

Sense and Sensitivity

The Identity of the Scholar-Writer in Academia

Hanna Ezer



SensePublishers

Sense and Sensitivity

IMAGINATION AND PRAXIS: CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 6

SERIES EDITORS

Tricia M. Kress
The University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd, W-1-77D
Boston, MA 02125, USA

Robert L. Lake
Georgia Southern University
College of Education, Box 8144
Statesboro, GA 30460, USA

SCOPE

Current educational reform rhetoric around the globe repeatedly invokes the language of 21st century learning and innovative thinking while contrarily re-enforcing, through government policy, high stakes testing and international competition, standardization of education that is exceedingly reminiscent of 19th century Taylorism and scientific management. Yet, as the steam engines of educational “progress” continue down an increasingly narrow, linear, and unified track, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the students in our classrooms are inheriting real world problems of economic instability, ecological damage, social inequality, and human suffering. If young people are to address these social problems, they will need to activate complex, interconnected, empathetic and multiple ways of thinking about the ways in which peoples of the world are interconnected as a global community in the living ecosystem of the world. Seeing the world as simultaneously local, global, political, economic, ecological, cultural and interconnected is far removed from the Enlightenment’s objectivist and mechanistic legacy that presently saturates the status quo of contemporary schooling. If we are to derail this positivist educational train and teach our students to see and be in the world differently, the educational community needs a serious dose of imagination. The goal of this book series is to assist students, practitioners, leaders, and researchers in looking beyond what they take for granted, questioning the normal, and amplifying our multiplicities of knowing, seeing, being and feeling to, ultimately, envision and create possibilities for positive social and educational change. The books featured in this series will explore ways of seeing, knowing, being, and learning that are frequently excluded in this global climate of standardized practices in the field of education. In particular, they will illuminate the ways in which imagination permeates every aspect of life and helps develop personal and political awareness. Featured works will be written in forms that range from academic to artistic, including original research in traditional scholarly format that addresses unconventional topics (e.g., play, gaming, ecopedagogy, aesthetics), as well as works that approach traditional and unconventional topics in unconventional formats (e.g., graphic novels, fiction, narrative forms, and multi-genre texts). Inspired by the work of Maxine Greene, this series will showcase works that “break through the limits of the conventional” and provoke readers to continue arousing themselves and their students to “begin again” (Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 1995, p. 109).

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Peter Appelbaum, Arcadia University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
Roslyn Arnold, University of Sydney, Australia
Patty Bode, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA
Cathrene Connery, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY, USA
Clyde Coreil, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ, USA
Michelle Fine, CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY, USA
Sandy Grande, Connecticut College, New London, CT, USA
Awad Ibrahim, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, Canada
Vera John-Steiner, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA
Wendy Kohli, Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, USA
Carl Leggo, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Pepi Leistyna, University of Massachusetts Boston, MA, USA
Donaldo Macedo, University of Massachusetts Boston, MA, USA
Martha McKenna, Lesley University, Boston, MA, USA
Ernest Morrell, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
William Reynolds, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA, USA
Pauline Sameshima, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON, Canada

Sense and Sensitivity

The Identity of the Scholar-Writer in Academia

Hanna Ezer

Levinsky College of Education, Tel-Aviv, Israel



SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6300-239-4 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-240-0 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-241-7 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Printed on acid-free paper

