

**LITERACY ACROSS BOUNDARIES:  
WRITING PRACTICES OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN  
THEIR TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

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A mi papá, por estar conmigo en cada paso

A mi pajarito de la mañana, luz de toda mi casa, Matilde

A Pablo, por su incansable ternura

## AUTHOR STATEMENT

I hereby declare that the research presented in this thesis is entirely my own work. During the course of this research, I have co-authored the articles included here with my supervisor, Karin Tusting. In each of these articles, I took primary responsibility for drafting the manuscripts and refining them into their final form, incorporating Karin's feedback and editing suggestions. Therefore, I claim the primary authorship of these publications.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Research background and context**

Higher education globally has faced significant changes in terms of expansion and diversification. In the last twenty years in the UK, there has been a major increase in the number of enrolments, but also a greater diversity within students' population in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education/Dearing Report 1997 in Lillis, 2001). In Latin America similar processes have taken place. Notably, in Chile a study with national educational data from 1990 to 2009 concluded that there was a rise in enrolments of females, ethnic minorities, and low-economic-background students (Espinoza & González, 2013). This growth is in part due to the implementation of equity-oriented admission programs (Santelices, Horn & Catalán, 2019) and to the “free education act”, a national policy which establishes that higher education is free for every student in the five lower income deciles (Guzmán-Concha, 2017).

In this scenario, transitions to university have become a relevant issue for research and practice. In particular, it has been recognized that higher education is responsible for promoting the participation and inclusion of students with different histories, learning paths, and talents. When universities do not provide a space for diversity, a double phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion occurs (Ezcurra, 2011): the doors are opened to new students, but they are not given real opportunities to contribute, get involved, and participate. In other words, they are not granted the chance to have a full voice in the conversation (Bazerman, 2017). Consequently, transitions into higher education have been supported to guarantee

smoother passages to the university culture and practices. Many of these support efforts focus on academic literacy as a key tool for ensuring participation of students from different backgrounds (Ávila, González & Peñaloza, 2013; Moyano & Giudice, 2016; Montes & Vidal Lizama, 2017).

In this context, *non-traditional students* – those previously excluded from higher education because of their class, race or ethnicity (Lillis, 2001) – may have gone through different previous educational trajectories and may have experienced different socially-shaped literacy practices than traditional ones, particularly in Chile where primary and secondary education remains extremely unequal and segregated (García Huidobro, 2007; Valenzuela, Bellei & De los Ríos, 2010; OCDE, 2013). Those formal and informal writing practices could be in tension with academic disciplinary literacies. Even though academic writing demands at the university are commonly unfamiliar and challenging for every newcomer (Carlino, 2005; 2013; Sánchez & Montes, 2017), they could be especially demanding for those coming from historically marginalized cultural and social environments.

Research has shown that students from economically deprived contexts have rich and varied experiences with literacy (Ávila et al. 2021c; Ávila et al. 2023), but these experiences may not resonate with academic writing. Ivanič et al. (2007) show that vernacular writing practices tend to be collaborative, agentic, multimedia, and nonlinear, among other characteristics, which differs from the essayistic writing (Lillis, 2001) widespread in higher education. There is still little research looking at how non-traditional students transition to academic writing practices and particularly observing to what extent they can harness (using Ivanič' 2009 et al. terms) their vernacular literacies and school-based literacies to face

academic writing challenges. To fill this gap, this research explores writing practices during transitions of non-traditional students entering university via equity-oriented admission programs in Chile.

### **What is transition?**

Transitions can be broadly described as shifts from one context to another, but also as changes regarding social roles and identities (Ecclestone et al., 2010). Some understandings of transitions have focused on induction into new academic institutions (Jansen, André & Suhre, 2013; Kift, 2009). Others have focused on how identity shifts from one context to another (Lam & Pollard, 2006; Worth, 2009). From recent research and theory, transitions have been understood as more fluid processes by the approach labelled as *transition as becoming* (Gale & Parker, 2014) or *life as transition* (Colley, 2007). From this perspective, transitions cannot be described as shifts from one homogeneous and stable context to another. On the contrary, transitioning is a permanent condition of people's lives, especially in times of greater grades of flexibility in individuals' trajectories (Ecclestone, 2009). From this approach, identity is understood as a non-unitary construct. Such an understanding acknowledges that people incorporate multiple identities as they navigate "multiple narratives and subjectivities" (Gale & Parker, 2014, p. 738).

An understanding of *transition as becoming* acknowledges the fluidity of peoples' movements throughout contexts, roles and identities and the dynamic and varied range of transitions people go through, such as the transitions in and out and throughout university or in and out and throughout formal education, among others. These more flexible and cyclical trajectories are habitual, especially for people commonly non-represented in mainstream

educational paths. This is the case of the closure and opening cycles experienced by Kurdish women refugees entering and leaving formal education as described by Mojab (2006) and analysed by Colley (2007; 2010). It was also the case for working-class and first-generation students interviewed by Quinn et al. (2005), who dropped out of university before completion but who mainly expressed their desire to return to university. To better understand less well-off students' transitions, it is crucial to consider social factors that could lead to more fragmented experiences with university and with transitions more broadly. For instance, some of the students from Quinn et al.'s study left the university because of the economic situation of their families or as a result of working to pay for their studies.

### **Transition, writing and identity**

From this perspective, it also seems central to take into consideration how students commonly participate in different social domains such as work, home, and university and how they negotiate different identities across domains. We will understand that writing is a powerful tool for shaping and re-shaping those identities in transition. Thus, I will rely on Ivanič's (1998; 2010) concepts of *autobiographical self*, to refer to the writers' sense of their own roots and life story; *discoursal self*, as the impressions writers convey of themselves – their values, beliefs and worldviews – through discursive choices; and *authorial self*, the presence of the writer as an author in their texts.

Writing has been frequently studied as a decontextualized cognitive skill, within what has been called the *skills discourse of writing and learning to write* (Ivanič, 2004). It has been measured and observed within specific moments, isolated from its context and from the continuous flow of experience, with its complexities, interactions, and permanent movements

and changes. However, recent developments in writing studies (Smith, 2020; Tusting et al. 2018) have emphasized that a more complex understanding of writing practices should be considered, taking into account not just the features of writing practices in one specific context but the ways in which writing dynamically changes and evolves across time and contexts.

### **Writing as social practice across contexts**

Studying writing throughout the lifespan is an approach to writing as a social practice in permanent development. It involves what Smith (2020) describes as an "across" perspective that assumes that writing, as well as writers, artifacts, and social practices, are in constant motion. Smith & Prior (2020) propose that understanding writing as dynamics in permanent becoming should lead the researcher to consider not only writing in a particular context and time but also through different spaces, times, and materials. From a similar point of view, Tusting et al. (2018) argue for the value of adopting a *New Literacy Studies* (NLS) perspective on research in writing development across the lifespan. From an NLS perspective, writing is understood as a social practice embedded in a broader social context, power relationships, and historical dynamics (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). In order to explore writing across the lifespan, working with an empirical approach to literacy, using methodologies that allow us to understand people's experiences and perspectives and to explore what people do with literacy in their lives is central (Tusting et al., 2018).

However, there are few studies regarding transitional literacy experiences across different curricular moments. Several works regarding students' academic writing have been developed in the Anglo-Saxon world (Lillis & Scott, 2007; Street, 1995; Hyland, 2004;

Swales, 1990) and in Latin America (Moyano, 2014; Navarro; 2014; Ávila Reyes, Calle-Arango & Léniz, 2021; Navarro & Montes, 2021). However, longitudinal studies that follow students' writing practices from school to university are less common. Some studies have explored writing practices during the transition from secondary education to higher education in the US or the UK (Harklau, 2001; Ruecker, 2014; Nordquist, 2017; Baker, 2018), but similar studies in Latin America are limited or non-existent, and studies with non-traditional students are even more scarce. In this regard, Ávila Reyes et al. (2021) developed a longitudinal study for three years with university students and found that students' conceptions about their academic writing change and increase in complexity over time. Uribe Gajardo et al. (2022) explored students' writing experiences throughout three stages in the higher education curriculum: access, transition, and graduation. They found that students perceive a lack of support with their writing across levels and develop self-sponsored strategies to face writing demands. These studies constitute an essential contribution to understand writing development across time, however, they focus exclusively on academic writing, without looking at transitions across writing practices from different domains and their interactions. Moreover, they are situated exclusively at the university level. In this vein, Bazerman (2013) points out, research on writing tends to be concentrated in school or university but not across different curricular stages. More recently, Smith (2020) states that: "research centering writing development that crosses times and spaces are [*sic.*] rare" (p. 17). In this regard, I will address this gap by exploring students' transitions across writing practices in their trajectory from school to university. Following *New Literacy Studies*, I will focus on *writing events* in terms of the participants, settings, artifacts, and activities involved (Hamilton, 2000) and the identities and values (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010) they rely on. I will observe the continuities and discontinuities of these writing practices across transitions and

explore how they contribute to enhance or restrict students' participation in higher education.

### **About this research: thesis by publications, research aim and overview**

#### *Why did I pursue a thesis by publications?*

When I began my PhD, I already had some experience publishing research articles in peer-reviewed journals, but limited experience as a first author and academic writer in English. In this context, pursuing a PhD based on a collection of publishable articles was an opportunity to gain experience in academic publication by strengthening my own voice and confidence in academic writing in English within a genre that I was already familiar with. Writing independently, but with the mentorship and guidance of an experienced researcher like Karin Tusting, was, in fact, a rich learning experience. I benefited greatly from Karin's expertise while also having the space to explore my own voice and research interests as an independent author. At the same time, writing my thesis by publications was an opportunity to strengthen my academic CV and being able to access better opportunities in the Chilean academia, where academic journal papers are particularly valued.

#### *How did I construct my thesis as a collection of publishable articles?*

I have organised my PhD research as a research project whose main objective is to understand how writing practices change and unfold throughout the transition from school to university, from the perspective of non-traditional first-generation students in Chile. I structured my research in three stages: 1) a literature review, 2) a school-level cross-sectional study, and 3) a longitudinal study.

The *literature review stage* was completed during the first year of my PhD (20/21). It focused on the concept of transition and on empirical research about writing during the transition from school to higher education. In addition, I explored the implications of transition theories in Lifespan Writing Methodologies. From this last inquiry, I developed a book chapter about writing in transitions in collaboration with Karin Tusting published by WAC Clearinghouse (Montes & Tusting, 2024).

The *school level-cross sectional study* was developed during the second year of my PhD (21/22) and part of my third year (22/23). It encompasses the data collected with 13 students attending secondary school. Hence, this phase is focused on school writing practices and their interactions with vernacular writing during the last year of secondary school.

For the *longitudinal study*, I attempted to retain this group of 11 students I interviewed while they were in secondary education with relative success: 9 of them continued their participation in the study. I invited two more students attending their first year of university to supplement my data and conducted repeated interviews (2 while participants were attending secondary school and 2 when they were attending university). Altogether, these studies will allow me to better understand students' writing transitions across domains and educational stages.

*Thesis by publication overview*

I present an overview of each paper that comprises my PhD thesis below.

Table 1. Thesis by publication overview

Stage	Paper title	Status	Research questions
Phase 1: Literature review	Writing In Transitions From School To University: What Do We Know From Research And Theory?	Not submitted for publication	How has transition to higher education been conceptualized in writing research in the last twenty years?
	Writing In Transitions Across The Lifespan	Published as book chapter Full Reference: Montes, S. & Tusting, K. (2024) In R. Dippre & T. Phillips. (2024). <i>Improvisations: Methods and Methodologies in Lifespan Writing Research</i> . The WAC Clearinghouse. University Press of Colorado. <a href="https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2024.2289">https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2024.2289</a>	What are the methodological implications for Lifespan Writing Research of conceptualizing transition as becoming?
Phase 2: School level-cross sectional study	“Writing Is Like A Wide Universe Where You Can Express Yourself”: Exploring Identity, Agency And Meaning In Secondary School Students’ Writing Practices	Submitted to <i>Literacy Research and Instruction</i> , peer reviewed positively but not accepted for publication. Alternative journal suggested by editor. Seeking alternative publication venue.	How do secondary school students describe writing practices that hinder identity work and agency? How do students describe writing practices that support their identity work and agency? How does students’ identity work unfold across domains?
Phase 3: School to University-longitudinal study	Dynamic Becomings In The Transition To University: Experiences Of Non-Traditional Students Across Contexts And Writing Practices	Published as a journal article Full reference: Montes, S. & Tusting (2024). Dynamic Becomings in the Transition to University: Experiences of Non-traditional Students across Contexts and Writing Practices. <i>Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura (RLEE)</i> , 1(1), 78-98. DOI: 10.37514/RLE-J.2024.1.1.05	How students from marginalized backgrounds experience changes in writing practices and social roles as they transition from high school to university?

Apart from these papers, I developed a methodological essay in which I reflect on the methods I used for researching writing practices longitudinally and across contexts. I displayed this methodological article first in this thesis, to give the readers a more detailed account of the methodological approach and methods I followed throughout the papers presented here. This methodological paper is currently under peer review to be published as a book chapter.

### *About authorship*

The articles included in this document were submitted or will be submitted for publication, co-authored by Karin Tusting. As my supervisor, Karin played a pivotal role in supporting me to explore, discuss, and reflect on research questions, methodologies, data interpretation, and the ideas that emerged throughout my PhD process. In other words, she made it possible to develop my thesis through dialogue, exchange of ideas and triangulation in data analysis. Supervision from Karin was key for having an external point of view throughout my thinking and research processes and helped me to keep myself accountable at various stages of my thesis. It also helped me to be aware of possible biases or interpretations that were not sufficiently grounded in the data.

Karin's supervision style was consistently dialogic rather than directive, which was critical to me as it helped me to feel agentic, responsible and independent in my research process. In our frequent meetings, I always felt that she positioned me as an author rather than as a novice learner. This approach made it very easy to me to deal with the well-documented tension in PhD researchers between being expected to be students who are still learning and being independent scholars developing an academic voice at the same time. As a co-author, Karin contributed to each of the articles presented here by providing detailed

feedback on the first, second, and third drafts (and sometimes more), and by helping me to refine the final versions prior to submission.

As the main author of the collection of papers presented in this document, I was responsible for formulating the research questions, developing the paper ideas, drafting each article, and positioning myself in relation to the concepts and theories encountered in the literature. I also carried out the data analysis and interpretation. Each article went through multiple cycles of drafting, revision, and refinement, during which I received and incorporated feedback from Karin. Even though I drafted and wrote the articles myself, I used the first-person plural in each of them to reflect the collaboration and dialogue with Karin that shaped them. Finally, as English is not my first language, I occasionally used AI tools to revise my writing. In particular, I employed Grammarly or alternatively ChatGPT to refine the clarity, flow, and grammatical accuracy of specific paragraphs of my thesis when I considered improvements necessary. These tools were never used to generate content or drafts, but solely to enhance the phrasing of selected passages.

METHODOLOGICAL PAPER (AN OVERVIEW OF MY METHODOLOGY) |  
RESEARCHING LITERACIES ACROSS TIME AND CONTEXTS

**Abstract**

Ethnography has long been a key methodological tool in the study of literacy as social practice (Barton & Papen, 2010). However, sustained engagement in *one* site – a key ethnographic principle (Lillis, 2008; Tusting, 2019) – is not enough to understand people’s experiences with writing across contexts. How we can research writing practices as they change over time and across settings remains a central question at a time where mobility, change and life course transitions are pervasive, dynamic and varied, including those across educational settings (Ecclestone et al. 2010; Montes & Tusting, 2024a). Drawing on research with Chilean students in their transition from secondary school to higher education (Montes & Tusting, 2024b), in this chapter we explore methodological tools for researching writing practices longitudinally and across contexts. We will discuss the use of talk around texts (Lillis, 2008), literacy history interviews (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000) and text artefacts in repeated conversations to understand how writing changes as young people move between institutional and non-formal contexts. These tools allow researchers to explore both material and non-material aspects of writing as a social practice.

## Introduction

Researching literacy as social practice is an act of making meaning from the scraps of people's practices and the social events mediated through texts they engage with in different domains. In ethnography, this has translated into long *in situ* engagement in the research site to capture people's practices on a daily basis, recording textual artefacts, conversations, people's perceptions, discourses and values, people's actions and activities and the identities they construct through them. However, these already complex practices are not situated in one isolated context. Human praxis is distributed across a range of different settings - work, home, school, town .... And now, more than ever before, people transition between places, social statuses, countries and jobs, making practices diverse, dynamic and subject to change.

As others have suggested, research has rarely paid attention to writing across times and spaces (Prior & Smith, 2020; Smith, 2020). However, writing practices are more than ever dispersed across times and spaces and laminated in complex networks with other activities and practices (Roozen and Erickson, 2017; Prior & Schaffner, 2011). This chapter explores some methodological challenges of studying literacies as social practice over time and across contexts. It discusses the complexities of studying literacy and change in the context of this increasingly dynamic world. We will reflect on methodology and methods for studying lifecourse transitions – defined as changes of contexts and social roles over time (Ecclestone, 2009) – from a literacy as social practice perspective. This analysis is informed by New Literacy Studies (Barton et al., 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995), Lifespan Writing Research (Dippre & Philips, 2020; Smith, 2020) and Transition Studies

(Ecclestone, 2009; Ecclestone et al., 2010), and driven by our reflections from a research project on one life transition in particular: moving from school to university.

While there are studies on teenage literacy practices inside and out of school (Vetter et al. 2021), as well as research on academic writing in the first year of university (Ávila et al., 2021; Gourlay, 2009; Roozen, 2021), there are very few studies looking at the process of transitioning between these different settings. There might be both epistemological and methodological reasons for this. Epistemologically speaking, research on the transition from school to university tends to understand this phenomenon as primarily located in the first year, encapsulating a complex social phenomenon within a specific and delimited space-time. From a methodological point of view, exploring transitions by following a group of students from secondary school to university involves the strong possibility of participants' attrition over time, as they are going through challenging life transitions. In this context, finding methods that allow constant interaction without overloading participants is crucial. Moreover, if—as in our case—the transition to university is examined within the broader context of participants' multiple life domains, then maintaining sustained presence in a single research site or shadowing (Jirón, 2011) participants is not always feasible.

The research on which this chapter is based focuses on the writing practices of eleven students from economically deprived neighbourhoods in Chile throughout their transition from secondary school to higher education, spanning 17 months. We conducted repeated interviews with the participants, 40 in total, and collected artefacts (texts, notes, drawings, etc.) from their literacy life. We discussed these artefacts with them following a talk-around-text method (Lillis, 2008) and we attempted to understand the broader biographical context of our participants through literacy history interviews (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998;

Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000). We will reflect on how this methodological approach helped us to understand students' multilevel transitions, from school to non-academic settings, from school to work, and from secondary school to university.

### **Literacies as social practice and the multiple domains of literacy**

Writing practices from a New Literacy Studies perspective (Gee, 2000) – *literacy studies* from hereon – are conceptualised as something that people do with reading and writing in specific contexts as they participate in different domains throughout their life (Barton & Hamilton, 1998/2003). This approach originated in the 1980s, alongside critical discourse analysis, and was influenced by critical theory and the recognition of structures of dominance and dominant ideologies in society (Freire, 2005/1970; Duboc & Ferraz, 2018). Influenced by these theories, literacy studies acknowledge both material and discursive dimensions to literacy practices. Practices are mediated by tools and material objects and shaped by the material conditions of their production, but also have a non-material dimension: the discourses, values, ideologies and social roles that they sustain and construct.

These last components of literacy practices (roles, subject positions, values, etc.) are linked to how people experience reading and writing in a given context, which is intrinsically interwoven with the material aspects of literacy. Identifying these different dimensions of literacy practices reinforces a view of such practices as highly complex phenomena. Analysing literacy means analysing a range of aspects at the same time, some directly observable, others that we cannot observe directly but which are signalled through meaning-making resources and language (Table 1, from Satchwell and Ivanič 2009).

