of writings and utterances, but the ability to participate fully in a set of social and intellectual practices. It is not passive, but active, not imitative but creative, for participation in the speaking and writing of language is participation in the activities that make it possible. Indeed it involves the perpetual remaking of both language and practice. [cited in Robinson, 1990, p. 158]

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