All Rights Reserved © 2016 Sense Publishers

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Acknowledgements	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction: Autobiographical Notes and Research Design	1
Autobiographical Notes: Myself as Writer	1
Research and Book Structure	5
Chapter 2: Theoretical Background	9
What Is Writing and Why Do People Write?	9
Status of Writing Worldwide and in Israel	10
Models for Teaching Writing	12
Types of Writing	13
Writing and Identity	15
Chapter 3: Six Narratives Highlight the Identity of the Writer	21
The Fascinating Process of Writing—A’s Narrative	21
Writing Is a Precious Matter—B’s Narrative	26
Writing Offers Serenity—C’s Narrative	30
Writing Is an Extraordinary Experience—D’s Narrative	34
Writing as a Calling Card—E’s Narrative	37
Writing as the Essence of Life—F’s Narrative	40
Lenses Reflect the Identity of the Writer	44
Chapter 4: First Lens: Perceptions of Writing	47
Writing as Artistic Creation	47
Writing as Experience and as a Social-Communicative Medium	48
Writing as a Physical and Spiritual Process	50
Chapter 5: Second Lens: The Role of Writing in the Writer’s Life	53
Types of Writing	53
The Development of Writing	55
Passages and Changes—From Poetic Writing to Academic Writing	59
Factors Influencing the Development of Writing	62

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 6: Third Lens: The Self as Writer—The Literate Self	67
Perception of the Self as Writer	67
The Bilingual Self as Writer	71
The Process of Writing	72
The Role of the Computer in the Writing Process	75
The Literate Self—the Literate Individual	79
The Self as Writer and the Literate Self—Summary	81
Chapter 7: Fourth Lens: Writing and Teaching	83
Perceptions of Writing in Teaching and Learning	83
The Identity of the Writer and the Teaching of Writing	85
Chapter 8: Writing Workspace and Writers' Behavior	89
The Writer's Workspace	92
The Behavior of the Writer While Writing	95
Chapter 9: The Identity of the Writer—Through the Lenses and Beyond	103
Conclusions	106
Implications for Writing Environments	108
References	109
About the Author	113
Index	115

PREFACE

All of us write during the course of our lives. We were born into a literate world in which reading and writing are an integral part of our lives. No longer do we need to talk about an illiterate society, the literacy campaign launched in Israel in the 1960s is no longer relevant and we no longer need to consider the role of literacy in society and culture. We were born into a world of writing, and that writing is manifested in different forms and media and a variety of technologies, both print and digital. Nevertheless, there are those who write more and consider writing to have major importance in their lives, and there are those who attribute it less importance. Some writers write for themselves only and what they write remains in their desk drawer or on their computer. Others write for social purposes and for the sake of others, for example greetings at public ceremonies or light essays to amuse the public, or on the other hand eulogies at times of sorrow. And there are those who engage in academic writing as part of their professional lives, not only in academia but also as part of the requirements of their chosen profession, as in law and medicine, for example.

Our identity as writers is not a matter that we usually consciously consider. It is part of the way we perceive and feel about ourselves. It is there in our subconscious, and it surfaces when we are asked direct questions about our writing. Among authors and poets, awareness of writing is perhaps more explicit. For them, writing is a profession. Or perhaps it is not? Perhaps their writing emerges from within, from their hearts, as stated by the poet Chaim Nahman Bialik (1981) in his poem “I Didn’t Win Light in a Windfall” when he describes the writing process as something he did not inherit from his father but rather “I hewed my light from granite. I quarried my heart.” He goes on to say: “Neither hired, nor borrowed, nor stolen – my very own.” For Bialik writing was a way of life. The writer Maya Arad (2014) is troubled by the question of the difference between author and writer and differentiates between the two. A writer, according to her, is someone who writes. An author is the one who records things.

Foucault (1987) asks: at what point does a person begin to function as an author? This is not an easy question to answer, because every author is a writer, but not all writers are authors. Foucault designates the author as a function of discourse itself. “In this sense, the function of an author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society” (p. 124).

In this sense, academic scholars are writers. For them writing is part of their academic environment, part of their profession. Or perhaps it is not? What is the role of writing in the lives of academic scholars? Is it merely a professional necessity, an important functional component of the requirements of the academic world? Or does it have some added value for the writer? The current study attempts to answer this

question by examining the writer's identity of academic scholars who are engaged in teaching and research in the field of education and teacher training.