Table 1. Aspects of Literacy Practices from Satchwell & Ivanič (2009)

<b>Aspects of literacy practices</b>
Roles and Subject-positions inscribed in the practice
Values associated with the practice
Participants
Audience
Purpose
Text-type
Artefact
Medium
Mode
Content
Activity
Place
Time/Duration

The complexity of literacy practices foregrounded by literacy studies is in notable contrast to a skill perspective on literacy, predominant in the 1980s and still considerably influential now, particularly in educational policy and public opinion (Tusting et al., 2018). From this perspective, reading and writing are cognitive skills that can be measured to represent a person's writing competence as a whole, independently of the context in which they are writing or the purpose they are writing for. This homogeneous construct normally represents *institutionally valued literacies* intended for learning and demonstrating learning in educational contexts (Ivanič et al., 2009) and neglects other vernacular or non-hegemonic forms of reading and writing that exist in people's everyday lives.

In contrast, the literacy as social practice approach is situated in the activities in which people are involved in their everyday life across domains. The concept of domain is critical in literacy studies, but at the same time, it adds a new layer of complexity to the notion of context/research site. Traditionally, ethnographers studied these different domains and the literacy practices within them through sustained engagement in one site, such as the classroom or the workplace. This immersive experience seemed the best way to capture what people do with reading and writing in concrete situations and to observe different elements of the practice at the same time (participants, artefacts, place, time, etc.). However, as some research has already noted (Roozen, 2021; Montes & Tusting, 2024b), people do not only spend time in one setting but also move across different life domains.

Since these transitions across context and life domains are more pervasive nowadays (Ecclestone et al., 2010), it becomes relevant to capture how people experience this movement and make sense of their diverse literacy practices in the context of their life as a whole. This is an enormous methodological challenge, and it is likely a task that can only be achieved through the orchestration of research efforts. To start moving in this direction, we need a solid understanding of how people move across context and social roles. In other words, it is critical to understand the phenomenon of transition.

### **Transitions in writing through the lifespan**

When someone engages with other people and artefacts in a context that is new for them, occupying new social positions, roles and identities, they are experiencing a transition (Ecclestone, 2009; Ecclestone, 2010). Such changes of context, role and identity occur many

times throughout our lives. Examples include migrating to a new country, starting a new job or retiring.

Some transitions are socially represented as recognisable life events, with social expectations attached; for instance, the idea that there is a certain age for retirement or for starting a university degree. However, transitions are becoming less predictable and more diverse (Ecclestone et al., 2010; Riley & Riley, 1994), and people have more agency to define when to begin them – for instance, someone could decide to start a university degree in middle age rather than after secondary school. Ecclestone et al. (2009) emphasize that transitions are both partially determined by social structure and social expectations and subject to people's agency.

Transitions into higher education are becoming more difficult to reduce to a single universal representation. Widening participation has diversified both the student body and their transition experiences. Policies frequently depict one type of transition, while what we have in reality is a wide diversity of transitional experiences shaped by social constraints (Quinn, 2009). For instance, working-class students are less likely to enter traditional courses such as medicine. Ethnic minorities rarely enter elite universities, and when they do, they transition into highly white institutions (Connor et al. 2004 in Quinn, 2009).

Researchers have criticised linear and time-bound understandings of transition to university, depicted as a process in which students need to overcome deficits and gain cultural capital to “fit in’ with prevailing institutional norms and practices” (Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018, p.1255). Such an understanding overlooks the rich, diverse, and valuable previous experiences and knowledge that students bring with them, including the vernacular literacies

with which they have engaged in various contexts, such as participation in political movements, online communities, or personal ventures.

Very often in transition, previous knowledge is neglected, because transition itself is represented as a process of enculturation into a new context, as a process in which people move from one homogenous – and many times stereotyped – identity to another. Mojab (2006) studied Kurdish women transitioning from political and community-based education experiences to formal education in Sweden, Canada and Britain. In this transition – a product of political struggles and humanitarian crisis – most of their previous knowledge was not valued. They were constructed as refugees needing empathy, while what they really needed was, as one says, “a forum, a space, to tell them as an illiterate woman, under the condition of suppression of my government, how I mobilized, gathered women, recruited them for the national cause; how I self-taught myself reading and writing in order to be able to read the political literature; how I learn to manage a large community of youth, support them, give them hope in life, and inspire them for a better life in future. Here in Sweden, they think I know nothing.” (Mojab, 2006, p. 168.)

In transitions to university with first-generation students, there is a similar reductionist representation of the transitioning individual which encapsulates them in just one deficit identity and neglects the various domains of life in which they participate, building complex and multifaceted identities. Recent approaches have rejected such a view and called for recognising people’s various approaches to social participation and identities. Amundsen (2021) shows how indigenous Maori students experience transition into university as a process encompassing family, work, leisure and university demands. In our research with first-generation Chilean students, we also observed that our participants engage

with a wide variety of leisure, work or community-based activities while transitioning into higher education (Montes & Tusting, 2024). Such studies foreground how the transition to university also entails meso-level transitions across different life domains, and at the same time acknowledge the diversity of contexts where people engage and construct identities and knowledge.

In assuming that individuals interact with the world in a variety of settings, where they construct diverse identities and situated knowledge that are not necessarily isolated, but integrated in individuals' life experience as a whole, we emphasise the need to develop methods that allow us to observe these across-context movements and how people construct their literacy life throughout time and domains.

### **The study: non-traditional students transitioning from school to university in Chile**

#### *Research context*

Higher education around the world has undergone notable transformations marked by both expansion and increased diversification. In the UK there has been a substantial rise in student enrolment figures, accompanied by greater heterogeneity in the student body with respect to gender, ethnicity, and age over the past two decades (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education/Dearing Report 1997, cited in Lillis, 2001). A comparable trend has been observed in Latin America. In Chile, data from 1990 to 2009 revealed a growing presence of women, ethnic minorities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education institutions (Espinoza & González, 2013). The increase in enrollments of students from marginalised backgrounds can be partially attributed to the development of equity-focused admission policies (Santelices, Horn &

Catalán, 2019), as well as to the implementation of the “free education act,” a public policy that guarantees tuition-free access to higher education for students belonging to the lowest five income deciles (Guzmán-Concha, 2017). These measures aimed to address the marked educational inequalities and segregation in the country (García Huidobro, 2007; Valenzuela, Bellei & De los Ríos, 2010; OECD, 2013), showing a shift towards human-rights reforms in education in Chile (Zancajo & Valiente, 2019) that can be traced back to 2014.

The study underpinning this chapter explores the experiences of Chilean students who transition from secondary education to higher education through an equity-based access programme. This initiative offers an alternative pathway to university for students from low-income families who do not meet the required scores in admission tests but are academically outstanding within their own contexts. The participants of this study attended public schools in Chile that had been classified as highly vulnerable by the Ministry of Education, with an Educational Vulnerability Index (Correa et al., 2019) of 80% or higher, meaning at least eight out of ten students were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. In this context, our participants’ experiences give insight into those of many first-generation students who were supported by relatively new human rights-oriented policies. Consequently, the ways they experience transitions into university –and its writing practices– may be new to traditional higher education institutions designed for elite students. Exploring these historically underrepresented students’ experiences requires an openness to observe how particular material and socio-historical constraints may shape their transitions into university.

### *Main researcher role, responsibilities, and labour*

This study was designed and carried out as part of the first author's doctoral research, and it relied substantially on her sustained labour across all phases of the project—from research design to multilingual data processing to writing. In this section I, Soledad Montes, main researcher and first author, will describe my work and the ways I collaborated with Karin Tusting, the second author, throughout the development of my thesis research.

I developed the research design and data collection plan, including the longitudinal structure of repeated interviews across the transition from secondary school to higher education, and the integration of literacy history interviews, talk-around-text conversations, and participant-selected artefacts. This design required anticipating both the ethical and practical constraints of working with students during a demanding transition period, including the likelihood of attrition and the need to minimize participant burden while still producing rich longitudinal data.

Building contact with participants was also a key component of my work. Recruitment involved identifying and approaching potential participants through appropriate institutional and community channels, communicating the aims and conditions of participation clearly, and establishing trust in a context where students' time is often under pressure. I maintained ongoing communication with participants over the course of 17 months, coordinating interviews at times that were feasible for them, adapting to their shifting circumstances, and ensuring that participation remained voluntary and ethically supported throughout.

I collected the full dataset, including organizing, conducting, and documenting the interviews, and gathering and managing the artefacts shared by participants (texts, notes, photographs of writing, and other materials). I conducted all interviews myself, including the repeated interviews with the longitudinal cohort and the interviews with the additional participants recruited later to enrich the dataset. Conducting these interviews involved not only following an interview schedule but also developing “long conversations” in which participants could reconstruct literacy events, explain the meanings of their texts, and articulate changes in their practices across time and settings.

A substantial portion of my labour lay in data preparation. I transcribed the interview recordings and managed the organisation of transcripts and associated artefacts for analysis. Given that the interviews were conducted in Spanish and the thesis is written primarily in English, I also carried out translation work at multiple stages. This included translating interview extracts for analytic writing and for inclusion in thesis chapters and article manuscripts, as well as making decisions about when to preserve features of vernacular language and when to prioritize clarity for an English-medium academic readership. Translation was therefore not treated as a mechanical post-hoc step, but as part of the research process that required ongoing interpretive judgement. Moreover, translating excerpts was needed at different stages of the research when I needed to discuss the analysis with the second author, for instance, to triangulate the interpretation of a specific portion of data.

I managed the secure storage and organization of research materials, including pseudonymization and encrypted data handling. Across the study, my responsibilities involved developing the study design and design refinement, sustaining participant

engagement, carefully handling data and engaging in repeated conversations with the second author to reflect on data interpretation and to discuss research decisions.

Finally, I took the lead in conceptualising the papers arising from the study and in writing the manuscripts that make up this thesis by publication. This involved identifying the key theoretical and empirical contributions of the dataset, developing the central arguments of each paper, selecting and analysing relevant data excerpts, and drafting and revising the manuscripts through multiple iterations. While the second author contributed through discussion, feedback, and collaborative reflection at different stages, responsibility for the overall intellectual direction, argumentation, and written production of the papers rested with me.

### *Participants*

Our participants were eleven students from economically disadvantaged contexts. When we first contacted them, they were enrolled in public schools in Santiago, the capital of Chile, in their final year of secondary school. All came from families in which the parents did not possess a university degree and studied in schools located in low-income urban or semi-urban areas. At the time of recruitment, six were enrolled in academically oriented schools, while five attended vocational institutions. Although both school types share a common curriculum during the initial two years of secondary school, vocational schools offer specialised work-oriented training during the final two years, from age 16. In Chile's deeply segregated education system (Bellei et al., 2018), approximately 65% of students from the lowest income quintiles are enrolled in vocational schools (Sevilla, 2012).

Nine of our initial eleven students continued their participation in this study through their first year at university. To enrich our data, we contacted two additional participants who, at the time of our initial outreach, were pursuing a university degree. Like the original nine, they had entered through an inclusion program and shared similar backgrounds.

Recruitment was carried out via email (see Appendix 1). Potential participants received written information (see Appendix 3) and a short video (see Appendix 6) explaining the study's purpose, participation conditions, and data protection measures. Consent procedures included both participant consent and, when relevant, consent from legal guardians (when participants were underage) (see Appendix 4 and 5). Personal data was securely stored in encrypted folders, and pseudonyms were assigned to protect participants' identities.

### *Study Design, instruments and data analysis*

Data collection spanned 17 months. For the nine students we followed longitudinally, two interviews were conducted during secondary school (August–October 2021) and two more during their first year at university (July–August 2022 and November–December 2022). The two students who were enrolled in a university at the time of our first contact were interviewed twice (October, then November–December 2022). In total, 40 interviews were completed. Additionally, follow-up WhatsApp conversations were held with four participants until March 2023 to clarify interview details.

We used *literacy history interviews* (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998, 2000) to explore life and literacy-related experiences and *talking around text interviews* (Ávila Reyes, 2021;

Lillis, 2001, 2008) to discuss writing practices using student-selected texts (see Appendix 2). A total of 56 texts were collected, which served as prompts for conversation about participants' writing practices in school and university.

Data analysis followed a qualitative, iterative coding approach. Initial notes taken during interviews were transformed into preliminary categories. NVivo software was used to refine these categories, develop operational definitions, and ensure coding consistency. Two rounds of constant comparative analysis were conducted (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), allowing categories to evolve and become more robust (See section 12 in Tables and Images Index). Codes were then connected to theoretical frameworks, previous research, and researcher memos. In our analysis, we made an intentional effort to keep close to the data following principles of rhizomatic analysis (Taylor & Harris Evans, 2018; Amundsen, 2021; Montes & Tusting, 2024), which emphasize “a way of working with data in its nuances, differences, singularities, contradictions and difficulties” (Taylor & Harris Evans, 2018, p. 1257). This was particularly useful considering that our participants represent a group of students who were historically underrepresented. Consequently, their transition experiences were relatively unexplored.

### *Encountering multi-level transitions*

As we reported in Montes & Tusting (2024), students engage with a wide variety of academic and self-sponsored writing practices during their secondary school years. They responded to multiple choice exams in school assessments, designed mind maps to study for a school subject, and wrote summaries of school-sponsored reading, but also communicated with peers through messaging, explored their creativity through poems or fictional writing, documented their experience through diary writing or wrote video game reviews. Our

participants' engagement in these practices changes over time as they transition from school to university. The variety of these writing experiences narrows down as they focus primarily on academic writing and new learning challenges at university. However, they still harnessed what they had learnt in other settings to face academic writing demands, which shows that vernacular writing practices can function as what Ivanič et al. (2009) coined as *border literacies*, those reading and writing practices from students' everyday lives that "are, or have the potential to be, situated in the educational domain, and may therefore be mobilized to support students' learning" (p. 22). This finding foregrounds the idea that these dynamic, ubiquitous and multi-level transitions students experience are connecting different domains of life, as these students bring their literate experiences from different contexts into their present, wherever that present is unfolding.

We explored literacy experiences across some of these transitions by using a combination of methods that allowed us to observe change across time and settings. Even though we did not directly observe some of the material aspects of literacy practices (particularly activities, spaces, etc.) as they change across contexts and times, we collected artefacts to explore those literacy events where they emerged and paid attention to the material aspects that participants could reconstruct by discussing these artefacts. We also explored the non-material aspect of literacy: the identities that are constructed through it, and the role they play in the broader framework of people's lives. In the next section, we will expand on our methodological orientations and methods for exploring literacy practices across time and contexts, that is, across transitions.

## **Methodology and Methods for Researching Writing Practices in Transitions**

As we have discussed above, studying writing practices across contexts is challenging in many ways. Literacy studies have tended to use ethnography to directly observe people's everyday life uses of literacy *in situ* and “engag[e] with them to understand their perspectives and experiences” (Tusting et al. 2018, p. 403). Such an approach, implying a “sustained engagement in a particular site” (Hammersley, 1994, 2006 in Lillis, 2008, p. 358) and a focus on “a single setting or group of relatively small scale; or a small number of these” (p. 358), allows researchers to observe the practice as it unfolds in real life, with all its details and components: interactions, artefacts, social roles, modes, etc. . However, when we attempt to explore writing in transitions, as people move across time and different domains and settings in their everyday life and life trajectories, such an immersive approach can become unfeasible.

The question then is, what approach can serve for the exploration of writing as a social practice across time and settings? We suggest two methodological orientations: one that attends to both the material and non-material dimensions of writing practices, and another that is sensitive to change over time and across settings.

### *Attending to Material and Non-Material Dimensions*

We have emphasised that writing practices are complex and encompass material aspects as well as dimensions that are not directly observable, such as people's identities or values. Following this rationale, we suggest that a useful approach is to select a combination of methods that attend to these two dimensions of literacy practices: material and non-material. By including data at these two levels, we can acknowledge what people do with

literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998) in context, or at least be as close as possible to understanding practices if we do not have the chance to directly observe people's mediated actions.

The material aspect of literacy emphasises the idea that reading and writing are not abstract cognitive phenomena but embodied practices. Particularly when studying the literacy life of marginalised students, it was critical for us to acknowledge that access to mediational tools, such as a laptop or a space for studying, played a key role in students' reading and writing practices. Reading and writing mediate concrete activities in the material world and— following sociocultural theories of learning — cognition is a result of social participation (Tusting et al., 2018). This view reinforces the idea that we learn, even to read and write, as we participate in concrete activities in a mediated world.

#### ARTEFACTS

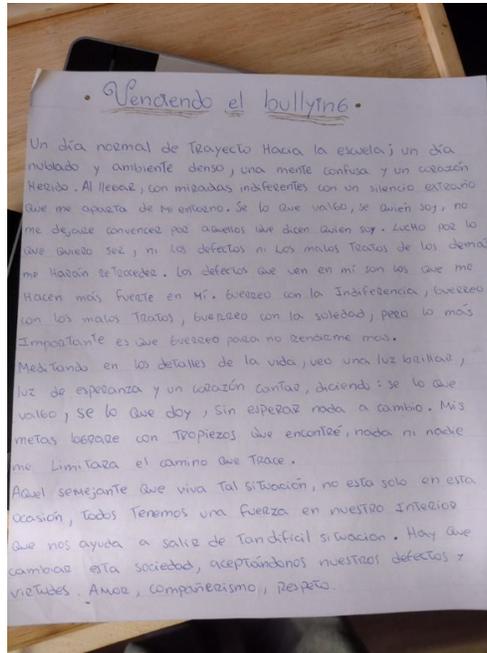
Observing the materiality of literacy practices has been at the heart of New Literacy Studies methods. As an example, at the dawn of literacy studies back in 1989, David Barton, Mary Hamilton, Roz Ivanic, Fiona Ormerod, Sarah Padmore, Simon Pardoe and Rachel Rimmershaw started to use photographs in a study about literacy practices in Lancaster (this study is reported in Barton et al., 1994). They also took their cameras to different countries in the world – including Chile – to observe literacy practices beyond printed texts in different cultural environments and to explore the uses, mediational tools, gender inequalities, and technologies for literacies among other elements linked to reading or writing practices.

We also used photographs in our study with Chilean students in their transition from school to university. However, we soon realised that an important portion of their literacy

practices occurred in private spaces or devices (for instance, in their room, in meetings with friends). To avoid being too intrusive, we chose to ask them to take photos of what they were writing in their original formats and platforms, rather than a photograph of the entire context in which these texts were located. We understood these texts as cultural artefacts rather than as mere linguistic devices, that is, “objects or symbols inscribed by a collective attribution of meaning” (Bartlett, 2007, p. 55) that can assume a material aspect (such as a book) and a conceptual aspect (such as social identities signalled by the book). Therefore, artefacts can open up both the material and the non-material dimensions of literacy practices if we have the chance to explore their cultural meaning.

The photographs of our participants’ artefacts told us about the concrete mediational tools they were using for writing, for example, if they were writing notes on a cellphone or writing a to-do list on a wrinkled piece of paper. The materiality of these artefacts gave us valuable clues about the practice: where they were writing, in what time frame and space. By having these photographs of our participants’ artefacts (texts, notes, essays, etc.), we were able to reconstruct part of the practice in which these were playing a role by talking around them with the students. At the same time, we could acknowledge some of the material aspects of each practice and bring this to the conversation. As an example, the photograph shown in Figure 2 helped us to understand the very different nature of writing at schools in comparison with those in university.