A short story by Israeli author Amnon Shamosh (2014) published in the Culture and Literature supplement of the Haaretz newspaper expresses the troubles experienced by writers, and perhaps even more the relationship between identity and writing for all people whoever they may be, not necessarily authors or academics but rather all those who now seek to write "so they'll know who has been living among them for all these years." In the story, a man who is not widely known as an author and who finds himself hospitalized in a kibbutz clinic wants to write a book. Both he and the kibbutz society in which he lives see him as someone who writes short amusing essays for many occasions, such as holidays and weddings. But now that he has free time, like so many others his age, he wants to "devote himself to writing." "Instead of just thinking about things, I'll write them. So they'll know who has been living among them all these years," he writes in the story. "All my life I've waited for this. When I have the time, I said to myself. Now I have the time. Lots of time." The story also contains an element of awareness of the target audience, the notion that the writer is writing for others, that the writing, which emerges from the writer because it is a matter of necessity for him, goes out to readers who do not necessarily identify this need or recognize the writer's ability to write. The writer's distress also is apparent. The words are trapped inside him. "Now that there's time there's no peace. Not outside and not inside. And without peace it is difficult to write. Even though there is a lot to write about. There is a larger truth, and writing talent, and abundant distress. There just isn't enough paper. Nor peace. Nor empathy."

There is not enough paper, nor enough peace or empathy. In these few words the author not only describes the distress experienced by the writer but also the relation between writing and identity, or to put it another way between writing and who the writer is, the way he perceives himself and his need to communicate with those around him using words that take form in his brain and embody who he considers himself to be. Because writing is part of one's life, of who one is, the need to express one's thoughts in written words, to perpetuate who one is and to communicate with others through writing are all part of one's identity. In other words, writing is part of identity, and identity is the way in which individuals perceive of themselves through their own eyes and those of society. For some people, including most of the academics interviewed for this study, writing is part of both their personal and their professional identity. The research does not answer the question of whether particular individuals chose an academic career because writing is part of their identity or whether their writing developed along with their academic careers. Nevertheless, the question remains the same: What came first, one's self-perception as a writer or one's self-perception as an academic, a profession in which writing plays an integral role?

Many studies over the past three decades have examined the concept of *writing for learning*, or *Writing-In-Disciplines (WID)*, and the writing process in the schools based on the understanding that writing is a means of learning in all content areas. I spent many years examining and fostering this aspect of writing in the educational

system. In so doing, I often encountered the question of the role of writing in our academic and personal lives. For some years now I have been thinking about clarifying this question among professionals for whom writing is part of their professional expertise. In the current study I chose to focus on academics working at education colleges for a number of reasons. First, they were accessible to me in the academic environment in which I work. Second, I began with the assumption that written words are part of the professional essence of academics, in particular those engaged in education and teacher training, so that these people would have stories to tell about themselves as writers. I was not proven wrong, though I discovered something else as well. Not only do they perceive of writing as an integral part of their professional lives, they also see it as an integral part of who they are, of their own personal biography. I chose to hear their stories based on my belief that our life is a story and our identity, the essence of who we are in every realm of life, emerges from this story. I chose to listen to the story of the writer and from that story to reveal the identity of the writer, because “identity is a storied life composition, a story to live by. Stories to live by are shaped in places and lived in places. They live in actions, in relationships with others, in language, including silences, in gaps and vacancies, in continuities and discontinuities” (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, pp. 161–162).

To a certain extent I did receive an answer to my question of what comes first, self-perception as a writer or being a writer in academia. According to the results of this study, academics are people who identified themselves as writers from birth, people for whom writing has always been part of their very essence. Nevertheless, many describe a reciprocal process encompassing what they write for others or *social writing* as some call it, their *creative or literary writing* and their *academic writing*. This academic writing has developed and become more sophisticated over the years, due to formative events that helped them shape it and as a result of their socialization within the academic environment and its requirements. They refer to their writing today as *new writing* that combines all the types of writings on which they were raised with their current personal and professional development. What was of particular interest to me in this research was to discover the extent to which writing was an integral part of their personal lives, of who they are, and the extent to which writing is present and important in their lives as academic scholars. I discovered that they cannot conceive of themselves without writing as a means of expressing their thoughts and emotions, of discovering who they are, indeed as a means of finding their own individual voice, or in the words of one of the interviewees (see Chapter 3), “finding my inner voice—a voice that is everything within me.” That indeed is the topic of the current study—writing as the voice and means of expression of academic scholars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been realized without the participation of the academic scholars, who gave their full consent to be interviewed for the research and to publicize their complete narratives or partial quotations from their stories. As a researcher, I was encouraged by their endorsement of my research endeavor and their enthusiasm in talking about writing and in telling their stories as writers in academia. Thank you all for being part of my professional community and for revealing your inner thoughts frankly and openly.

I am grateful to Donna Bossin for her editing skills and her contribution to designing the format of the book. I also thank Levinsky College of Education for its financial support in the production of this book.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Autobiographical Notes and Research Design

I am a female academic scholar engaged in teacher training and education. Writing is part of my academic life. It is also an integral part of me as a human being and as a professional working in academia. It is from this personal perspective that I embarked on this research about the identity of the scholar-writer in academia. Throughout the research process, both during the interviews and afterwards, as I analyzed the data I collected I could not help but compare the personal stories told to me to my own story as a writer, could not refrain from comparing the identities revealed to me to my own identity as a writer. Therefore, I feel it is appropriate to begin with a description of “Myself as Writer” before describing the research design and the structure of the book.

Each chapter and subchapter in the book begins with one or more quotations from the interviewees. These quotations, I believe, highlight the major issues discussed in the chapter or subchapter. Many of the interviewees spoke about the power of the written word. I contend that these quotations from the interviewees are part of this power of the written word and are thus important as part of the essence of writing. This book is my academic writing, and the written words, the quotations, are an important part of me, an important part of my writing, in which I integrate the data provided by the interviewees with my interpretations as interviewer. This shifting back and forth from data to interpretation through the prism of the researcher – in this case, me – is part of the essence of academic writing. Indeed, this is my nature as an academic writer today, which is in no way disconnected from the interviewees’ perceptions of the writer’s identity in this research.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES: MYSELF AS WRITER

The joy of writing.

The power of preserving.

Revenge of a mortal hand.

Wisława Szymborska

Writing is associated with memories. For some reason, when people discuss the role of writing in life they tend to go to the most intimate places in their lives, to their memories of the past, and usually these are happy memories. The poet Wisława

Szyborska (1998) calls this “the joy of writing.” Indeed the relationship between joy and writing is twofold: the joy in writing and the happy event associated with the writing. This is also the case with me. For me writing has always been a matter of joy and a part of my very essence as a girl, an adolescent and later as a university student.

Two significant and formative memories occur to me when I think about writing. The first is from when I was 12 years old, in the sixth grade. I saw an announcement in a children’s newspaper about an essay contest for children. I’m not even sure which newspaper it was. It may have been *Mishmar Layeladim (The Children’s Guardian)* published by the Mapam United Workers Party. I had a subscription to this publication, not because of my parents’ political leanings but because our neighbor was the distributor of this newspaper in our town. Or perhaps it was *Ha’aretz Shelanu (Our Country)*, a publication I later subscribed to. In any case, I do not recall who sponsored the contest. Maybe it was the Ramat Gan municipality, where the ceremony was held to distribute the prizes for the best essays. Or perhaps it was some publisher, or even the Ministry of Education. In any case, I decided I should submit something I had written, because at age 12 I considered myself to be an excellent writer. I loved to write and evidently I was encouraged to do so at school. I submitted an essay to the contest and waited impatiently for the results. Finally a letter arrived from the organizers inviting me to the awards ceremony at a hall in Ramat Gan. The letter stated that the essays had been examined and evaluated, and only those worthy of a prize were invited to the ceremony. It further stated that three prizes would be awarded to the three outstanding essays among those deemed worthy. I lived in another city, and traveling to Ramat Gan was not a simple matter back then, when most travel was by public transportation. My father volunteered to accompany me on the bus to the event, which he considered to be especially important. While I was not awarded a prize, I saw this nationwide contest as a formative event that made me feel I had entered the “national league.”