Image 1. School assignment written in a vocational school in Chile



As we observed in conversation with our participants, most of what they wrote at school was handwriting, like the example in Figure 1. These writing events occurred frequently in the classroom or as homework, which students completed in their rooms or even shared spaces at home, such as the kitchen table. In the case of the piece of writing shown in Figure 1, we noted from our conversation with its author that the process of writing looked very different from a paper written in a Word document, and entailed particular challenges related to dealing with the mediational tools that shaped the practice: paper, pencil and pens of different colours, etc. The author of the artefact shown in the picture above refers to this as follows:

I would write it in the notebook, the notebook was like the rough draft, and from there of course I would transfer it to a blank sheet, because I like, as my dad says, to make it more professional when it's something sort of formal so then I transfer it to a blank page so you don't see the squares of the notebook.

This fragment shows how this participant was investing enormous effort into dealing with some of the material aspects of the practice (transcribing the text from a notebook squared page to a blank one). As can be slightly noticed from the photo, she drew horizontal pencil lines on the sheet with a ruler to make sure the text lines were straight and then erased them. This investment is attached to values and social identifications: the importance of constructing a “professional” appearance in her writing, and the presence of the father as a valued advisor. The excerpt, along with the artefact it refers to, also tells us about what counts as formal in the context of a secondary school language classroom from the perspective of the participant (white paper, letterings and colours used in the title, etc.), which was reinforced by the teacher’s feedback on this assignment.

The artefact in Image 1 functions as a transitional device that travels across settings as the life of the participant unfolds. Its writing was initiated in the classroom but was finished and polished at home. The values and ideas that shaped its production came not only from school but also from what seemed important for our participant’s father, an influential figure when she was in secondary school. In other words, this artefact served as a window to look at different contexts, life domains and literacy sponsors that shaped this dispersed, mediated and laminated (Prior & Smith, 2020; Roozen & Erickson, 2017) writing practice. As Blommaert (2008) has stated, texts – and particularly texts as artefacts – are “firmly locked into a wider complex of human contextualised activities” (p.17) and encapsulate different “indexical loads” (Blommaert, 2016, p. 251). In this vein, our research on the multiple transitions in students’ school-to-university trajectories suggests that as writing practices cross the multiple domains of people’s literate lives, artefacts can be seen as transitional

devices as they travel across social spheres and are produced throughout different moments and places across time.

As we can see, when working with artefacts rather than with texts as merely linguistic objects, we can more accurately explore both the material and non-material aspects of writing practices from a literacy studies perspective. This is particularly true if we combine the collection of artefacts' photographs with talking around text and literacy history interviews.

*Attending to change across time and settings*

Artefacts can act as transitional devices because they are not confined to a single context. They are produced and circulate across time and space, often carrying values, identities, and norms from various domains. Their significance in a person's life trajectory may shift over time. Even if their material or linguistic features remain unchanged, the ways in which people use, interpret, and re-signify these artefacts are constantly evolving. This is why, to understand students' literate lives across transitions, it is crucial to engage them in conversations around their texts: the roles these texts play in their lives and the meanings they attach to them at different moments.

Both *literacy interviews* and *talking around texts* have been widely used in research on literacy as a social practice (Ávila et al., 2021; Ivanič, 1998; Lillis, 2008, 2009). In this section, we reflect on their value for exploring writing practices over time. We argue that when employing these methods, it is essential to attend to change across time and contexts. This requires sustained engagement— or what Lillis (2001) calls “long conversations”— with participants, in order to trace the evolving meanings of their literate lives.

## LITERACY HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Literacy history interviews (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000) “involv[e] eliciting autobiographical accounts of languages and academic literacy learning so that current practices and perspectives can be understood within the broader socio-historical context” (Lillis, 2008, pp. 362-363). We suggest that it is also important to explore people’s biographical trajectories more broadly to better understand the role of literacy practices in the frame of their life events and practices. In other words, we foreground the importance of exploring, as Ivanic (1998) puts it, “the role of literacy in [people’s] lives, past and present” (p. 115).

A historical approach involves retrospectively reconstructing individuals’ experiences, attending to the past to understand how they have come to be who they are. However, it should also illuminate the practices and life events they are currently navigating, as well as their perspectives on the future. Barton et al. (2007) propose a framework for examining people’s lives that considers past histories, circumstances across life domains (such as friendships, caregiving responsibilities, etc.), significant life events, current practices and identities, and imagined futures. This framework can be expressed chronologically as: “what has happened in people’s pasts, who they are now, what is happening in their lives now, and where they may want to go” (p. 18). In Table 1, we present some of the questions we used to explore students’ life trajectories and transitions based on a literacy history interview.

Table 2. Questions to explore students’ life trajectories and transitions based on a literacy history interview

<b>History, circumstances and transitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In which school do you currently study? Where is it?</li> <li>• Over the years at your school, was there any year that felt different or new to you?</li> <li>• What do you normally do after school? What do you like to do in your spare time?</li> </ul>
<b>Current practices and identities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the assignments you normally have at school like?</li> <li>• Which subjects do you like the most?</li> <li>• Is there anything you like to write outside of school?</li> </ul>
<b>Imagined futures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your plans for the next year? What do you think are your main future challenges?</li> </ul>

Literacy history interviews are a useful tool to reconstruct people’s life trajectories and the role literacy plays within them. However, it is important to recognise that retrospective accounts of the past are always, to some extent, influenced by the present — by how individuals make sense of their past and envision their future at any given moment. For this reason, conducting repeated conversations with participants is essential to capture how people change and resignify their experience over time.

We will illustrate this point with a brief example. We first interviewed a participant during her final year of secondary school, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had shifted schooling to online formats. She had no prior experience using a word processor and was struggling to adapt to the new digital tools. Several months later, in a follow-up interview, she had not only mastered Word but was also using it for personal writing. In retrospect, she minimised the difficulties she had initially faced, suggesting that they had not been particularly significant. Her earlier struggle was being remembered through the lens of her present experience, in which she now felt confident and even enthusiastic about Word-based writing. The excerpts below capture these two distinct moments in our conversations.

Table 3. Two excerpts from two conversations with the same participants

Moment 1	Moment 2
<p>Participant: now it's all through the screen.</p> <p>Interviewer: Everything on the computer</p> <p>Participant: yes, doing all the assignments on the computer</p> <p>I: and how has that change been for you?</p> <p>Participant: <b>it's been rough!</b> Because sometimes I had a <b>hard time</b> with technology, it is said that young people understand, but I had a <b>hard time</b> with it.</p> <p>I: What part was hard for you?</p> <p>Participant: Using Word</p>	<p>Participant: I had to learn how to use it (the computer).</p> <p>I: and how has that learning process been?</p> <p>Participant: at first <b>it was difficult</b> and then <b>it was easy.</b></p> <p>I: and what has been easy for you now about writing on the computer?</p> <p>Participant: I think that when you write on the computer you take the time to write the dots and the commas, when you write by hand you write quickly.</p> <p>I: and why do you think that happens?</p> <p>Participant: to make it look nicer, I don't know, but on paper you write like all at once.</p>

In the excerpt above, the participant describes her relationship with technology as “rough” and “hard” at first, then as “difficult and then easy” during a later moment. In our second conversation, she did not spend much time describing her previous struggles with Word, but she had previously elaborated considerably about this (despite being an interviewee of few words). If a researcher had only captured this second moment, they would have missed the depth of what technology had truly meant to this participant in the past. With this example, we want to emphasise the importance of repeated interactions with participants in order to capture how the meanings attributed to writing practices change over time.

## TALK AROUND TEXT

Talk around text as a method has a central role in literacy studies (Ávila, 2021; Lillis, 2001; 2008; 2009; Ivanic, 1998; Ivanic & Satchwell, 2007). It entails a “talk between the researcher and the writer-participant about a text that the writer is writing or has written” (Lillis, 2009, p. 203). Building on the argument developed in this chapter, we suggest that we can also use this method to explore texts as artefacts. In our research, we understand talk around textual artefacts as open-ended conversations that explore the broader writing event in which a text was produced and the practice involved in the event, including the material, spatial, and technological conditions of production, the tools and resources used, students’ material and linguistic choices, as well as their feelings and views about these choices. Some of the questions we used as a general guide for our talk-around-text interviews are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Talk around text as artefacts

<b>Context, media and spaces</b>	What was the moment of writing like, if you could go back and see yourself...how are you, where are you, what are you wearing, what do you see...?
<b>Reading aloud</b>	Could you read it aloud for me? How does this sound to you?
<b>Decision making</b>	You used a “we” here, who are “we” for you? Why did you choose to use this form?
<b>Identities</b>	Why did you choose this piece of writing? What do you like about it? What happens to you when you listen to your writing? When you read it, is there any specific part in which you recognize yourself? Like yes this is me speaking!

The questions or topics to be included in a very flexible schedule for a talk-around-text interview will vary depending on the research questions and focus. For instance, in our study, we explored writers' identities as this was a central aspect of transitions. It proved to be very useful for us to explore the decision-making of a text to raise what Ivanič (1998) called *Critical Language Awareness*, about how “language choices are shaped by conventions and construct their identities” (p. 117).

Combining talk around texts interviews with collecting artefacts and developing literacy history interviews in repeated cycles proved highly effective for exploring

both the material and non-material aspects of writing as a practice, as well as observing how these aspects evolve over time. This approach offered valuable insights into the changing meanings of the material conditions of writing for our participants during transitions, and how students make sense of the conventions, norms, and values surrounding writing in various domains.

### **Critical reflections on the research process**

Conducting a longitudinal, multi-sited study of writing practices across a major life transition entailed various challenges. First, there was a certain amount of labour involved in carrying out a PhD study across two languages. Working with interviews, artefacts, transcription, coding, analytic writing, and publication across Spanish and English meant that “data work” did not end at collection. It continued through transcription, translation and repeated revisiting of extracts. It also entailed ensuring that students' voices were represented faithfully and, at the same time, clearly for an international audience.

Regarding translation, participants frequently drew on Chilean Spanish vernacular and youth registers to convey their ideas but also to perform relational meanings (for example, humour, irony, distance, solidarity). These meanings are not easily transportable into English without loss or distortion. At times, literal translation produced English phrasing that sounded overly formal, flattening the texture of teenage speech; at other times, seeking an “equivalent” vernacular register in English risked imposing cultural meanings that did not belong to the participants’ contexts. In practice, I often had to make situated decisions—prioritising accuracy of propositional meaning in some cases, and trying to preserve stance, rhythm, or social positioning in others.

A related constraint was the limited space within standard English-medium journal articles to include bilingual extracts. Even though presenting data only in English can obscure some linguistic and cultural features of participants’ meaning-making, it can also support accessibility for an international audience. In this context and considering that I was developing not discourse but content analysis, I decided to include extracts in English only and to provide reflections on the variants of Spanish used when this was relevant for the study’s main inquiry and research questions. I also provide the Spanish original version of the excerpts included throughout this thesis in Appendix 7, in order to offer an opportunity for multilingual readers to see how translation was handled and to access students’ original voices.

The longitudinal design also implied challenges around participant availability and unevenness of contact across time. Following students through the transition to university meant working around periods of high pressure (exams, admissions processes, new schedules, and work responsibilities). Sustaining engagement without overburdening

participants required flexibility and being open to different formats and mediums of data collection. That is why I included a final stage of clarifying some of my participants' responses via WhatsApp, as this was an accessible medium for them and did not require synchronous encounters. Moreover, the longitudinal design required a strict organization of data collection and analysis. I had to start data collection early on the PhD process and to develop various cycles of data collection and data analysis in the short period of time of the PhD studies.

Lastly, the research presented an additional challenge because the participants belonged to a population for whom access to university was not guaranteed. For many young people from economically disadvantaged contexts, transitions are experienced as unpredictable processes shaped by emergent opportunities and structural constraints. For my participants, entry into higher education could therefore not be taken for granted. This required particular reflexive attention during data collection to avoid projecting normative or traditional representations of transition onto participants' accounts. In practice, this meant avoiding assumptions—explicit or implicit—in my conversations that university constituted the only, or necessarily the most legitimate or desired, pathway following secondary education.

Overall, these challenges sharpened my awareness that researching literacies across time and contexts requires not only methodological flexibility, but also an ongoing reflexive process of critically examining potential biases and normative understandings of the phenomenon under study. From this perspective, adopting an emic stance entails creating space for participants to articulate their own understandings of transitions and literacy, rather than subsuming their experiences within predefined categories.

## **Conclusions**

Exploring writing as a social practice across time and contexts requires methodological approaches that are both flexible and sensitive to the complexities of people's lived experiences. In this chapter, we have shown how combining talk around texts, literacy history interviews, and the collection of text artefacts in repeated cycles offers a powerful way to capture both the material and non-material dimensions of writing. These tools allowed us to observe how writing practices shift as students move between educational and non-formal contexts, and to understand how they negotiate meanings, norms, and values around academic and other forms of writing.

We suggest that researching writing longitudinally and across settings benefits from methods that are iterative and attentive to participants' own interpretations of their practices. For researchers, this means moving beyond the constraints of a single research site and embracing designs that can follow people through transitions, mobilities, and changes in their writing lives. Such designs can illuminate how broader social, institutional, and material conditions interact with individual trajectories, and how writing practices are reconfigured over time. By adopting these methodological strategies, literacy research can more effectively capture the dynamic, situated, and socially embedded nature of writing in contemporary life

PAPER 1 | WRITING IN TRANSITIONS FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY: WHAT  
DO WE KNOW FROM RESEARCH AND THEORY?

**Introduction**

Transitions are shifts across contexts that entail a new sense of self and social roles (Ecclestone, Biesta & Hughes, 2010). They involve the transfer of knowledge across contexts (Wardle & Clement, 2020) and can be challenging or problematic for many (Gravett, 2019; Mojab, 2006), which makes them central to lifelong learning and career development. Transitions have been subject to public concern since educational and professional careers are less linear and the job market has changed significantly, being now more dynamic and showing new patterns of mobility and long-term transitional periods (Smith, 2009). This has led to the diversification of career and educational trajectories and it has made clearer how transitioning and changing are fundamental aspects of contemporary life. This context of increasing fluidity and dynamism (Ingram, Field & Gallacher, 2009) has made transitions a central political concern, but has also led some to question the more rigid and linear understandings of transitions (Gale & Parker, 2014; Colley, 2007; Ecclestone, 2009).

Transition from school to university has also been a central concern for educational research (Kift, 2009; Kift & Nelson, 2005; Reason, Terenzini & Domingo, 2005). Such interest is due in part to the increasing number of enrolments in higher education, but also because of the greater diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity and age of students entering university among the last twenty years (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher

Education/Dearing Report 1997 in Lillis, 2001; Ezcurra, 2011; Shah et al., 2015). This greater complexity of higher education and the necessity of giving every student the same opportunities for participation have made it critical to support transitions into university.

Literacy has been recognised to be especially central in the transition to higher education. Participation at the university level requires students to be able to access the language resources needed to give an opinion, to write an argument or to explain a theory. All these actions occur in writing or in academic oral communications, as disciplines are areas of knowledge defined by their intellectual traditions, areas of discussion, practices of data collection and data analysis, but also by their particular genres and discourses (Tusting & Barton, 2016). Notably, writing promotes critical thinking and learning, but it is also one of the most common means for assessment (Bazerman, 2017). This implies that writing has consequences in terms of grades, pass rates and even drop-out rates. Written assessments have a gate-keeping role (Lillis, 2001) by regulating access and academic progress and sometimes narrowing educational opportunities for underrepresented groups. Writing is key to facilitating participation and even academic achievement in the transition to higher education.

Although importance has been attributed to writing in the transition from school to university, little has been discussed regarding how studies on writing have approached transitions. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore how transition to higher education has been conceptualized in writing research in the last twenty years. In order to do so, we describe three conceptualizations of transitions introduced by Gale & Parker (2014) and explore how these are represented in the literature: transition as induction, transition as

development and transition as becoming. We conducted a literature review to address the following research questions:

1) What is the predominant conceptualization of transition in studies that examine writing during the transition from school to university?

2) From which educational context (school, university, or both) do these studies gather their data?

3) What aspects of writing do these studies focus on when observing the transition from school to university?

Based on our findings, we will present conclusions, implications, and directions for future research.

*Perspectives on transitions: induction, development, and becoming*

Gale and Parker (2014) identify three approaches in educational research concerning the transition to university: transition as induction, transition as development, and transition as becoming. Researchers who focus on transitions as *induction* pay close attention to the process of adapting to academic culture, demands, and practices. This perspective places special emphasis on students' academic achievement and "failure" (Torenbeek, Jansen, & Hofman, 2010) and focuses on the support students need to avoid drop-outs. From this approach, the main strategy to prevent such negative results is induction into university culture and conventions within disciplines (Kift, 2009). Students who are not prepared for the demands of university need to be provided with a bridge (Leese, 2010; Briggs et al., 2012)

to achieve the necessary skills to meet the requirements of higher education, including academic writing.

The inductionist perspective includes works describing the transition to university as a predictable and organized into stages. This approach seems to follow structured notions of change as processes that “may be easily demarcated in time, scheduled, structured in steps and presented in terms of results or achievements” (Nortier, 1995, p. 33). Such is the case of Nicholson’s (1990) model for transitions, which has been widely used to describe first-year students’ experiences in higher education (see De Clercq et al. 2018; Jansen et al. 2013). As it has been applied to the university context, Nicholson’s model includes a phase of preparation in which students develop their own expectations of the upcoming stage; a second moment of encounter with the new educational setting followed by a period of adjustment and a final moment of stabilization which would be the end of the cycle.

Another approach to transitions has been labelled by Gale & Parker (2014) as *development*. Within this perspective, “transition is a change process but also a shift from one identity to another” (Ecclestone, Biesta & Hughes, 2010, p. 6). In other words, it is a process of change in an individual who becomes someone (Ecclestone, 2009) as a consequence of acquiring a new status, social role, or ways of participation. For these theorists, transitions can be represented as milestones or crucial life events articulated with a “complex process of ‘becoming somebody’, personally, educationally and occupationally” (Ecclestone, 2009, p. 13). This approach depicts transitions in terms of ‘becoming somebody’ but also in terms of ‘becoming a member’ of a new context, culture, or community.

This perspective highlights the internal changes individuals experience as they go through personal explorations and transformations within a new context. For example, Worth (2009) explores the concept of self-images and potential future selves. She focuses on how individuals interpret their life transitions, emphasizing the idea of self-extensions—the broadening of an individual's worldview—and the transformations of self-image. This narrative approach (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Lam & Pollar, 2006; Pollar & Filler, 1999) emphasize how individuals create narratives that connect their past, present, and future into a cohesive biography, serving as a tool for sense-making and self-representation.

Finally, transitions have been also understood as part of simultaneous and never-ending processes of becoming. This third approach emphasises the diversity of individuals' life trajectories, narratives and identities (Colley, 2007; Quinn, 2010; Gale & Parker, 2014) and has been referred to as *life as transition* (Colley, 2007) or *transition as becoming* (Gale & Parker, 2014). Researchers from this perspective understand that change is an intrinsic feature of life. They claim that understanding transitions as a phase of uncertainty and change within a predominantly stable and steady life course does not reflect the actual experiences of many people since neither people's identities nor their contexts are static, unified or unidimensional (nor are they about to achieve that final point of stability). In this regard, Quinn (2010) states that the concept of transition has been developed in educational policies as fixed and linear and emphasises that change should be recognised “as a permanent state of being, rather than a periodic occurrence” (p. 118).

From this view, the final goal of transition to university is not assimilation, academic achievement and stability. On the contrary, transition is depicted as an ongoing process which is also unpredictable and never-ending. This process does not finish in becoming someone

(for instance, becoming an engineer) as disciplinary identities are permanently being constructed and re-negotiated. From a transition as becoming perspective, students who access university come from diverse previous trajectories and may encounter equally diverse paths during or after university.

## **Method**

We explored how the three approaches to transitions are represented in research about writing during the transition from school to university. We also identified the specific dimensions of writing that have been investigated in this context, and how the role of writing has been understood within this literature. To do so, in a first stage, we conducted a literature review (Andrews, 2005; Suri & Clarke, 2009) in Scopus seeking articles focusing on writing during the transition from school to university, which were published between 2000 and June 2021.

In our searching, we developed a search syntax including terms related to writing – such as *academic literacy*, *writing* and *literate practices*– and to transitions –such as *transition to university* and *transition into higher education*. Following this procedure, we obtained 109 results. Through abstract screening, we eliminated articles that 1) were not empirical, 2) were focused on transitions within school or other educational stages (eg. postgraduate education) or 3) looked at transitions in the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this procedure, we obtained a list of 27 relevant articles.

We expanded our search following a more flexible approach to avoid missing relevant works that may not have been included in Scopus. Particularly, we explored alternative data bases such as *Google Scholar* and we included books and book chapters that were relevant.

Following Arksey & O'Malley (2005), we also developed a recursive process reviewing the reference lists of each new article. We proceeded with a full-text reading of our selection and eliminated false positives, obtaining a refined final list of 32 articles. We analysed these articles considering: 1) the setting where data were collected; 2) the aspect of literacy explored; and 3) the predominant approach of transition in each article, considering the three perspectives described in this paper.

Based on Gale & Parker's (2014) work and Ivanič' (2004) contributions on discourses of writing and learning to write we developed the following coding scheme. We used Excel to organise the coding process and conducted two cycles of coding, systematically reviewing and refining our codes in relation to the coding scheme (see Table 1).

Table 1. Literature Review Coding Scheme

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
Setting	University	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed in a university setting.
	School	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed in a school setting.
	University and School	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed both in a university and school setting.
Transition	Transition as induction	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as induction is developed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T1 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) The article focuses on transition as a critical stage, limited in time and attached to notions of failure and success which should lead to an integration process in a new academic context.
	Transition as development	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as development is displayed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T2 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) The article focuses on transition as identity shifts, self transformation or developments from one stage to another, it takes into account a more complex layering of experiences including movements between context and identities. There is a focus on the subject identitarian, biographical and learning trajectories over time. It is possible to identify the idea of becoming somebody or becoming a member.

	Transition as becoming	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as becoming is displayed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T3 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) In the article transitions are understood as an essential part of subjects' lives without pre-defined stages and it is recognized that students are always going through transitions on several levels (as daily shifts in context, language, genres, among others) and directions. Coding here any article in which a critical stance on transitions is explicitly stated; those articles in which transitions are seen as trajectories with more than one possible route; studies in which drop-outs are seen as possible alternatives instead of failures, and those which focus on more complex entanglements between social conditions, ideologies and institutional constraints.
	T0	Coding any article in which although transition is mentioned as a central issue, there is a lack of definition or a weakly developed definition of the concept. Articles in which it is not possible to identify a predominant approach to transition are also coded here.
Literacy related construct	Writing	Coding any article which focuses on writing as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on writing such as writing understood as social practice, as a skill set, as a cognitive process, among others.
	Reading & Writing	Coding any article which focuses on writing and reading as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on literacy such as reading and writing as social practice, as a skill set, as a cognitive process, among others.
	Information Literacy	Coding any article which focuses on information literacy as one of its main constructs. This could include different understandings of how people search, organize, use and value information.
	Digital literacies	Coding any article which focuses on digital literacies as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on how reading and writing through technology is understood.
Discourses on Literacy	Writing as social practice (WSP)	Coding any article which explicitly defines writing from a social practice perspective, by 1) quoting relevant authors from this area of study (such as Hamilton, Ivanič, Lillis, Barton, among others); 2) defining writing as a social activity shaped by (and shaping) the social context, power relationships and identities. Some of these studies may include non academic writing practices since diverse expressions of students' literacy are recognized. We also included here papers based on the US Writing and Composition Studies tradition that paid attention to contextual dynamics and writing.
	Writing as genres and disciplinary conventions (WG)	Coding any article which explicitly focuses on academic writing from a genre based perspective or any approach highlighting writing as a disciplinary-specific practice. Writing is understood as a purpose oriented activity which take relatively stable structures according to social context and purposes. This approach can be recognized by 1) the reference to key approaches to genre such as English for Academic Purposes, SFL, among others; or 2) a focus on disciplinary genres or disciplinary writing conventions.

	Writing as Skills (WS)	Coding any article in which writing is understood as a set of linguistic skills that can be applied in different contexts. Within this frame, writing is commonly understood as a basic ability that should be learnt at school or at the university as a part of remedial efforts to "bridge a gap". This approach can be recognized by: 1) the systematic use of terms such as "writing skills", "writing abilities" or "writing performance", 2) a focus on textual features such as coherence, cohesion or lexical resources, 3) a lack of recognition of disciplinary-specific writing practices
	Writing as process (WP)	Coding any article in which writing is understood as a process in which students have to go through different activities such as searching for information, reading and summarizing readings, planning, writing and reviewing. This approach can be recognized by 1) the prevalent mention of processes in writing such as searching for sources, planning and reviewing, among others; 2) the systematic quotation of relevant authors from a process based perspective such as Flowers & Hayes, Kent, among others. 3) a dominant reference to constructs commonly related with process approaches such as metacognition, monitoring, reviewing, among others.

## Findings

### *Where do we look when studying transitions?*

The setting where the data were collected signals, to a certain extent, whether transition is understood as a ‘one-stage’ process or as a phenomenon that requires a more longitudinal approach to be fully captured. Moreover, the setting shows how the challenge of transitioning is placed in different educational contexts and consequently how the responsibility of supporting transitions is attributed to different educational actors and sectors. For instance, those works located in universities consider students’ experiences in their transition, but also institutional support, which suggests that, from the perspective of these articles, higher education institutions have a role in smoothing transitions to university.

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the articles included in this review had a cross-sectional design. More frequently, they used data collected at only one educational stage (N=23), either the end of secondary school (N=3) or, in a higher proportion, in the first

years of university or other post-secondary settings (N=20). The majority of these articles paid special attention to the first academic year with an emphasis on students' perspectives and experiences with new academic demands, including literacy practices that are context-specific (Wahleithner, 2020; Elliott et al. 2019; Kirker & Stonebraker, 2019; Gourlay, 2009; Smith, 2004; Alder, 2018). Other works in which data were collected during the first academic year focused on institutional support strategies regarding academic skills, institutional cultures and academic literacies (Daddow & Schneider, 2017; Hopkins, 2021; Megwalu, Miller & Haller, 2017; Hughes et al. 2016; Salisbury & Karasmanis, 2011).

Table 2. Settings for data collection in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Setting</b>	<b>N</b>
Post-secondary education	20
Secondary education & Post-secondary education	9
Secondary school	3
<i>Total</i>	32

Only a few articles (N=3) focused on secondary schools. These studies aimed to enhance our understanding of the curricular continuities and discontinuities between secondary schools and universities. Some studies have examined the writing skills that students develop in school with the aim of informing transition support strategies for first-year university students. All these studies reinforce the idea that students are unprepared in academic writing related skills and situate this responsibility in secondary schools. Varlejs, et al. (2014) found that “students are information illiterate” (p. 15), either because of lack of preparation or due to the fact that they do not “absorb” what they were thought. Nix, Hageman, and Kragness (2011) investigated the writing skills taught in high schools to help design more effective freshman literacy induction programs. Similarly, Allison (2009)

explored literacy tasks at the secondary level and found that students' experiences with reading and writing varied widely. She concluded that opportunities to engage in college-like literacy practices differed significantly across schools, resulting in uneven levels of preparation for academic writing.

One-third of the articles reviewed (N=9) focused on how literacy changes throughout curricular stages, highlighting both differences and similarities, as well as continuities and discontinuities across levels. As an example, Jessen and Elander (2009) examined the differences in beliefs and expectations regarding writing assessments between A-level and higher education students. They found that pre-tertiary education students were more confident in their understanding of these assessments but exhibited surface approaches to learning and naïve epistemological beliefs towards writing. Despite including data from both schools and universities, the method used in this study —as in most research examining both secondary and higher education — was cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. Since it compares two distinct groups rather than tracking the same cohort of students across educational levels, this research fails to capture the students' lived trajectory from school to university, including how individuals experience shifts in context, social roles, and identity.

Few of the studies included in our literature review incorporated longitudinal designs following the same group across educational levels. This was the case of Harklau's (2001) pioneering ethnographic case study, which follows a group of four minority-language students from their high-schools to their first semester in university to explore their perceptions regarding literacy at both levels. Similarly, Ruecker (2014) reports a study with Latinx students during their transition from school to community college or university, demonstrating how institutional cultures and external demands influence literacy teaching

and learning. Baker (2018) investigates writing practices from A-levels to university in the UK, exploring how a group of eleven students face a variety of genres and challenges with writing at both levels. She found that there were higher levels of informality regarding writing task submission and fewer opportunities for source management and referencing in A-Levels compared with university. Rather than merely comparing secondary school and higher education curricula, these studies explore students' experiences and trajectories across educational levels, focusing on how they engage with specific aspects of writing during their transition. In other words, they draw not only on data from schools and universities but also seek to understand students' transition experiences and writing practices in both school and university from an emic perspective (Lillis, 2001, 2008).

Overall, most of the research about writing during the transition from school to university focuses on the university level and mostly on the first year-experience. This is not surprising since there is a long tradition of educational research that has paid attention to transitions as the encounter with a new institutional and learning environment. They have focused on what has been called the *first-year experience* – or on related concepts such as *college readiness* (Baker, Clay, and Gratama, 2005) – with even specific journals addressing the topic, such as the *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*. However, there is a clear effort in some of the articles reviewed to go beyond the first-year experience and explore how writing is shaped across educational contexts; even though such studies are less numerous and have also fewer participants, particularly those with longitudinal designs. This may be due not only to the practical difficulties of tracking participants over time, but also because of the prevalence of more static notions of transitions that encapsulate them in a delimited period of time and context.

### *Key literacies in transition*

The articles reviewed address different constructs related with reading and writing. Some of them pay attention to the way in which technological tools and artefacts mediate experiences with literacy at university. *Digital literacies* have been defined as the practice of communication “within fluid, socio-cultural, digital spaces where students use multi-modal communication tools to digitally access, consume, and produce information” (Caverly, et al. 2019 p.171; cf. Neumann, 2016). Their role in transitions in higher education has been tackled in two of the articles reviewed here, as can be seen in Table 3.

Hopkins’ (2021) participatory action research examines a literacy program that provides digital literacy instruction to undergraduate students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Using surveys and focus group interviews, the study found that students often struggle with the transition to the increasingly online or computer-mediated learning environments typical of university education. The findings also indicate that students value opportunities for digital literacy training to support their transition into higher education. Similarly, Convertino and Mein (2020) show how digital tools can limit the participation of Latinx first-generation students as they begin university. Drawing on a New Literacy Studies perspective to explore these students’ transition experiences, they demonstrate how the use of a learning management system to mediate assignments and activities can pose a barrier to student participation.

In addition to the articles that explicitly address the role of digital literacy in the transition to university, other works in our corpus — although not primarily focused on digital literacies — report findings related to digitally-mediated writing (Baker, 2018; Varlejs, Stec, & Known, 2014). For example, Baker (2018), in examining writing practices during the transition from

A-levels to university, found that writing assessments at university are often mediated by digital tools and platforms, which can pose challenges for some students.

Table 3. Literacy related constructs in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Literacy related construct</b>	<b>N</b>
Digital Literacies	2
Information Literacy	7
Reading & Writing	12
Writing	11
<i>Total general</i>	32

Another construct explored in 7 of the articles was *information literacy*, which has been recognised to be an important aspect of academic writing in higher education (Dennis, Bailey & Abbott, 2018). Farmer and Phamle (2021) define information literacy as “the ability to locate, select, evaluate, use and communicate information effectively and responsibly” (p. 1). While this definition may raise questions about what constitutes “effective” and “responsible” use, and offers limited clarity on the boundaries between general literacy and information literacy, it nonetheless highlights the close relationship between reading, writing, and the processes of sourcing and managing information. The use of academic sources is an integral component of academic literacies and has been shown to play a key role in students’ transitions into university.

In fact, some studies have explored how the management of university libraries, data bases and other digital media of information are an important challenge during the first academic year. To explore students’ knowledge of information literacy strategies and practices, Salisbury & Karasmanis (2011) conducted a survey and found that 35% of the

students state they would use Google when searching for journal articles. This probably shows unfamiliarity with journal articles as a genre, including the media in which they circulate. Searching for academic information is a key element in academic writing and reading, which commonly overlaps with digital literacy, as scientific information relies frequently on online environments. However, information literacy is not just about the use of technology and digital media. According to Megwalu, Miller & Haller (2017), libraries could play a role in student's sense of community and belonging with the institutions, as they can offer a physical space for encounter and learning.

As expected, given that the search strategy in this study explicitly included terms such as “*writing*” and “*written communication*”, a substantial number of studies focused specifically on writing (N= 11). However, an even larger number of articles addressed writing and reading concurrently (N= 12), highlighting the close interrelationship between these constructs and their shared importance as academic literacy practices in higher education. In this vein, Pessoa, Miller & Kaufer (2014) explored students' challenges related with reading – such as background and vocabulary knowledge – and with writing – such as genre expectations and academic writing style. Wahleithner (2020) found that students experience a mismatch between school and college writing. They describe having scarce opportunities for multi-draft writing and analytical thinking in high school writing assignments. In contrast, college writing requires them to have their own opinions on diverse sources and does not rely on formulaic writing, such as the five-paragraph essay, which they describe as a frequent writing model at school. Five out of 18 participants of this study recalled having few opportunities to write in high school.

Finally, we coded the 23 articles that explored reading and writing, or writing, according to their conceptualisation of literacy, considering the following categories: writing as social practice, writing as genre and disciplinary conventions, writing as skill, writing as a process (see coding scheme in Table 1, this paper). We found that most of the articles focused on literacy as a social practice, meaning that they frame literacy as ideological and intrinsically embedded in social practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2004). An example of such an approach is the work of Daddow & Schneider (2017), who explored transition experiences of non-traditional students in an Australian university. The authors argue that those entering university without having previous experiences with academic and disciplinary literacies perceive benefits in a curriculum that utilises students' authentic literacy practices as assets for writing pedagogy.

Other works focused on literacy as a set of genre and disciplinary-specific conventions. Such is the case of Pessoa, Miller & Kaufer (2014), who explore transition challenges in multilingual students. They conclude that students experience difficulties in understanding the genre expectations and style of English academic writing. Even though these authors seem to show a deficit perspective towards students' literacy, the focus on disciplinary conventions and genres was slightly more predominant than the one of literacy as skill.

There were works in which a literacy as skill approach was salient. Kodama et al. (2018) reported a bridge writing program, which gave remedial writing instruction as a tool for academic progress and success. Finally, one of the papers we examined reported a study of writing conceptualised as a process. Hebdon (2015) reported a learning academic skills program in which processes associated with writing were taught, such as researching,

referencing and the process of composing an academic text. The authors measure students' capabilities for academic writing, research skills and grades after the program, showing progress in each of these areas.

Table 4. Perspectives on Literacy in studies on writing

<b>Perspectives on Literacy</b>	<b>N</b>
Writing as Social Practice	15
Writing as genre and disciplinary conventions	5
Writing as skills	2
Writing as process	1
<i>Total general</i>	23

Finally, the literature reviewed highlights that multiple dimensions of literacy are relevant for understanding students' transitions to university. Reading and writing in higher education are not merely abstract or decontextualised skills; rather, they are embedded within situated practices. This embeddedness makes it difficult to separate them from broader academic activities, such as locating a book in the library or submitting an assignment through an online platform. Literacy, therefore, plays a central role in mediating key learning activities during the transition to university—such as researching disciplinary topics, completing assessments, and engaging with academic sources. Given their integration into concrete academic tasks, writing practices in particular appear to function as a gateway to, or barrier against, full participation in academic life.

*What is transition in studies of writing from school to university?*

The articles included in our review express explicitly or implicitly different perspectives on transition, including *transition as induction*, *transition as development* and *transition as becoming*. It is worth noticing that the majority of the articles did not expand

on any particular perspective of transition; rather, we had to infer such a view according to the way they tangentially talked about transition or described students' experiences and practices. In this sense, one of the findings of this review is that transitions have not captured the interest of writing researchers, with a few exceptions (see, for example, Spelman Miller & Stevenson, 2018). Even though they use the term, they seem to regard transition as a background phenomenon rather than as an object of inquiry or discussion on its own. Although the term is used, it is often treated as a contextual backdrop rather than as a central object of inquiry or discussion. As we observed transition through students' experiences with reading and writing, we gained a sense of what literacy can look like (or what aspects of literacy are foregrounded) when observing transition as induction, development or becoming.

As can be seen from Table 5, some of the articles approach transitions as *development* (N=13), paying particular attention to identity shifts, self-transformation, or changing roles from one stage to another. They consider a more complex layering of experiences, including movements between context and identities. Becoming someone, for instance incorporating disciplinary identities through writing, was a common issue explored by these articles. In this regard, Everitt-Reynolds, Maguirre & Delahunt (2018) explored the development of authorial identity of thirteen university students from three different health-related programmes. The study considered how students' authorial identities change depending on their course's year. The authors found that students have to face several transitions along their studies which they identify as *reality shock*, *developing writing capital* and *emerging voice*. These stages show an idea of development across time which ends up with the acquisition of a personal voice in academic writing.

All the articles focusing on emotional processes were also labelled within the approach to transition as development, as we understand that feelings and affects are associated with the *self* as an aspect of identity (Ivanič, 1998). Emotions, self-representations and identitarian explorations were examined by several articles. Gourlay (2009) explores emotional processes and struggles with identities during the transition to university. The author observed that a sense of belonging to the academic community and the development of an identity within this new context were frequently related to students' confidence with writing. From this perspective, developing a sense of belonging with a new academic community, and, in this sense, becoming a member of that community is a key aspect in writing confidence.

Elliott et al. (2009) also approach transitions as becoming a member of a new community. They focused on disciplinary writing and in how newcomers are not told about conventions and practices that are assumed by tutors to be natural. Additionally, the authors explored the emotional charge of essay writing and students' confidence with disciplinary writing. Similarly, Kirker & Stonebraker (2019) explored emotional changes in first year students and how they change their perceptions of their own information literacy mastering. As can be seen from this group of articles, writing plays an important role in the acquisition of new identities in the university level and in the wider process of becoming a member in a new community.

There were also studies looking at *transitions as induction* (N=12). Some of the studies reported support strategies and induction programs for new students. These often sought to promote academic reading and/or writing skills but also to show students the new institutional cultures and procedures (Hebdon, 2015; Kodama et al. 2018). Other works paid

attention to students’ experiences with literacy practices as part of a set of relevant academic skills which had to be reinforced and promoted in the first year of university (Stokes, 2014; Jessen & Elander, 2009; Regalado, 2004).

Table 5. Transition perspectives in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Transition Perspective</b>	<b>N</b>
Transition as development	13
Transition as induction	12
Life as transitioning	7
Total general	33

Reading and writing were seen in these articles as university-specific abilities, but also as abstract skills in the sense that there was a general representation of ‘academic writing’ as just one acceptable way to write that needs to be taught when there is a ‘deficit’ of it. This is the case of Kodama et al. (2018), who reported a bridge program which placed students in a “remedial course” considering, for instance, how strong was the “second language influence” (p. 353) in student’s writing. This can be related to what Ivanič (2004) has identified as a *writing as skill* discourse, that represents writing as an abstract basic skill which has to be learnt at school or as part of remedial efforts. In other words, when transition is understood as an induction process in which students are treated as passive recipients to be filled with academic ways of communicating and thinking, academic writing is positioned as a skill to be acquired rather than a practice to be negotiated. From this perspective on transition, students follow a similar stage-based pattern in their transition to university. As they are reduced to a single universal model, previous skills, practices and experiences are

considered to be more or less homogeneous, which neglects the diverse trajectories students may bring to university.