When I was in the eighth grade, all students were tested to determine who would go on to study at an academic high school and who would go to a vocational school. Writing a composition was a major and important part of this test. I scored 100 on the test. What was significant about this was not the score itself, but rather the pride it gave my parents and me as well. One day my father elatedly told me that he had met one of the teachers from my school in the street. This teacher was quite well known and well respected in our city, and she told him that his daughter’s composition (that is, my composition) was especially good, particularly remarkable.

I loved to write, mainly the flow of my ideas during an interior monologue, my arguments and counter-claims. I did try my hand at creative writing, but less than other types of writing and usually after being motivated by some outside factor. For example, our school had a newspaper that published student writing. From time to time I wrote what today would be called op-ed pieces for this newspaper, of course on a level appropriate to elementary school students. When the newspaper

published serialized stories and asked students to take part, I was unable to pass up this opportunity and made my own contribution to the overall jigsaw puzzle of the story.

I expressed myself well. Without a doubt this helped me on exams. I particularly remember one case of a history test when I was in high school, in the eleventh or twelfth grade. The history teacher decided to be creative and asked the students to write an imaginary essay in which Ussishkin gives a speech at the Zionist Congress at the turn of the 20th century. The essay was to include Ussishkin's arguments and the claims against him. The ideas immediately began forming in my head and emerging, line by line, on the paper, one argument after the other, a complete story. A close friend sitting next to me was sweating and sighing, and out of the corner of my eye I saw that she hadn't managed to write very much at all. Today, in retrospect, I know that such an assignment is not suitable for all students and that just because someone cannot write a composition does not mean that he or she does not know the material. But back then, for me the assignment was very suitable. Indeed it was who I was!

I also loved to read. The municipal library and the school library were among my favorite places. The municipal library was close to my home and to get there I didn't even need to cross a street but simply to walk down a path designed for pedestrians only. I always made sure to be first in line when the library opened on Wednesdays, because on Tuesdays the library received and catalogued new books and therefore was closed to the public. I loved the new books – children's series, adventure books, stories about children from faraway lands. In books I traveled to Japan and Finland, to the United States and England, to India and China and other exotic places.

And then there were letters. Back then, before the computer age, people wrote letters to communicate with one another. The children's newspapers I mentioned as well as *Maariv Lanoar (Teen News)*, a publication geared to teenagers, had pen pal sections. I read these regularly and I collected friends from all over the world. In particular I remember a pen pal from Japan. She is immortalized in my memory through her charming photo in my childhood photo album – a short girl with slanted eyes dressed in a sailor shirt, standing in front of a flower garden against the backdrop of a Japanese house whose walls are covered with rows of windows. I was in seventh or eighth grade when I corresponded with her. I was already able to express myself in English, a language I studied at school, and I derived a great deal of pleasure from telling her about my life and learning about hers. I also corresponded with a girl in the United States, and during high school with a boy in Sweden. Years later, when I was in my first year of university, this boy came to Israel for a visit and I was quite embarrassed. In my letters I told him a great deal about my life, my friends, my thoughts and my dreams. I told him more than I told to meaningful others in my immediate surroundings. For me the paper tolerated everything and was very discreet because the letter was sent to someone who was far away and almost intangible. It was as if I was writing to myself, even though I did have a defined audience – my

pen pal. I was extremely embarrassed when he decided to come to Israel. I made every effort to keep our meeting short. That was the end of our relationship.