Finally, there were some articles exploring writing in transition to university from a *life as transitioning* perspective (N=7). Some of them took an explicitly critical perspective towards non-flexible approaches to transitions (Baker and Irwin, 2021) others were coded on this category because they consider diverse trajectories (for instance in and out university) or due to their consideration of more complex interaction between students' contexts, social structure and transition experiences without a focus on academic success or integration into academic culture. Such is the case of Baker (2018b) who explores shifts in the treatment of knowledge and assessment culture from school to university.

Many of the studies on writing with a more flexible and dynamic approach to transitions to university envisioned diverse pathways in students' educational trajectories, for example, from school to university or from school to community college. Such is the case of Ruecker (2014) who followed a group of multilingual latinx students transitioning from high school to university or to a community college. Similarly, Nordquist (2017) developed an ethnographic exploration following students across contexts and settings in their trajectories from school to university, to community college or to the workplace.

As we could associate approaches to writing as induction with approaches to literacy as a general skill, we found that in studies with a life as transitioning perspective there was commonly an understanding of writing from a social practice perspective. This approach has been referred to as New Literacy Studies (NLS), from which literacies are defined as *what people do* with reading and writing (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) in concrete social situations

within different domains of human activity. These concordances could indicate that *life as transitioning* understandings could be coherently and explicitly adopted by research about literacy from school to university from a NLS perspective and vice versa. Many of the works in this literature review did not take an explicit approach to transition, missing the opportunity to positioning their work in a broader discussion around students' careers, lifelong learning perspectives and mobility embedded in transition studies.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this work was to explore how transitions from school to university and writing practices within them have been understood from both research and theory. Following Gale & Parker (2014), Colley (2007) and Ecclestone, Biesta & Hughes (2010) we described how transitions in higher education have been grasped at least in three different ways: 1) as processes of induction in institutional contexts; 2) as becoming somebody or becoming a member of a new community and 3) as the intrinsic condition of people's life, as a permanent state of movement and transitioning.

We also observed how those perspectives were represented in research approaching writing during the transition from school to university and how writing was understood within this research. The transition as induction understanding was commonly associated with a view of writing as a basic and general skill that students did not learn properly in previous levels. Writing from this approach was also understood as disciplinary-specific but homogeneous skills that students will have to learn to success in higher education. Within the perspective of transition as becoming somebody or becoming a member, writing was understood sometimes as disciplinary genres, processes, and conventions that students will

have to manage, but more strongly related to individuals' emotions, sense of belonging and identities. Finally, the *life as transitioning* approach was frequently associated with an understanding of writing as varied (vernacular, and academic) and changing practices (ever-evolving) crossed by power relationships, ideologies and institutional constraints.

Our findings also show how writing during the transition from school to university can be observed as a construct by itself but also as a practice associated with related abilities such as reading, information literacy and digital literacies. Even though few articles focused on digital literacies as a main construct, many of the works reviewed considered how technologies in higher education mediate writing practices and how this is sometimes challenging for students, especially for those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Information literacy seems also to be central and commonly interwoven with digital literacies, as much of the academic sources are available online. It is also worth noting that most of the articles reviewed paid attention to both writing and reading, which reinforces the intrinsic connection between source searching and reading in academic writing (Castelló, 2007).

Finally, studies on writing from school to higher education very often do not critically consider transition, a concept that despite having a long research tradition in education is treated as background information. However, approaches to transition can be inferred from the way they report on students' experiences and writing practices. Writing from school to university has been mostly studied from inductionist or developmentalist approaches on transition and studies have been mostly focused on the first-year experience.

Considering our findings, we suggest that future research in writing from secondary school to university should take an intentional stance and conceptualization on transition. This would enable researchers to examine more closely how transition—as a phenomenon involving changes in context, social roles, and identities over time—shapes writing practices. Furthermore, since most of the studies we reviewed focused on a single setting, we recommend exploring transitions longitudinally, tracing how they unfold across time and contexts. Finally, we argue that approaching transition as a process of becoming can offer a richer understanding of both transitions themselves and the writing practices that develop within them.

## LINKING STATEMENT 1

The previous literature review examined how studies on writing from secondary school to higher education have conceptualised the notion of transition. Through this review, I realised that most research on the topic focuses primarily on students' first year at university, with few works attempting a longitudinal approach tracing transitions across educational levels and describing how changes in writing and students' experiences unfold over time.

I had the intuition that following the same group of students from school into university would allow me to observe more nuanced aspects of writing development and better understand how writing is entangled with students' biographical trajectories. When I finished this review, I concluded that, in fact, studies that looked at writing in the transition in this way could report on more detailed aspects of students' writing experiences in the transition than those focused on the first-year experience that explored transition relying on retrospective recalls of school writing. This encouraged me to work on a challenging approach to data collection in which I attempted to retain a group of participants from low-income backgrounds who had not secured a place in higher education but had the desire to access university and who were supported by an equity access governmental program. The goal was to conduct a longitudinal observation of students' experiences during their transition from secondary school to the first year of university and talk with them recursively along the way; a goal that this review reinforced.

The review also made me aware that the concept of transition is not always explicitly discussed in writing studies. At times, I questioned whether it was appropriate to place so

much emphasis on a concept that, while well established in educational research, has received relatively little attention in writing research. However, as I engaged more deeply with the literature, I encountered the 'transition as becoming' perspective, which emphasised transition as an ongoing process that does not follow a unique route (for example, from school to university and from university to a professional job). This conceptual turn made me look at transitions in a new way and guided some of my research decisions at different stages. The process of exploring this 'transition as becoming' conceptualisation is, to some extent, reflected in the following paper: *Writing in Transition Across the Lifespan*.

## PAPER 2 | WRITING IN TRANSITIONS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Published work: Montes, S. & Tusting, K. (2024). Writing in transitions across the lifespan. In Ryan J. Dippre, and Talinn Phillips (Eds). *Improvisations: Methods and Methodologies in Lifespan Writing Research*. The WAC Clearinghouse. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2024.2289>

### **Abstract**

In this chapter, we explore the concept of transitions and show the importance of considering transitions as a diverse and rhizomatic phenomenon. We argue that the concept of transition as becoming is likely to be a more fruitful way to approach transitions for lifespan writing researchers than seeing transitions as simple linear shifts over time. Drawing on researchers from New Literacy Studies and from Lifespan Writing Research, we emphasize the importance of understanding context, identity and time as dynamic phenomena of multiple layers, and discuss methodological implications of this for writing research across the lifespan. In particular, we call on lifespan researchers to adopt the principles of openness, movement across contexts, and repeated data collection across time to develop a fuller understanding of how writing practices develop, transform, and remain as people transition between different contexts throughout their lifetimes.

## Introduction

Lifespan Writing Research (hereafter, LWR) has focused on observing writing practices over time as they move and change throughout the lifespan. Dippre and Phillips (2020) refer to the lifespan as the “entirety of a lifetime” as it unfolds “across the many social spheres that writers participate in” (p. 5-6). They call for both life-long and life-wide inquiry that leads us to observe the developing writer’s multiple activities in their naturally dynamic and not necessarily linear forms.

Observing writing development along the entire lifespan is a challenging task. That is why LWR has regarded itself as a methodologically eclectic approach. This heterogeneity allows us to build the whole picture of writing development collaboratively. There are, in fact, different angles through which we can observe the lifespan of a writer and how their writing practices change all along the way. We can look at how writers master different genres or focus on how knowledge about writing is transferred from one context to another. This chapter contributes to this choral effort by reflecting on one particular angle of the human life course: transition.

Life-course transitions, such as changing jobs or moving from school to the workplace, could be a valuable entry point from which to observe developing writers’ challenges, struggles, achievements, and learnings across time. While some studies on transitions rely on rigid understandings of change—as some authors have already pointed out (see Quinn, 2010; Colley, 2007; 2010)—we would like to explore other approaches that give us some analytical and methodological tools to explore transitions in alignment with lifespan writing research’s main insights. This chapter will examine some of the latest contributions

to the comprehension of transitions, mainly based on feminist theory and on critical concepts from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), highlighting the notion of *transition as becoming* and the inherent diversity of life course transitions. We will consider several aspects of this diversity, including diversity in contexts, identities, and time, drawing on insights from New Literacy Studies. Finally, we will discuss some implications of these perspectives on transitions for LWR methodologies.

### **What is Transition?**

Transitions have been traditionally referred to as changes in the life course that involve shifts of context, identities, and social roles (Colley, 2010; Ecclestone et al., 2010). Some transitions are regulated by educational institutions, such as passing from kindergarten to school, from primary to secondary education, or from secondary school to university. These movements encompass new identities and writing practices that shape and are shaped by those contexts. Other transitions, such as the one from single to married status, involve our social relationships and inscribe them in a civil law framework, shaping, for instance, the way we are referred to in legal documents. A job change implies getting involved in a new community in new roles and perhaps writing emails from a different interpersonal position. All these life course changes imply identity negotiations, as transitioning subjects change their social roles and the way they engage in daily activities with others. They also concern writing practices, as writers engage in different literacy events while transitioning across contexts and identities.

Within the literature on educational research and practice, transitions have been widely understood as periods of crisis. Researchers have depicted them as delimited periods

of intense change that lead to a final stage of stability and adaptation to a new culture or social status. This comprehension of transitions has one of its roots in the concept of *rites of passage*, first introduced by Van Gennepe (1960). He understood that human development is structured by a series of passages that function as markers of life change. According to Van Gennepe, transitions follow a pattern of pre-liminal rites (rites of separation from a previous stage); liminal rites (during the transitional phase); and post-liminal rites, those unfolding when the individual is incorporated into a new world and status. Some works on “liminality” have paid attention to the “spaces in between,” foregrounding the uncertainty and indeterminacy of the process (Gourlay, 2009; Turner, 1995). Other studies describe transitions as a sequence of stages, such as Nicholson and West’s (1995) description of the transition to higher education organized in the phases of preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stabilization. Thus, transitions have been seen as time-limited periods preceded and followed by periods of stability. The extension of this period has also been outlined with specific landmarks. For example, Coertjens et al. (2017) define the end of the transition to higher education when the moment of the first assessment comes. These fixed depictions tend to neglect the fact that change and movement are constantly unfolding and disregard individuals’ positionings in the social structure as if people all have the same opportunities, social repertoires, and economic capital when they go through transitions.

Since the pivotal work of Van Gennepe, transitions have involved a social component in the form of social expectations and regulations. They are often socially regulated by institutions such as schools or the civil law. These institutions hold discourses and ideologies that also shape our understandings and expectations. Just as we could sustain an “autonomous model” of literacy (Street, 2005) by disregarding social conditions and cultural

understandings of what it is to read and write, we could also do the same with transitions by depicting them according to what is expected from a normative perspective. The representation of a linear progression from kindergarten to primary school, from secondary education to higher education, and so forth tends to subsume many people's diverse realities into one universal process, often regarded as *the* successful progression.

As many authors point out, such a view neglects many experiences, struggles, and trajectories (Quinn, 2010; Colley, 2007; Nordquist, 2017). The fact that transitions are socially determined makes them highly diverse depending on social class, gender, ethnicity, among others. At the same time, even though there are social expectations regarding when and how specific transitions “should” occur, such as the age when students “should” enter university, contemporary individuals' trajectories are more diverse. People are more likely to change jobs as the labor market is more dynamic (Ecclestone, 2009), and students traditionally excluded from higher education are now entering university (Cupitt & Trinidad, 2017; Lillis, 2001; Villalobos et al., 2017).

This scenario pushes us to build new understandings of transitions in the lifespan. Recent research describes transitions as more fluid processes using terms like *transition as becoming* (Gale & Parker, 2014) or *life as a transition* (Colley, 2007). From this perspective, transitions are not described as shifts from one homogeneous and stable context or identity to another; rather, transitioning is a permanent condition of people's lives. We will discuss some of the contributions of this approach to transition, and their potential usefulness for studying writing across the lifespan.

## Transition as Becoming: A Rhizomatic Understanding

Many recent works in transitions rely on the notions of *rhizome* and *becoming* developed by Deleuze & Guattari (see Amundsen, 2021; Gravett, 2019; Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018). The concept of the *rhizome* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) refers to a non-linear and non-hierarchical system with multiple entryways and exits. This helps us think of transitions as nonpredictable *becomings* that can spread in various directions. Changes of context and identities across time should not be depicted as predictable or occurring in developmental stages but as dynamic processes that vary from person to person. This contrasts with approaches to writing development which compare two points (for example, primary and secondary school) and assume the latter will be superior (Smith 2020). This common expectation fails to acknowledge the multiple writing contexts in which students participate (Ivanič et al., 2009; Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998) and the many influences on their writing abilities beyond school.

We suggest that transitions in the lifespan should be understood as processes within a more complex orchestra of simultaneous changes and becomings which can evolve in multiple ways. Mainstream paths in transitions, such as from secondary to higher education, are not the only “correct” or “logical” sequence. Seeing transitions as rhizomatic pushes us to regard them without a predefined idea of their direction and order. Expectations of what a “typical” transition looks like are significantly determined by our social position and views.

Trajectories such as school to workplace, job to further education, or in and out of university are common for people traditionally not represented in mainstream educational paths. Such is the case of Kurdish women refugees entering and leaving formal education in

cycles described by Mojab (2006) and analyzed by Colley (2007; 2010), or the working-class and first-generation students interviewed by Quinn et al. (2005), who dropped out of university before completion but desired to return. Students from our current research on transitions after school in Chile also have shown far from linear trajectories. One of our participants, a student in her last year of secondary education, is not planning to enter university after finishing school but to join her father's gardening business, which she started to learn at ten years old. For her, this choice is compatible with studying in university after a period or while working:

I have to see how I will sort it out because, to be honest, even if I study advertising I would like to keep my job maintaining gardens because it is what I know most about and if it comes a moment when I am tired of carrying the machines, cutting the grass, the heat and everything, so if it comes the moment when I say, 'I cannot do it anymore', I can work in that what I studied.

Transitions have been regarded as shifts of *contexts* and *identities* across time. They are socially regulated and shaped by social expectations, discourses and socially determined possibilities, access, and opportunities. They are concerned with changes situated in core areas of our human activity: our social practices and the identities that we create within them. A clear understanding of contexts and identities could provide many clues of how to study transitions and writing across the lifespan.

### **Transitions and Context**

We focus first on contexts. Transitions, as life-course phenomena, should be regarded from both a *life-long* and *life-wide* perspective in the same way that lifespan writing practices

should be (Dippre & Phillips, 2020). The life-wide perspective helps us to see how the multiple contexts in which people engage change simultaneously around significant life transitions. In transition to higher education, for example, this means taking into account not just the movement from school to university but also all the daily activities in different contexts occurring on a smaller scale. This means understanding transitions across the lifespan as multidimensional rather than as a change from one unified context to another.

This multidimensionality has been considered in transition research using metaphors like ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ transitions (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Vertical transitions indicate movements between more extensive periods of an individual’s life (Zigler & Kagan, 1982), such as the one from primary to secondary education. As they commonly represent progress across educational levels (Johansson, 2006), vertical transitions tend to be regulated by social institutions, such as ministries of education, national curricula, and lifelong learning policies. In contrast, horizontal transitions refer to those movements happening in shorter time frames, even daily, when individuals move across life spheres (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Another scale is introduced by Spelman Miller & Stevenson (2018) with the idea of micro transitions in writing, referring to the negotiation of different genres, learnings, and modalities or semiotic systems. These various dimensions (vertical, horizontal, micro) require an ecological approach to fully capture them. In this vein, Johansson (2006) highlights the importance of looking at the interactions between different scales of transitions as they occur in the entire experience of individuals. These perspectives suggest a layered idea of writing practices and contexts in transition.

Changes in context are frequently associated with changes in writing practices, a connection highlighted by the New Literacies Studies understanding of literacies as a social

practice. One of the central precepts of this approach is that “there are different literacies associated with different domains of life” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8). The workplace, school, university, home, and healthcare, among others, are all different life domains in which we can see a range of literacy practices that materialize in concrete writing events mediated by texts.

Life transitions across time are rarely a movement from just one isolated context to another. On the contrary, when transitions occur, many contextual changes frequently unfold simultaneously. For example, when students move from school to university, they are not just shifting from school culture to university culture; they participate in a more diverse range of social domains such as home and family, political groups, and the workplace. In this vein, depicting “the transition from school to university”—or any other—as a movement between just two homogeneous contexts does not recognize the complexity of human activity and the literacy practices shaping and being shaped by those activities.

### **Transitions and Identity**

The concept of *becoming* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) is also illuminating to understand the relationship between transitions and identity. It refers to the continual production of differentiation in which the self is permanently unfolding in an ongoing process of change. The process of becoming does not begin with a delimited entity; this is not *someone* becoming *someone else*. On the contrary, our entire subjectivity goes through a constant movement of becoming. This means that when we look at people’s life transitions—and writing practices within them—we might want to avoid representations of change as a movement from instability to stability, from struggling to adaptation, or from an unsettled

identity to a complete one. Rather, individuals constantly negotiate their identities as they participate in diverse life domains. This understanding pushes us to look at these change processes with an open mindset, without hoping for a “final stage” where the transition is over but looking at transitional movement through more extended observations to see the nuances of changing processes as they unfold through time.

Identity positions us in relationships with others and is built through social participation in concrete activities mediated by cultural tools and artifacts (Russell, 1997). Ivanič (1998) writes of *identification* as the “process whereby individuals align themselves with groups, communities, values, beliefs and practices” (p. 11). Wenger’s (1998) notion of identity as an experience negotiated through participation in communities of practice shows how subtle the edge between identity and context is. Understood in this way, it becomes clear that there are multiple identities as we participate in various life domains.

For example, when students enter university, they are not “becoming somebody” but adding new nuances and possibilities to their multiple identifications with others’ values, beliefs, and discourses, some of which might even conflict with each other, as Lillis (2001) showed in her research with non-traditional students. Similarly, Zavala (2011) explores tensions between Quechua students’ identities and academic cultures. These identity negotiations are a crucial element of any transition and commonly occur in the interaction of artifacts, institutions, and social actors in different positions of power.

Hamilton (2010), analyzing transitions in adult learning, understands identities—following sociocultural theories—as relational in nature, emphasizing how they are built and rebuilt through interaction. She explores transitions into and through the Skills for Life

program for adult literacy and numeracy developed in 2001 in the UK and observes how artifacts and social actors mediate the construction of narratives and identities of both students and tutors in the program. She shows how identity is not only in a permanent state of becoming but is also socially and culturally negotiated. Regarding educational transitions, these identity negotiations are frequently determined by institutional narratives about what it is to be, for instance, a university student, or a student in an adult literacy program.

The role of institutional narratives and the *possibilities for the self* (Ivanič, 1998) they offer to individuals are key to understanding the multilayered complexities of identity negotiations in transitions. As Ecclestone (2009; Ecclestone et al. 2010) has pointed out, transitions are changes of contexts and identities where individuals have a space for agency but are also regulated by social expectations and institutional constraints. This means that identity negotiations in transitions could be observed in individual participation and interactions and in the relationship with institutional regulations, which are frequently built through cultural artifacts such as texts. In this vein, Hamilton (2010) shows how guidelines, exams, screening tests, program descriptions, etc., in the Skills for Life adult learning program helped to construct institutional narratives and sometimes promoted stigmatized identities. Following Hamilton, it is critical to think about such intersections among texts and socially constructed identities in transitions. We suggest that both a multi-context and a multi-identity approach are needed, allowing us to understand the natural dynamic of these life-course changes and their connections with meaning-making processes through writing.

## Transitions and Time

Time is a fundamental concept for transitions as every transition constitutes changes of contexts or/and identities *over time*. Just as contexts and identities are multiple, time can be conceptualized as multiple and diverse rather than simply linear.

Colley (2010) argues that the most widespread understanding of time in transition research and theory is triadic; time is organized into past, present, and future. For instance, Biesta and Tedder (2007) depict human agency as iterational orientations (influences from the past), projective orientations (to the future possibilities), and practical-evaluative orientations (regarding the present). From this point of view, agency regards “the formulation of projects for the future and the realization of those projects in the present” (Colley, 2010, p. 134). This understanding, criticized by Colley, shows a positivistic approach to time as a one-direction progression projected according to the individual’s will.

However, time is not necessarily linear but can be perceived in diverse ways in people’s actual experiences. As Tusting (2000) points out following Zerubavel (1981), time can indicate boundaries between one social domain and another. Students inhabit different social roles in higher education, for instance in “class time” versus “break time.” In these different times, “ways of doing things” in social practices (Wenger, 1998) dramatically change, such as rules for making questions or interrupting a conversation.

By looking at how time unfolds at this more micro level, we can see how its linearity vanishes. Time passing leads us from one context to the other. A popup message could make us think about a future holiday destination; a few minutes later, we return to the chapter that we were writing before. At the same time, we can recognize different time scales (Burgess

& Ivanič, 2010). Following Adam, Tusting (2000) emphasizes the “multiplicity of times” (p. 41); the time frame of an individual’s life history is very different from the broader historical sweep. We could add to these the time experienced in daily activities while people engage in concrete events mediated by writing.

Nordquist & Lueck (2020) challenge the tendency to separate literacy development into homogeneous levels like “high school writing” and “college writing,” which neglects actual diverse students’ experiences with reading and writing in their daily lives. These linear representations of time set social expectations attached to age and cognitive development: “These stages are reinforced with appeals to ostensibly predictable relations among age, grade level, and cognitive, curricular, and social processes of development” (Nordquist & Lueck, 2020, p. 254). Following these ideas, we attempt to reinforce the multiple nature of time and how the experience of time as it progresses in an individual’s concrete life events is not necessarily reflected in broader narratives of time as a linear progression.

### **Studying Transitions and Writing in Transitions across the Lifespan: Methodology and Methods from a Rhizomatic Perspective**

Researching writing across the lifespan is a significant challenge that requires collaborative efforts and multiple gateways to approach the complexity of people’s writing practices in the frame of their life-long and life-wide trajectories. We have suggested that transitions in the lifespan are just one more angle to explore, but a meaningful one as transitions represent shifts in core areas of human development. A focus on transitions could encompass questions such as: how are changes of context involving new social roles and identities in someone’s life course linked with writing practices in meaningful ways?; how do social expectations and individuals’ agency shape changes across contexts and identities?;

how do social institutions regulate life-course transitions, and what is the role of artifacts such as text within them? We might want to look at specific transitions, for instance, the movements in and out of university or the entry to an adult learning program. Looking at those changes as transitions involves accounting for an individual's life history of participation in multiple contexts where identities and social roles are negotiated.

Transitions could be looked at vertically, along time and across institutions, or horizontally across contexts in a smaller time range. In particular, horizontal transitions could also be understood from writing across contexts (Prior & Smith, 2020; Kell, 2011) or transliteracies approaches (Stornaiuolo et al., 2017), contributions that have played a pivotal role in LWR. Finally, the angle of transitions focuses on changes encompassing identity negotiations and forms of participation in different time scales.

Transitions and the ways we understand context, identity, and time are not neutral. On the contrary, they have been depicted in diverse manners that imply particular epistemologies, methodological approaches and methods of inquiry. Looking at transitions is a rich node for exploring writing practices across the lifespan, but this could be looked at through different lenses. Consequently, it is critical to be aware of our own lenses and their implications.

Looking at transitions from a rhizomatic perspective has several methodological implications. It involves understanding writing practices as contextualized activities in peoples' lives, unfolding in diverse and dynamic trajectories of change across multiple levels of contexts, times, and identities. We suggest at least three main methodological orientations

to study transitions and writing across the lifespan. We will also give examples of particular methods that lifespan researchers could incorporate when they take this stance.

### *1. Openness*

When we look at one specific transition, we are always at risk of assuming a previously defined trajectory. For instance, we might be tempted to explore school to university or university to workplace without recognizing that these trajectories are not necessarily the same for everybody. When we decide to study a particular transition, it is always worth asking ourselves: what diversity of possible trajectories could we consider? Are there movements that we are not taking into account? How could we be open to unexpected movements? Which social factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, among others, could be shaping how transitions unfold?

Being aware of the variety of possible trajectories and being open to exploring those we did not predict could be helpful at different levels of research. For instance, in the sampling phase, we can choose participants who could experience transitions differently rather than work just with those who will follow mainstream careers. Moreover, we could incorporate openness during interviews by not assuming a specific direction in participants' transitions. Participants of our current research who were interviewed in their last year of secondary education were from economically deprived neighbourhoods in Chile. Even though they were part of an inclusion program to access higher education, going to university was not taken for granted for many of them. We tried to keep open to and hear their desires and expectations, often attached to the social valuing attributed to tertiary education but sometimes linked to other careers or possibilities.

An open mindset could also be adopted during the coding process. Broadly speaking, coding involves organizing data by labeling them within themes or categories. Coding is in itself an exercise of data simplification, reduction, and abstraction. It takes us “away from the data—from their detail, complexity and singularity” (MacLure, 2013, p. 169). Following Deleuze’s critiques of representational thinking, MacLure points out that coding tends to use a tree-like hierarchical structure that organizes data in categories and subcategories in static relationships. This logic could lead us to “recode what is already coded by language culture, ideology and the symbolic order” (p. 170) and more importantly, it could prevent us from taking into consideration those elements that might not fit with our previous understanding of a phenomenon or with our coding scheme. This openness to unpredicted interpretations is especially critical when social contexts become particularly unpredictable or unwieldy, as was explored by Ávila et al. (2021) in their research in times of social unrest and pandemic.

Regarding transitions, as we seek to capture change over time and across contexts in a way that involves multiple identity negotiations, it seems particularly important to avoid coding schemes that might restrict our capability to see how change is inscribed in the data along a period of time. This is also relevant to capture identities in their plurality and intrinsically dynamic becoming. In other words, if we want to observe the negotiation of identities that are not only multiple but changing over time, fixed tree-like themes and categorizations might not always be helpful. From our perspective, this view on coding does not imply abandoning themes and categories but using them more flexibly by allowing us to hold those fragments that do not fit or enabling the emergence of more rhizomatic connections between different elements of our data.

Some researchers in transitions have applied a rhizomatic approach to data analysis (see Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018; Amundsen, 2021) by focusing on “data hot-spots” that seem to carry complex relationships of language, emotions, and thoughts. In this vein, MacLure suggests incorporating the practice of *unforgetting* by holding fragments and details in slow and intimate work with data. We encounter various elements that resist coding in our current study. For instance, one of our participants repeatedly used a question prosody when asserting or answering a question. This was a persistent tendency in our interviews with her, showing us the interpersonal nature of our interactions and the imbalance of power in them. Her silences, doubting prosody, and conciseness could also be expressing something else, something that escapes our current ways of thinking, but we are committed to not forgetting those signs, even though we still wonder about their meaning.

## 2. *Motion*

As some lifespan researchers (Bazerman, 2013; Dippre & Phillips, 2020) and researchers of writing across contexts (Prior & Smith, 2020; Kell, 2011) have pointed out, writing has commonly been studied from a one-context perspective. Since the turn of the century, the notion of context has gained increasing attention from writing research (Lillis, 2008). Linguistic ethnography has frequently explored one setting by prolonged immersion in the context, using field notes and detailed observations, among other methods. These techniques have enormously contributed to writing studies, focusing on the writing event or the activities mediated by texts rather than on the written piece as the main object of inquiry. However, exploring writing practices across contexts remains a central challenge (Prior & Smith, 2020).

We commonly depict a movement from one context to another when studying transitions (for instance, from a job to another, from university to a job, etc.). However, research on transition usually focuses on the “new setting”, where the person is transitioning to (see Hebdon, 2015; Megwalu, et al., 2017; Elliott et al., 2019). A step forward to capture the complexity of transitions could be to explore the two reference points in our transition, such as school and university, for example, through a longitudinal study across educational levels. We can take another step forward by looking at the diversity of contexts students engage with while moving from school to university, from one job to another, or from university to work. This multisite approach allows us to explore how people experience transitions in the context of their life as a whole rather than as an isolated phenomenon. In this vein, if we observe transitions at the end of schooling, we can look at people’s movements across context and identities as their life trajectories unfold and explore the diverse roles of writing across these.

To observe movement across time imposes significant methodological stakes. It implies the need to perhaps follow our participants across settings or find meaningful ways to talk with them about their several spheres of social activity. Various studies have challenged the one-setting approach by moving with participants across time and contexts. Nordquist (2017) incorporates time-space mappings and *shadowing* (Jirón, 2011) in his research about writing and mobilities. He “became the shadow” of his participants by walking with them in their daily activities from school to home, from home to extracurricular activities, work, etc. While shadowing participants’ routines, he took field notes, had more informal conversations, and recorded interviews throughout the day. This seems to be a

valuable tool to observe transitions as they unfold across time and context and to explore the writing practices that shape both those movements and settings.

Barton et al.'s (2007) repeated interviews across time with adult learners is also worth mentioning. The researchers conducted several interviews focusing not just on participants' experiences with reading and writing but on the broad context of people's lives in different careers: work, health, education, etc. They use temporal representations of events within these trajectories and explore how writing practices are entangled with individuals' experiences in several life domains. The authors also capture the materiality and spaces of social practices by using photographs of places or meaningful objects. In our current research, we discuss with our participants some of the texts they wrote for school and other contexts. We regard these texts as artifacts mediating concrete activities and ask for them in their original format to see how these cultural tools were used. For instance, some of these texts were notes on a wrinkled piece of paper; other times, they were cellphone notes with letters and emojis. Working with artifacts as they exist in the context of the activity that they mediate allowed us to see through them our participants' several social practices and writing practices.

### *3. Repetition*

Researching transitions as a permanently unfolding process of change over time and across contexts requires detailed observation of people's practices. As other researchers within LWR have stated, longitudinal observations comparing two predefined points—for instance, first and second year of university—do miss the spaces in between. In transition research, those spaces in between are regarded as transitional stages or liminal sites in transition studies. These spaces are precisely one of the defining aspects of transitions, as

moments where changes of contexts and negotiation of multiple identities show the mobility and unsettledness of individuals' experiences. One observation of a particular context or one interview before and after is not enough to capture this subtleness of transitions; on the contrary, we need sustained engagement through repeated interactions or/and observations across time.

A central methodological principle of ethnography is sustained engagement (Hammersley, 2006; Lillis, 2008) in a particular setting. This could be challenging when observing writing practices in transitions as they unfold across several contexts. However, as Lillis (2001; 2008) and Ávila (2021) suggested, long term engagement could be incorporated in research as long conversations with participants. Lillis suggests conducting cyclical talking around text interviews with several encounters with participants. This methodological tool seeks to consider students' perspectives on their processes of meaning-making through writing. This *emic perspective* helps us hold the principle of openness described above and is a valuable way to avoid the *reification* (Lillis, 2008) of what participants say or describe as immutable and easy to translate into general principles.

In our current research, we engage in repeated encounters with our participants. We seek to understand the role of writing practices as students move out from school to new settings after secondary education. Through our interviews, we found many horizontal and micro-level transitions while students were in their last year of school. They faced an unprecedented pandemic that forced schools to shift to online learning. Writing practices mediated by technologies became preponderant in the school classroom with laptops, cellphones, emails, online platforms as new tools for communication and learning. In our first interview, one of our participants told us how difficult it was for her to write on her

laptop. Her dad was a porter and a resident of the building he was working in gave him a disused laptop. This was now the computer of our participant, and she was getting familiar with this new tool: “Technology was difficult for me...even though we are the youth that knows, for me was too difficult,” she says. However, at our second interview a few months later, she had become accustomed to using her laptop for school homework and even for personal fictional writing which she used to write in a notebook. After the first interview, our impression was that technologies could be challenging for students who did not have earlier access to them; the reification of this judgment would have led us to a misunderstanding. We would have missed how new mediational tools could have evolving meanings for our participants and play changing roles in their practices.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have explored the concept of transitions and shown the importance of considering transitions as a diverse and rhizomatic phenomenon. We have argued that the concept of *transition as becoming* is likely to be a more fruitful way to approach transitions for lifespan writing researchers than seeing transitions as simple linear shifts over time. Drawing on researchers from New Literacy Studies and from LWR, we have emphasized the importance of understanding context, identity and time as dynamic phenomena of multiple layers, and discussed methodological implications of this for writing research across the lifespan. In particular, we call on lifespan researchers to adopt the principles of openness, movement across contexts, and repeated data collection across time, to develop fuller understandings of how writing practices develop, transform, and remain, as people transition between different contexts throughout their lifetimes.

## LINKING STATEMENT 2

The previous paper was a theoretical exploration of the concept of transition. On the one hand, this book chapter reflects the process of thinking thoroughly about transitions as becoming, which changed my initial intuitions about the transition from school to university. When I began my PhD, I was thinking of transition to higher education as a process of enculturation and negotiation of new academic conventions and ways of thinking and communicating at the university. By studying transitions as becoming and engaging with my data, I became more aware of the fact that there is a trajectory, a life course within which entering university (or any other transition) takes on its own meaning. In other words, accessing university does not occur in a vacuum but in the frame of students' life trajectories with their own previous experiences, knowledge, practices and transitions. Students come from somewhere, they bring with them their history, fears, dreams and expectations which are ever changing throughout the life course.

I realised that, particularly for students from non-privileged backgrounds in secondary school, their future possibilities were wide open, from starting a job after school to going to university or combining a part-time job with studying a career. At the same time, their experiences before university were diverse, ranging from internships, workshops, political activities and school. By looking at students' life course transitions as a unit of analysis, I could observe their trajectories as a whole, and how they transitioned from school and non-academic contexts before entering university, how they first transitioned to jobs and internships before going to university and how they transition across contexts once in

university. I understood that it is not about moving from school writing practices to university ones, but about understanding the complex and multiple transitions and open expectations that shape students' trajectories when they move from secondary school to post-school settings.

On the other hand, this book chapter helped me to reflect more thoroughly about the methodological implications of taking the approach towards transitions as becoming. The principles I described of openness, repetition and motion are reflected in the following articles. For my next paper, for example, I developed the first interview schedule that was designed to initiate a conversation with my participants while they were in their last year of secondary school. At that point, I did not know which of them would actually go to university, and during the interview, I was aware that I should not assume university as the obvious second step after school. I was open to their own perceptions and views of the future and did not start the conversation with a pre-defined expectation of it. This was very useful to understand what going to university really meant for them in the context of their own life courses.

In my next paper, I explore how students in their last year of secondary school express their identities and agency in writing, both within and outside the classroom. This article looked at students' experiences in secondary school, and their findings reinforce the idea of transition as becoming. It shows how students participate in various activities within and outside school that are mediated by writing; they transition from one context to the other, engaging with different roles and identities across them. The study also shows how the final year of secondary school is a key moment for identity exploration and that writing can serve this purpose.

PAPER 3 | “WRITING IS LIKE A WIDE UNIVERSE WHERE YOU CAN EXPRESS YOURSELF”: EXPLORING IDENTITY, AGENCY AND MEANING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS’ WRITING PRACTICES

Submitted for publication: Montes, S. & Tusting, K. (In preparation to be submitted for publication) “Writing Is Like A Wide Universe Where You Can Express Yourself”: Exploring Identity, Agency And Meaning In Secondary School Students’ Writing Practices". *Literacy Research and Instruction*.

**Abstract**

This study explores how students in their last year of secondary school express their identities and agency in writing, both within and outside the classroom. Relying on 26 interviews with 13 students from economically deprived backgrounds who want to pursue higher education, we aim to identify which writing practices support and which ones hinder students’ identity work and agency in school and non-academic settings. Our research shows that writing practices enable students to explore and enact agency, meaning and identity to varying degrees across different domains. We found that school offers few opportunities for agentive writing and that students frequently have to adjust to teachers’ voices and views. We also found that students have more meaningful and engaging experiences with writing when they are able to express their opinions, make choices in their texts’ structure and style, express feelings and document their experiences in their writing. Lastly, our findings

suggest that students use writing for identity work across domains, particularly when it comes to imagining professional identities they aspire to.

**Keywords:** adolescent literacy, secondary school, everyday literacies, identity, agency.

**Subject classification codes:** adolescent literacy, critical literacy, motivation/engagement/interest, writing.

## **Introduction**

Developing a sense of ownership and agency in writing is crucial for writers' development. Research has consistently shown that writing becomes more meaningful when students can connect it to their own experiences and identities and exercise agency in their writing (Eodice et al., 2016; Ivanič & Satchwell, 2015). This proves especially pertinent in the final years of secondary education, when students are actively exploring potential futures and gaining increased autonomy.

As with any life course transition, finishing school implies exploring new social roles, identities and contexts (Ecclestone et al., 2010), which can be messy and unpredictable for students from less privileged backgrounds (Colley, 2007, 2010; Quinn, 2010) for whom future possibilities are constrained by economic factors and a lack of emergent opportunities. Secondary school students' explorations of future identities and career choices could impact how they use, learn and make sense of their writing at school. This makes it particularly relevant for students to have space for identity work and agency in their writing practices, as "readers and writers can come to understand themselves in particular ways as a result of a literate engagement" (McCarthy & Moje, 2002, p. 229).

However, schools often encourage students to rely solely on authorised voices from textbooks rather than developing their own voices (Baker, 2017, 2018a; Hutchings, 2014; Vetter et al., 2021). This limited space for *identity work* can be especially evident in economically disadvantaged schools (Hutchings, 2014). This lack of opportunities for agentive writing and identity work contrasts with writing practices outside formal education settings, where students can write agentively and consistently with their own identities and values (Ávila Reyes et al., 2021; Ivanič & Satchwell, 2015; Ivanič et al., 2009). Therefore, it is essential to explore how student writers enact agency and engage in identity construction across various domains, while also examining the interplay among these diverse writing practices across contexts.

Many studies have explored the role of agency, voice, and identity in students' writing (Ávila Reyes et al., 2020; Botelho de Magalhães et al., 2019; Hutchings, 2014; Zavala, 2011). However, most have focused on undergraduate students in higher education (Ávila Reyes et al., 2020; French, 2020; Hutchings, 2014; Zavala, 2011) or in doctoral studies (Botelho de Magalhães et al., 2019; Calle Arango et al., 2021a; 2021b). Few studies pay attention to the interplay between secondary school students' writing and identities in both academic and non-academic settings (see Montes & Tusting, 2024b and Vetter et al. 2021). Some works have examined how young people negotiate their identity through literacy practices in particular domains or genres, such as fanfiction writing (Black, 2006), multimodal literacy (Muhammad & Womack, 2015) or dialogic writing assessments at school (Jones & Beck, 2020), but do not pay attention to the interaction among practices across domains. Vetter et al. (2021) have notably observed how students utilize cultural artifacts to facilitate identity work both within the classroom and beyond. Their findings significantly contribute to our

comprehension of the intricate relationship between writing and identity in students' lives, illuminating the notion that writing becomes meaningful when it helps them make sense of who they are. However, this study does not take into account identity work in an educational transition and the role of future expectations within this context.