Today the computer has changed my life. Indeed it has changed my writing, my thinking, my ability to observe things and to present my thoughts. In effect, my writing can be divided into writing before the computer era and writing with a word processor. More than once it has seemed that when I sit in front of the computer, it actually helps me think. Indeed, the computer can be considered “the brain on the screen.” In the opening essay of his book *The Story Begins: Essays on Literature*, Amos Oz, an Israeli author, states that he was

staring at a single mocking blank page in the middle of an arid desk, like a crater on the face of the moon. Just me and emptiness and despair. Go make something out of nothing at all. (Oz, 1996)

For me, in contrast, the computer actually encourages thinking. And to write is to think. Or perhaps the opposite is true – I write, therefore I think: the ease in typing on the computer keyboard, the speed with which my fingers run in pace with my thoughts, the ability to preserve the word and to change it at will, immediately or after some time has gone by, this amazing ability of the computer to tolerate everything. You can make changes as you want, add or remove things, make up an entire world for others to see or for your eyes only. The computer is your intimate friend, the one that sees what is going on in your mind and helps you organize your thoughts.

One of the best gifts I ever gave myself was a course in touch typing. This was right after I arrived in the United States for a period of some years. I thought that before embarking on my doctoral studies it would be a good idea for me to learn touch typing. That was in the mid-1980s, when word processing was still in its infancy. I inquired in my neighborhood and found that a course in touch typing was being offered at the local high school. I signed up for the course and found myself studying with young women who probably needed to learn touch typing for secretarial work. The course was short and intensive, and at the end I was able to touch type. Of course my typing skills improved with practice. My fingers began running in pace with my thoughts, my writing flowed easily from my head to my hands to the keyboard to the screen and back again. I was also pleased that my children learned touch typing in elementary school in the United States. The school included this skill as part of the school curriculum. Indeed, I was impressed with the school’s basic assumption that touch typing would be beneficial to the children’s writing and learning. And in fact it was beneficial to them. But this story is not about them, but rather about me. When we came back to Israel, I was worried. I was an excellent touch typist in English, but what about in Hebrew, I wondered. I glued the Hebrew letters onto the keyboard, and after only a few days of practice, my fingers ran over the keys as rapidly and as skillfully as in English. My thoughts went from my brain to my hands to the keyboard to the screen and back again, only this time in Hebrew. Rapid typing, my fingers running together with my thoughts, the computer screen smiling at me – in Hebrew and in English: This is the way things are to this very day.

And I have yet to mention the pleasure I derive from holding a newly published book written by me or an article I wrote that just came out in an academic journal. Leafing through the pages of the book, smelling that new book scent enjoying the pleasurable feeling that these are my words, immortalized on these pages – this is the essence of “the power of preserving, the revenge of a mortal hand,” in the words of the poet Wisława Szymborska.

Looking back I can truthfully say that writing and I are inseparable. For as long as I can remember, writing has been a pleasurable, natural and inextricable part of my life. My sense of identity is therefore expressed in the following question posed by philosopher Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (Pinker, 2014):

What is it that makes a person the very person that she is, herself alone and not another, an integrity of identity that persists over time, undergoing changes and yet still continuing to be?

Indeed, is the writer’s identity part of what a person is? Is it part of his or her identity?

RESEARCH AND BOOK STRUCTURE

My personal history as a writer and my current work on language and literacy in academia have led me to seek to discover the nature of the literacy of academic scholars, of those engaged in the same field of interest that is the focus of my work: teacher education. In other words, I sought to discover the writer’s identity of academic scholars working in teacher education. In pursuing this quest, I conducted qualitative phenomenological research whose objective was to reveal the writer’s identity of teacher educators in academia and to discover how this identity is expressed in their teaching practice.

I interviewed twenty-three academic scholars, all of whom are engaged in teacher education and who work at colleges of education. The teacher educators I interviewed all were engaged in writing, whether it was academic writing as identified through publications in Hebrew and in English on academic publication forums, creative writing in the form of prose and poetry, or communicative writing as seen in blogs, journals and the like. The writers were identified through my acquaintance with lecturers at the college, an acquaintance stemming from my former position as person responsible for hiring new teachers at the college and my current position on various committees, among them the promotions committee which examines the curriculum vitae of the lecturers at the college.