Building upon these contributions, this article aims to deepen the exploration of the dynamic interplay among writing, identity, and agency within the transitional phase of the final year of secondary school. Our focus lies in investigating the writing experiences of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who often encounter limited opportunities for identity construction within the school environment and grapple with heightened uncertainty regarding their futures after school. Moreover, we work with students who desire to pursue higher education, as we wanted to observe how this factor also played a role in their writing experiences at school and beyond. We aim to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How do secondary school students describe writing practices that either hinder or support identity work?
- (2) How do secondary school students describe writing practices that either restrict or enable their ability to enact their agency?
- (3) How does students' identity work unfold across school and non-school settings?

By exploring these questions, we hope to identify those writing practices that teachers may consider bringing to the classroom to afford students greater opportunities for expressing their identities and agency through writing. We will explore what writing practices that facilitate identity work and agency look like according to the experiences of secondary school

students so that educators can identify specific features to incorporate in their classroom writing tasks. These findings could promote writing pedagogies that are based on what students truly value and enjoy in writing, particularly in the last year of secondary school.

### **Literacy as Social Practice**

This research takes a New Literacy Studies (NLS) approach (Barton et al., 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995), focusing on what people do with reading and writing within specific contexts. These literacy events are part of broader social practices involving attitudes, emotions, values, identities and social relations (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998; Barton & Hamilton, 2000). From this perspective, writing mediates a wide range of human activities and cannot be reduced to an abstract set of skills (Barton et al., 2007; Ivanič, 2004; Lillis, 2001) that can be learned and measured in formal education. Such a perspective is particularly illuminating when we approach secondary school students' writing, as it reminds us that youths use writing in the context of their lives as a whole and not uniquely for academic purposes.

The conceptualization of youth and adolescence has been extensively debated in both theory and research (Lesko, 2012; Moje, 2002, 2015; Petrone, 2013). Traditionally, youth has been viewed as a biologically age-based category, often associated with secondary school (Moje, 2002). However, it has also been framed as a socially constructed phenomenon, defined by specific behaviours, identities, and practices (Petrone, 2013). While social representations frequently depict youth as incomplete, deficient, or troublesome (Lesko, 2012), there is a growing scholarly work addressing youth culture as legitimate, rich, diverse, and deserving of study as a cultural formation in its own right (Alvermann & Kaminski,

2019; Nelson et al., 2020, Petrone, 2013). This formation is dynamic, characterized by fluid and multiple identities (Moje, 2002), which are often expressed through multimodal artifacts, popular media, and digital spaces (Alvermann & Kaminski, 2019).

Young people are frequently depicted as deficient or inadequate writers. Standardized assessments grounded in restricted views of what counts as writing commonly reinforce these beliefs (Applebee & Langer, 2006) and neglect a variety of writing practices students explore outside school. These *deficit discourses* (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Lillis, 2001) are frequently attributed to the rise of new literacies mediated by technologies, which are represented as damaging writing conventions (Maltais, 2012 as cited in Vetter et al., 2021). Such an understanding reflects a *skills discourse* on literacy (Ivanič, 2004; Lillis, 2001), which reduces reading and writing to the ability of decoding and constructing texts according to conventions and grammatical rules and neglects the role of power relationships and identities in writing.

Despite the persistence of deficit discourses around people's writing, research has consistently shown that youths' literacy practices are rich and diverse (Elf, 2019; Ivanič et al., 2007; Lenhart et al., 2008; Vetter et al., 2021). They are also part of young people's experiences of participation in diverse communities where they connect and identify with others and build their own identities. In this research, we are setting out from this perspective of literacy as social practice in order to explore how students in their last year of secondary school find spaces for agency and identity work in their writing practices in the context of their daily life within school and in non-academic settings.

## Identity, Voice and Agency

Identity formation is a socially constructed process (Castelló et al., 2021; Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Ivanič 1998; 2009) in which people identify themselves with other individuals or social values in situated social practices. Writing is intrinsically connected to identity in many ways. It has not just the function of communicating ideas, but also an expressive function – relating to the construction of a personal voice – and a critical function – concerning the ability of writers to negotiate, dispute, and transform writing practices and conventions based on their values and identities (Navarro, 2021). In this vein, writer development – the process by which individuals become more skilled and competent writers – involves expanding individuals’ language repertoires to express their own voices and identities across increasingly diverse domains as they participate in new activities in the course of their lives (Bazerman et al., 2018; Compton-Lilly, 2014).

Writer development implies mastering language resources to convey meaning in a way that is coherent with the writer’s identities, views and styles, which contributes to gaining a sense of ownership in writing (Ivanič et al., 2007; Jakobsen & Krogh, 2019). Being able to take a significant degree of responsibility in the writing process and accordingly develop one’s own writing style and authorial voice is a key feature of advanced writers. Moreover, developing a voice in writing has been related to producing better-quality texts (Castelló et al., 2011).

Ivanič (1998) identifies three aspects of identity: the *self*, associated with feelings and emotions; *roles*, which are stereotyped behaviours; and *ethos*, which relates to individuals’ worldviews and social practices. According to Ivanič, identity is constrained by social

structure as individuals have different *possibilities for selfhood* available in their specific contexts. These possibilities are drawn on and performed in individuals' social practices, including writing.

Ivanič identifies three aspects of identity that writers put in place when writing a particular text: the *autobiographical self* concerns writers' sense of who they are, their roots and life stories; the *discoursal self* refers to the impression writers convey of themselves; and the *self as an author* relates to writers' beliefs, positions and opinions. Ivanič and Camps (2001) also regard the two latter elements as *voice*, the expression of authoritativeness and self-representation in writing. Matsuda (2001) emphasizes that voice is the effect of the intentional or unintentional use of "socially available yet ever-changing repertoires" (p. 40), while Hutchings (2014) incorporates the ability to work with other's voices as a key aspect of voice. According to her, *voice* can refer to "the student's own views and to the ability to present other views as other voices" (p. 315).

In sum, identity is constructed in writing through language resources that intentionally or unintentionally reflect writers' biographical trajectories, the ways they want to sound, and the opinions and positions for which they take authorship. We are using the term *identity work* to signal what writers do more broadly to use language or other cultural artefacts to develop a sense of who they are and to *feel* and be *seen* accordingly with the identities they identify with. We build up this definition from previous works that have regarded identity work as what writers do to *feel* (intrapersonal work) and *be seen* (interpersonal work) as legitimate writers (Bartlett, 2007; Vetter et al., 2021); but also we are drawing on ideas of identity work as the ways writers use language and other resources to construct their identities performatively (Preece, 2018).

Despite the centrality of identity work in writers' development, teachers sponsor teenage students' writing within unbalanced power relationships, which can constrain students' choices for reflecting their own views and values in writing. Brandt and Clinton (2002) define writing sponsors as local or distant, concrete or abstract agents that prompt, regulate, restrict or frame literacy. Possibilities for self-expression in writing are mediated by *agency*, the ability to negotiate contextual demands and constraints to make decisions in the process of writing (Ávila et al., 2021; Eodice et al., 2016; Navarro, 2021). Agency in writing can be described as the "author's ability to take on a position of their own" (Hutchings, 2014, p. 316) in a process in which institutional demands and individuals' positions are negotiated (Cooper, 1995). Students are not entirely determined by their institutional or social contexts, nor do they have total freedom to choose (Zavala, 2011); that is why fully understanding students' possibilities for conveying their own identities in writing involves considering both spaces for decision-making and contextual restrictions.

Some writing practices have been described as particularly agentic. Such is the case of everyday literacies, regarded as those outside formal education that people engage with in their everyday lives (Hamilton, 2006; Ivanič et al., 2009). According to Ivanič, such literacy practices are purposeful, directed to recognizable audiences, interactive and collaborative, learnt through participation, agentic and self-determined. These qualities might be less common in school-sponsored writing practices. However, we believe that students' practices and identities are not confined to isolated domains (Roosen, 2009; 2021), but they interact and influence each other in the context of students' trajectories of participation.

Acknowledging this diversity in students' writing practices is fundamental for a writing pedagogy that recognises students' writing experiences and abilities to communicate

with others, build communities and solve problems through literacy. Such pedagogies would be rooted in “what young people know, do, read, and write and *want to* know, do, read and write” (Moje, 2015, p. 207). This acknowledgement would allow curriculum designers and educators to tailor literacy instruction in a manner that resonates with students’ actual contexts and experiences, ensuring both relevance and meaning in their educational practice.

### **Youth Identity Work and Agency in Writing**

Some studies have explored how youth use writing for identity work in their everyday life writing practices. Black’s (2006) ethnographic case study examined how engaging in an online fanfiction network provided an L2 speaker of English space for English language development and an opportunity to construct an identity as a multilingual writer. This study shows how everyday life writing, such as fanfiction, provides youth opportunities for identity work in a process where identity is constructed and negotiated with other members of a community. Everyday life writing practices have been shown to be an opportunity for young people to construct and contest social identities through both writing and multimodal resources, as Muhammad & Womack (2015) have shown in a qualitative study with Black teen girls who used writing to contest stereotypes.

These studies reinforce that everyday life writing is agentive and can effectively mediate identity work. However, more needs to be known about how agency and identity work is worked, negotiated and harnessed in academic settings. In this vein, Ivanič et al. (2007) explore how some features of students’ everyday writing can be applied to writing assignments in educational contexts. They found that students perceive they learn more and

engage more deeply with writing when they can exercise their agency and make sense of who they are and who they want to become.

Hutchings (2014) analysed written reflections of postgraduate students and found that most participants came from schools where questioning the ideas presented by textbooks and teachers was discouraged, and knowledge was perceived as either true or false. Similarly, Baker (2018a; 2018b) found that reading practices at A-levels were based on pre-packed sources, particularly the textbook, in which there were limited opportunities for independent thinking and research. Even though Baker's work is not particularly focused on identity work and agency in writing, her results accurately describe how school context could hinder such elements in students' writing. Despite these findings, there is still space for students to express their views and opinions at school, as Jones and Beck (2020) show in their conversational analysis of teacher-student interactions in a dialogic writing assessment, in which students display complex manoeuvres to take positions of submission and uncertainty but simultaneously confidently express independent views.

Notably, Vetter et al. (2021) explore how teens describe their writing lives and identity work by observing the cultural artefacts students rely on to feel and be seen as writers. They found that meaningful writing helps students make sense of themselves and the world around them and conclude that teens tend to seem and feel like a legitimate writer when they can choose their topics for writing, receive support and explore their identities.

We would like to build up from these findings to further explore what descriptions secondary school students provide regarding writing practices that impede their sense of identity and agency, how students talk about the writing practices that support identity

expression and agency, and in what ways students' identity work is manifested in writing across various domains.

## **Methodology**

This research is situated within the qualitative interpretative tradition of literacy studies, drawing on some linguistic ethnography principles (Tusting, 2020; 2013; Tusting et al., 2018). We adopt an emic approach (Lillis, 2008), prioritizing a focus on participants' perspectives and experiences with writing over texts as static linguistic objects. This approach demands openness to emergent, complex, and sometimes contradictory data that participants might bring into the conversation (Montes & Tusting, 2024a; 2024b; Rampton et al., 2004, as cited in Tusting, 2020). The research methodological procedures undertaken in this study were approved by the FASS-LUMS Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University (reference number FL20065).

### *Research Context and Participants*

This study is part of a broader research project on literacy practices during the transition from secondary school to higher education. The data presented here were drawn from a purposeful sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for such a project comprising 13 participants, aged 17 to 18. Nine participants identified as female, four as male. All were enrolled in an inclusion program aimed at facilitating access to higher education. This program specifically targeted students who demonstrated academic promise despite facing economic challenges, aiming to promote equity and inclusion in higher education access. Accordingly, all our participants demonstrated high academic achievement and intended to pursue higher education after secondary school.

The participants attended schools located in the metropolitan region of Santiago, Chile, and were in their final year of secondary education. All came from families without university degrees and were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, attending schools located in low-income urban or semi urban areas which presented a high percentage of students categorized as “vulnerable”<sup>1</sup>. The participants were attending either academically oriented (N=6) or vocational schools (N=7). While both types follow the same curriculum for the first two years, vocational schools provide vocational training in the last two years (from age 16). In Chile’s highly segregated school system (Bellei et al., 2018), 65% of students from the lowest quintiles attend vocational schools (Sevilla, 2012).

#### *Data Collection*

We conducted two interviews with each participant over a period of six months. Every participant recorded an oral informed consent after receiving detailed information about the research in text and video format to ensure accessibility. Interviews were conducted online in Spanish (our participants’ first language), transcribed and translated into English.

The first interview followed a literacy history approach (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998; 2000), eliciting biographical accounts of students’ experiences with literacy (Lillis, 2008) (see appendix 1). Using a semi-structured schedule, we discussed their school history, everyday literacy experiences, and future aspirations. The second interview adopted a talking around-text approach (Lillis, 2001; 2008), focusing on students’ perspectives and

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<sup>1</sup> We selected schools rated with a minimum of 80% in the national vulnerability index, an indicator accounting for the percentage of the population vulnerable to dropping out based on socioeconomic factors.

experiences with their texts. We explored various aspects, including the writing situation, process, and identity construction through a flexible interview schedule (see appendix 2).

We also collected 45 texts that were not directly analysed but were discussed with the students during the talking-around-text interviews. Students were instructed to select texts that were particularly meaningful for them, or that represented typical literacy practices. To gain insight into the media and resources utilised by students in their literacy practices, we requested that students present their texts in their original format (for example, a screenshot of a WhatsApp message rather than a transcription of the chat).

### *Data Analysis*

We analysed our data through a recursive qualitative coding process (Glaser, 1998). First, we took notes during each interview to keep track of the topics and relevant issues in the interviews. From these notes, we defined exploratory categories and developed an operational definition for each of them to keep ourselves consistent during data analysis. Second, we conducted two rounds of analysis in NVivo. During the first round, we applied our preliminary categories to a portion of our data to test their applicability and adjust them when necessary. In the second round, we applied these categories with our entire data set and refined them as we contrasted data against data (Charmaz, 2006). This iterative process resulted in a set of emergent categories that served as entry points into different portions of our data, facilitating the exploration of broader issues related to our research questions.

Table 1. Set of emergent categories

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>School writing practices</b>	
	<i>Participants refer to or describe...</i>
Writing for assessment	writing assignments that involve a mark or formal assessment (for example, essay, reports, etc.)
Writing to learn and study	writing practices to understand, retain or reflect on school subjects (for example, note taking, make mind maps or summarizing.)
<b>Occurrence of writing and writing support at school</b>	
Absence of writing	the lack of writing assignments or mention of tasks where writing is minimal or absent (for example, multiple choice quizzes.)
Writing support	the support, training, or feedback they receive regarding their writing.
Absence of writing support	the lack of support, training, or feedback regarding their writing (for example, I had scarce guidance, I had to learn on my own, etc.)
<b>Self-sponsored writing practices</b>	
Pleasure and self-expression	writing for pleasure, entertainment, venting or expressing feelings (for example, writing poems, fictional writing, etc.)
Documenting experience	writing for keeping a record of their own experiences and reflect on them (for example, keeping a diary, personal cell phone notes, etc.)
Community engagement	writing for taking part in communities of interests (for example, writing to participate in an online community, etc.)
Communication	writing to communicate with others and build relationships (for example letters, text messages, etc.)
<b>Tools and technologies</b>	
	mediational tools or technologies they use for writing (for example, notebook, laptop, online platforms, etc.)
<b>Writers' identities</b>	
Current identities	who they are (attitudes, values, beliefs, roles), their abilities, interests or activities they like/dislike.
Future expectations	

	their desires or expectations for their future, including ideas or people driving such expectations (for example, going to university).
Biographical identities	how their writing reflects or is linked to their own life trajectories.
Authorial voice	the writing styles or writing choices they perceive as their own (for example, I can recognize myself in this phrase.)
<hr/>	
<b>Meaningful writing practices</b>	
	writing assignments they perceived as enriching, meaningful or enjoyable.
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In a third round of analysis, we incorporated principles of a rhizomatic analysis (Amundsen, 2021; Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018) by focusing on the multidirectional, overlapping, and sometimes chaotic connections among our emergent categories. At this stage, we re-examined our categories in the light of our multiple notes and memos. We identified "hot spots" (MacLure 2010, p. 282), data that ‘jumped out’ (Taylor & Harris-Evans 2018). In our analyses, these hot spots were particularly dense nodes where several of our categories seemed entangled in meaningful ways. We introduce these emergent issues below. To ensure consistency in the coding process, the primary analyst regularly met with a second researcher to review coding and analysis decisions. These discussions helped refine category definitions and ensured consistent application across the data.

## **Findings**

Our findings are organized around three main themes. First, we describe school writing practices that, according to our participants, hindered their identity work and agency. Second, we identify key features of writing practices that supported their identity work and

agency. Lastly, we explore how identity work was expressed through writing across both school and non-school domains.

*Assessment Culture: School Practices Hindering Identity Work and Agency*

Students described a diverse range of experiences with writing at school, which encompassed a variety of artifacts, roles, identities, and mediating tools. However, exams and tests were notably the most frequent type of school assessment that our participants reported. These assessments provided minimal room for students to engage in self-directed writing, as the teachers held authority over the content, mode, and timing of these practices, limiting students' autonomy and control. Consequently, these assessments offered few prospects for students to explore their identities and articulate personal perspectives, styles, and positions through their writing.

According to our participants, these assignments were content-focused and generally took the form of multiple-choice questions, sometimes including short written answers. They were commonly handwritten and took place in the classroom, even though they turned to the online mode during the pandemic in 2020. Such tests and exams were used for assessment purposes in various school subjects, such as Mathematics, History, and Science. Even in the Spanish Language classroom – oriented to literacy development – tests were identified as the most frequent type of assessment, in which students had to recall information from their readings without much opportunity for extensive writing. This echoes the findings of Wahleithner (2018; 2020), who observed in a university with 60% first-generation students that first-year students described limited opportunities for sustained multi-draft types of writing in school. This situation was also noted in the Chilean schools of our participants, as can be seen from the following excerpt:

You had to read a book a month and then take a test, but it wasn't really about writing about that text, it was mostly just the test and the test questions, and they asked about what the text was about or to summarize the text in your words, but more than that, they didn't make us do much writing (Yeyo, vocational school, literacy history interview).

As can be seen from the excerpt above, the scarcity of writing in school assessments was accompanied by a reproductive approach to learning, in which students mostly had to recall or summarize information from a book, study material or textbook with little space for expressing their own ideas, as evidenced below:

The teacher would spend a month, I don't know ... for example, in science, on the cell, and the test was objective, they focused on the parts of the cell, they gave you the drawing, and you wrote down the parts (Raquel, academically oriented school, literacy history interview).

This inclination towards prioritizing the recall of objective information over knowledge construction, wherein teachers' voices and textbooks serve as the primary authorities and sources of knowledge, is observed across various school settings, including South Africa (Hutchings, 2014) and the UK (Baker, 2018a, 2018b). This trend underscores a pervasive authoritarian ethos within secondary education systems that potentially transcends contexts.

A similar pattern was observed in writing tasks. In fact, students frequently described having to adjust to teachers' expectations and views in their writing in order to obtain good

grades, which restricted the space for agency as the possibility of making choices on their own and taking control over their writing process. In this vein, students avoid expressing their own opinions and try to stick to what was said by the teacher or written in the textbook. The following fragment shows this process of alignment with the teacher's voice in the written answer to a test question:

So I didn't want to go out of what the teacher put in the Power Point, because if I went out of that and put my own concepts about it, maybe the teacher would mark it as invalid, because that is what she is teaching, so I don't like to play outside of what the teachers teach, even though I disagree with the point because otherwise I have to debate with them and defend my point and it's more work (Alejandra, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).