The academic scholars who participated in the study are characterized by the following profile: 21 are women and two are men; two are associate professors and 21 hold doctoral degrees. The interviewees had an average of 29 years of teaching experience (ranging from 17 to 40 years) and an average of 16 years of experience teaching at a college of education (ranging from 4 to 25 years). Nineteen of the interviewees have tenure at the college of education where they work, two do not have tenure and two are retired. Their average age ranges from 50–60, with 18 over

the age of 50. Among those under the age of 50, one is under the age of 40. Most (21) did not study writing in any formal setting. Two studied writing formally. Most (21) identified themselves as people who write, and only two identified themselves at a midpoint between “write” and “do not write.” They all identified themselves as engaging in academic writing on a high level (5 – to a great extent) and in literary writing and personal writing on a low level (2 – very little). Most indicated that they do not engage in communicative or journalistic writing at all. A few also noted that they engage in another form of writing – learning materials and professional literature.

In the interviews I referred to three areas that interested me and that stemmed from the major research question I posed: sense of identity, use of writing in teaching and significance of writing for the writer. The relevant questions from the interview are as follows:

Sense of identity:

- What kind of writer are you?
 - Tell me about yourself as a writer. How have you developed?
 - What is the role of writing in your life?
 - What is different about your writing today than in the past?
 - Tell me about a meaningful/life-changing event related to your writing.

Use of writing in teaching:

- How do you use writing in your teaching? How does writing go along with your teaching?
- What role does writing play for the students in your courses?
- Is there a relationship between how you see writing in your own life and the role of writing in your teaching?

Significance of writing for the writer:

- What is the significance of the computer in your life as a writer?
- Is there anything I have not asked you that you would like to add about the role of writing in your personal or professional life?
- Finally, please label yourself as a literate individual who writes: what sort of literate individual are you?

The chapters of this book following this introductory chapter are based upon this research and are organized according to central themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews: perceptions of writing, the role of writing in the writer’s life, the self as writer, writing and teaching.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical background for the research. It describes writing and the reasons people write, introduces the state of writing in the world and in Israel, presents types of writing and discusses writing and identity.

Chapter Three contains the complete and processed narratives of six of the interviewees. These six narratives highlight the identity of the scholar writer in

academia. They were chosen as representative of the other narratives and also because of the interesting content of each of them. Each of these narratives was processed by me and is presented differently than the raw material of the interview itself. The narratives also include my interpretations. The spirit of each interview is preserved, as is the content. Each narrative description was submitted to the writer for his or her response and approval of the written version. This style of returning the written story to the interviewee is customary in qualitative research and therefore was adopted in this case as well. The writers willingly approved publication of their narratives and noted their major interest in the texts. Here are some of their comments: “You really touched me! You stressed things that are truly important to me and you did an excellent job understanding and interpreting my words, feelings and understanding.” “It’s interesting to be on the other side, that of the participant in the research narrative and not the one examining the narrative. The narrative is multifaceted and calls for further thought in this area, and the additional interpretation further sharpens my reflective processes.” Two of the six asked to revise a particular point in the text, and the revisions were made as they requested. In addition, all the names of the interviewees were kept confidential, and every effort was made to avoid personal information that would identify the interviewees. For example, details that might identify the interviewee were deleted from the quotations or the narratives, such as the interviewee’s specific job or area of specialization.

Chapters Four through Seven describe the writer’s identity as it emerges from the stories of the writers, each through a different lens: the lens of perception of writing, the lens of the role of writing in the writer’s life, the lens of the self as a writer and a literate individual, and the lens of writing and teaching.

Chapter Eight focuses on the interplay between the writers’ writing workspace and their behavior as they write. It describes the writing workspace as physical, panoramic and metaphysical. The writers’ behavior emerges as rhizomatic and as inseparable from their view of their writing workspace.

Chapter Nine, the final chapter, describes the identity of the writer through the lenses and beyond the lenses. The chapter refers mainly to the nature of the writer’s identity in both the writer’s personal and professional life, an identity comprising cognition as well as emotions, sense as well as sensitivity. It discusses the importance of the research and its implications for other areas as well, among them literacy, education and society and the designing of programs to foster writing in various educational settings.