Alejandra perceives she cannot add her opinions to her written response without risking her grades, which restricts her possibility of constructing an authorial self or self as an author (Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Camps, 2001) along with building a sense of ownership over her own writing. In fact, to avoid her response being marked as "invalid", she is willing to even incorporate phrases and ideas she disagrees with. Particularly, she found the phrase "verbal and psychological aggressions" (in italics below) to be redundant. In her own words: "There I disagree a little because verbal aggressions are already psychological aggressions (...) that is why it seemed strange to me, but since she [the teacher] put it, I did not want to change that point". The writing assignment's question and Alejandra's response to it are provided below to better illustrate this point. Alejandra's additions to the text are in bold and points of disagreement are in italics.

Indicate the main characteristics of the concept of discrimination and how it is developed.

Discrimination can be understood as the social exclusion that a community gives to a person for feeling those people inferior to us or unworthy of respect, **either by their sexual orientation due to homophobia, skin colour due to racism internalized many centuries ago by the supposed white supremacy**, religious beliefs due to the imposed Christian supremacy or gender due to machismo and transphobia. One of the most common ways in which discrimination is manifested is *through verbal and psychological aggression*, mainly this kind of acts are committed by ignorance, intolerance and inculcated beliefs and is a major problem and has always been present in society, besides being a learned behaviour.

Alejandra desires to express herself in her response at least through a few additions to the original. She explains: “Maybe I would have made it broader and more developed than what she did, I actually added a few more words than what she put to give it a more personalized feeling, so to speak” (Alejandra, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).

During our conversation, she identified the parts of her answer that she had added herself (in bold above) to “personalise” her text. However, her additions only accounted for 20% of the text in terms of word count. Alejandra’s experience highlights the intricate negotiation process within school writing, where students struggle between conforming to

teachers' voices, even when discordant, and asserting their own perspectives and unique styles.

These excerpts from our data exemplify how the pervasive emphasis on exams, tests, and short written responses, in which students have to summarize or reproduce what the teacher has told or written, restricts the space for identity work and more complex decision-making and agency within the writing process.

### **Fostering Identity Work and Agency: Expressing Opinions, Choices, and Emotions in students' writing**

While school often limits opportunities for students to exercise identity work and agency in their writing, we observed occasional instances of writing assessments at school that facilitated greater autonomy, allowing students to enact their agency and carving out space for identity work. Additionally, we found that students give themselves opportunities for identity work and agentive writing when using writing for leisure or recreation. We found that these writing practices supporting students' identity work and agency could take three main forms: 1) writing that allows students to express their opinions, 2) writing that gives students the possibility of making their own choices in terms of structure, wording or styles, and 3) writing that allows students to express feelings and document their experiences. Notably, the participants described these three forms of identity work and agentive writing as meaningful or enjoyable, which highlights their pedagogical value for engaging teens with writing.

### *Expressing Opinions in Writing*

No matter what genre they were producing, students positively valued writing events where they could give their opinions. They described such events as an opportunity to express “themselves,” showing that conveying an opinion was linked to their own identity or sense of who they are. They also described these writing tasks as meaningful or enjoyable despite the domain where the writing was situated (academic, personal, etc.). This can be observed in the following excerpts:

I have to make a personal comment and that’s what I like the most, because I can talk about the subject without having to inform. Then I can express myself without any limits and say what I think about the topic (María, vocational school, talking around text interview).

I: What do you like about writing? (...)

Dana: So, the area of expressing is that writing is like a wide universe where you can express yourself, giving your opinion (Dana, vocational school, literacy history interview).

As can be seen from the excerpts above, students see a space for identity work in making decisions over the content of their writing (what is said) as far as they can claim authorship over that content and say what they think. These written assignments in which students were able to construct a self as an author –expressing their positions, opinions and beliefs in writing (Ivanič, 1998) – contrast with the pervasive reproductive tendency of school writing.

### *Making Choices in Structure, Wording or Style*

We also observed some writing practices at school and non-school settings that allowed the exercise of agency as they offered students opportunities to make choices about text structure, wording, and writing style. This agentic writing was also described as meaningful or enjoyable by the students, as can be seen from the excerpts below.

It's like always having to follow a structure, just like the structure they give you at school and in these language things, I have never liked it when they impose me to do it. When I do it by myself, I have a great time and when they tell me: "you can create the structure", I do it and I enjoy it and it's like super entertaining (Pepsi, vocational school, literacy history interview).

When I write I do it most of the time, appealing more to the emotional than to anything else. That is to say, the texts I have written that I like and that I use to write are always more emotional. And, as I think about it, I write it, not organizing anything like in school texts, no. I think about it, I write it. But I think it, I write it and so on (Raquel, academically oriented school, literacy history interview).

Students also described writing as an enjoyable activity when they could include words and phrases representing their own personal styles, as we can see from the following excerpt from an interview with Samuel.

I say that it's like something of mine. Because I like to explain and also give like details and synonyms and it's something I always do in everything I write, I like,

I don't like to give like a single word, no, I like to keep giving more explanations to the subject (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).

Samuel develops a sense of ownership ("this is something of mine") over his writing by adding synonyms and extended explanations that he recognised as his distinctive style. These writing styles were sometimes closer to non-academic registers, but many times were, on the contrary, associated with what they described as a more academic or formal tone. For example, Alejandra explained to us that she liked to be more formal in her writing. She described feeling uncomfortable with one school assignment in which she had to mimic the voice of an author of a youthful magazine piece. This assignment was intended to incorporate alternative forms of writing in the classroom, but this was dissonant (Ivanič, 2009) with her own voice:

Alejandra: No, I mean it's not something I use, it's not a type of vocabulary that I use regularly, so I'm kind of embarrassed.

Interviewer: I mean, you don't feel identified with the writing style of this text (laughs).

Alejandra: No.

Interviewer: And how would your writing be different from this one?...like a writing with which you feel "ah, this is me".

Alejandra: More formal, less...more impersonal because I don't know, ee...I usually write things and I don't usually involve that kind of sentimentalism, so to speak, so I usually narrate in a different way.

(Alejandra, academically oriented school, talking around text interview)

From these excerpts, it becomes evident that the enjoyment and sense of ownership students experience in their writing are not necessarily tied to the proximity with non-academic writing styles typically associated with youth writing practices. Rather, it hinges on the freedom within a writing event that permits students to exercise choices regarding structure, wording, and style. This autonomy is what enables students to truly claim ownership of their texts, shaping them in ways that reflect their identities.

### *Expressing Emotions and Documenting Experiences*

Students engaged in various writing practices outside school that supported their identity work and agency, which had the purpose of venting and documenting their experiences and emotions. In order to do so, they relied on different genres and artefacts, such as poems written in a notebook, phone notes that recorded their daily experiences, poems or fictional stories on a computer. In this vein, Dana told us about her practice of writing to both vent and record her daily life experiences, which she did in notebooks every time she experienced something that triggered strong emotions:

(...) or sometimes when I feel angry I start like this to de-stress: "today June 9th, I don't know about June, I feel angry because this happened and the truth is that, no, I... for my part" as well as telling what happened in the day to day (Dana, vocational school, literacy history interview).

Similarly, Samuel told us about one of his poems and how it served him to express himself and vent:

A few days ago. Because... now I'm having a little more time and sometimes when I feel very... I don't know, I feel very emotional, with very strong emotions, I like to write, like channeling what I feel into something else. And that's how this [a text] came out (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).

Samuel, like other participants, described these practices as enjoyable, unwinding and meant to de-stress. In Samuel's words, writing for "channeling feelings" allows him to express what Ivanič (1998) refers to as self, the aspect of identity linked to feelings and emotions. This resonates with Vetter's (2021) findings, showing how students' identity work occurs when students can write from their own experiences. Notably, releasing their emotions and feelings was partly possible for these students because of the lack of "structure" that school-based writing often imposes, as Samuel explains in the following lines:

(...) and I also like writing poems because there's not as much structure and you can write whatever you want and put the words you want and repeat and it sounds nice and it's great the process of writing a poem because you already have the theme and then the words flow and you go thinking about how you are feeling at that moment and it's like...it writes itself (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).

Given this emotion vs. structure dichotomy, literacy instructors could offer more opportunities for free writing without teaching a particular genre or text structure, allowing students to explore writing as a channel to express themselves and enjoy writing as a

liberating exercise. Moreover, giving a margin of freedom in more structured academic writing could eventually promote a more personal and emotional engagement with writing.

Taken together, these accounts underscore how students rely on fictional, poetic and free writing for venting purposes to do identity work –in the sense of expressing their selves as the emotional aspect of their identities. These insights highlight the importance of fostering diverse writing opportunities and embracing a wider range of writing practices to enhance students’ engagement with writing at school.

### **Understanding Identity Work Across Domains**

We observed that students’ identity work unfolded in their writing practices across domains and functioned as a motive for engagement in various writing practices throughout different settings. Particularly, we found that students engaged more actively with their writing when they could use it to build a positive image of themselves that relates to their desired future identities, such as being a professional or a university student. Such identities were constructed beyond academic settings across their academic and non-academic writing practices. For instance, one of our participants described how he did not like to make spelling mistakes when talking with friends on WhatsApp, as this conflicted with a positive image of himself and his imagined future identity as a university student. He developed his spelling entirely outside of the classroom by asking his parents and searching on Google for the spelling of words, as he explained: “I put the word, and if Google corrects it is because it was misspelt” (Federico, vocational school, literacy history interview). He further developed this point below:

(...) but as I was saying, I was not very good at language, so it seems that little by little, with the help of my family, obviously, and when they correct some words or when I am writing on WhatsApp, they tell me: ‘that’s not how it is’. I remember that when I was a kid, I don’t know, I used to write ‘hello’ without ‘h’ (laughs). When I grew up, I didn’t like those mistakes, it was like, I don’t know, I didn’t like that of myself. Then I started to change all those things, my spelling, I said to myself: ‘no, I have to change my spelling, the commas’. Like if I’m going to enter a university, I’m sure I will have to write reports and I will need to have very good spelling, I will have to use commas, and I will have to use periods well, so I’ve been integrating all those things in my life (Federico, vocational school, literacy history interview)

Federico initially encountered spelling challenges in primary school, yet it was during secondary school that he honed his skills through informal writing exchanges on WhatsApp, progressively refining, according to his own perception, his command of spelling. In this way, his desire to feel and be seen as someone who could go to university helped him develop, in a non-academic setting, an aspect of writing that is highly valued in academic contexts. This finding reinforced what Black (2006; 2007) found in her study with a young English language learner. The participant of her study showed a greater command of some aspects of English grammar after receiving gentle feedback from her reviewers and followers in an online fanfic community. Along with our data, these results support the view that by participating in non-academic exchanges with peers, young people can improve different aspects of their writing when their self-image is compromised. In this sense, identity work in

non-academic domains could trigger learning and the development of aspects of writing that are valued both in academic and non-academic settings.

Like Federico, Tisúa—a student at a vocational school—engages in her studies and with writing across domains to feel like a future professional in education. Attending university and becoming a kindergarten teacher represents a desired “possibility for selfhood” (Ivanič, 1998) for Tisúa, even though historically, access to higher education has been limited in her commune of La Pintana<sup>2</sup>, in Santiago. However, Tisúa was aware that her school participated in an inclusion program that was beginning to change how young people in her community could relate to the idea of pursuing higher education. This emerging possibility of selfhood in La Pintana is illustrated by the following photograph of Tisúa’s school, taken from Google Maps, which shows a sign with the phrase: “Higher education is not a dream anymore. La Pintana is joining the PACE program.”

Image 1: Façade of Tisúa’s school from Google maps satellite imagery downloaded in November 2021

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<sup>2</sup> La Pintana concentrates a 32.74% of multidimensional poverty (in contrast with the national 20.7%) (CASEN; 2017) and a 22.3% of overcrowded housing (in contrast with the national 14.6%) (SIIS-T MDS, 2020).



Tisúa expressed that she liked studying at school, and when we asked about her drivers, she said: “wanting something better for me” and added, “to have something better in knowledge... to be a better person myself” (Tisúa, vocational school, literacy history interview). Her wording choices “to be” and “myself” show how the sense of who she was and wanted to be played a key role in her engagement with school.

A safety protocol for a nursery school event was one of the school assignments that served Tisúa’s identity work. Tisúa described this protocol as an opportunity to research and learn, which was linked with the idea of acquiring knowledge and being better, as shown above. The protocol helped her to feel and be seen as a knowledgeable educator. In fact, despite typically offering concise responses during interviews, she expanded enthusiastically when we asked her about the safety measures she developed in this protocol task, as evidenced below:

Interviewer: What has it been like for you to write this research?

Tisúa: ee...yes, I like it, because I learn more by researching and writing.

Interviewer: mmm...super. and what are these research papers you have had to write about?

Tisúa: they are about safety protocols for children.

Interviewer: mmm...and what do you have to write in those protocols? ...what does that text look like, that protocol that you write?

Tisúa: the safety measures of not leaving the children alone, that they can fall and hit, eee...not leaving the doors of the gardens open, because the children can get out or dangerous animals can get in.

(Tisúa, vocational school, literacy history interview)

The safety protocol developed for a vocational major in a school setting was among the writing tasks that Tisúa found enjoyable. This task also resonated with her self-perception as a future educator, aligning with the findings of Vetter et al. (2021), which suggest that meaningful writing aids students to make sense of themselves. This also supports Satchwell & Ivanič's (2010) findings, showing how genres for vocational courses were enjoyable for college students as they relate to their professional identities. However, her aspiration as an educator was not solely built within the academic sphere but also through various literacy experiences spanning different domains. An example of this is her habit of jotting down notes on her cellphone, which facilitated the documentation of her internship experiences in a nursery school, as shown below.

Today is a very important day to me, I start my professional internship in a nursery school in Las Condes, is a very long journey for me, but if I want something better and they are giving me this opportunity I have to appreciate and

value it. The nursery will be launched on Monday 4th of October, so we have to help with the decoration. The head of the school is really nice and said that she will help us with everything we need. I am so happy I already want it to be launched and be with the children. (Tisúa, vocational school, literacy history interview)

Her desire for a career in education allows her to engage with her texts and use them to explore her desired future identity. Specifically, her habit of taking cellphone notes enables her to feel like an educator who enjoys her work and will have something better in her life as a professional.

These examples highlight the interplay between writing practices and the formation of writers' identities across various domains, underscoring how these connections foster students' engagement with writing and their academic pursuits more broadly. Furthermore, they demonstrate that identity development is an ongoing and pervasive process that transcends specific isolated contexts. Academic or professional identity formation, for instance, can occur not only through traditional school assignments but also through informal channels such as WhatsApp conversations and personal writing endeavors.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

This research relied on students' self-reported perspectives without contrasting them with the direct observation of their actual writing practices. An ethnographic, *in-situ* study could complement this work allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how the classroom assessment culture and types of writing tasks shape students' agency and identity

work. Future research could benefit from incorporating direct observation of writing practices in the classroom to complement and validate students' self-reported experiences.

The small sample size of 13 participants means that the findings may not be generalizable to all students, and therefore, caution is required when applying these insights to other contexts. Furthermore, since our study focused on economically disadvantaged students with aspirations for post-secondary education, considering diverse student populations would be crucial to explore the broader applicability of our findings.

Ultimately, our study points to issues that need further examination, such as the potential of identity work to boost students' writing development and support a smoother transition into higher education or other post-secondary settings.

## **Conclusions**

This study highlights the significant role of identity work and agency in secondary school students' writing practices, particularly of those from economically deprived backgrounds aspiring to continue in education. Our findings underscore the limited opportunities within the school environment for students to engage in self-directed, agentic writing in accordance with their identities and aspirations. In fact, exams and tests based on retrieving information from the textbook or teacher's materials predominantly shape school assessments and writing. This assessment culture leads students to conform to teachers' expectations, constraining their ability to express their own ideas and exercise control over their writing process. These results point to the relevance of examining school assessment culture and its impact on writers' development.

Despite the prevalence of these memoiristic and reproductive assessments, our research underscores the importance of providing students with agency and identity work opportunities, which results in more meaningful and enjoyable writing experiences. Such writing practices allow students to articulate their opinions, make independent choices regarding structure, style and wording, and express their emotions and personal experiences. These forms of agentive and identity work conducive writing show effective ways for teachers to promote students' engagement with writing, particularly for students in their last years of secondary school.

Furthermore, our study reveals the cross-domain nature of identity work through writing, particularly in students' endeavours to imagine and construct professional identities. This suggests the need for educational policies and practices that recognise and support the multifaceted role of writing in students' personal and academic development and point to the relevance of academic and non-academic writing practices in supporting students' explorations of their professional identities.

In light of these findings, educators should strive to create learning environments that foster student agency and self-expression through varied and inclusive writing practices. By acknowledging and valuing students' voices and experiences, educators can empower them to navigate their identities and aspirations both within and beyond the classroom, particularly for those students from marginalised backgrounds in their last year of secondary school.

### LINKING STATEMENT 3

The previous paper helped me to understand the type of writing practices students engage with in secondary school. As a university academic writing instructor, I had the opportunity to work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds who had accessed university via inclusion programs in Chile. From this experience, I was familiar with first-year students' struggles with academic writing. However, I had no teaching experience in schools, and little clue of what was happening in secondary school classroom curricula (Deng, 2018) in Chile. Even though I was aware of the fact that academic writing and writing in the disciplines was something new and challenging for newcomers, I had not really weighed the dimension of the shift in writing practices students experience in the transition to university until I engaged with the data presented in the previous paper. I had the opportunity to discuss with them about different types of texts they wrote before entering university and how they could express their agency and identity through them at a moment in their life course when they were gaining more autonomy and were exploring possible future selves.

In my previous article, I also found that students encounter scarce opportunities for identity work and agency in school writing practices, as most of the writing at school was brief (in contrast with extensive multi-draft writing) and reproductive. However, the few opportunities they had for identity work and agency resulted in more meaningful and enjoyable writing experiences. This study also reveals the cross-domain nature of identity work through writing, as students use school and vernacular writing to explore, imagine, and construct professional identities.

This study analysed writing practices of students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds in secondary school and non-school settings. It explores teenagers' writing practices as they occur in one moment of their lives when they are about to leave school and make decisions about their future. I observed that the role of writing is key in this transitional moment, as a tool for identity work and to expand a sense of agency and autonomy. This is a cross-sectional study that helped me locate my participants in one moment of their trajectories. The next article explores what is beyond that moment and how that trajectory continues after school.

PAPER 4 | DYNAMIC BECOMINGS IN THE TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY:  
EXPERIENCES OF NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS ACROSS CONTEXTS AND  
WRITING PRACTICES

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\*The following version incorporates some minimal changes from the original published version. These changes consist of minor stylistic corrections and a few phrases that reflect insights gained over time.

**Abstract**

This study explores the experiences of 11 students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as they transition from school to university. Relying on data from 40 interviews, we utilize Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming* to comprehend students' navigation of different contexts, writing practices, and identities. Our results show that students experience dynamic and multilayered becomings and non-linear transitions as they combine diverse roles and engage in writing practices across domains and timescales. We also found that school students engage in diverse non-academic writing practices, but this narrows down in university as they focus on academic writing demands. However, they use their prior non-academic writing experiences to cope with academic writing at university. These findings challenge deficit discourses about marginalized students' writing and linear views on transition. Based on

the data, we suggest strategies to support students in their transition to university.

**Keywords:** transition, academic literacy, writing practices, higher education, becoming.

## **Introduction**

Higher education has undergone a process of significant expansion and diversification on a global scale. In the last years, there has been a worldwide increase in enrolments and greater diversity within the student population (Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). Data from the UK shows a diversification process from the 1990s onwards, particularly regarding gender, ethnicity, and age (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education/Dearing Report 1997 in Lillis, 2001). In Latin America, similar processes have taken place with the rise in females, ethnic minorities, and low-economic background students (Espinoza & González, 2013). In this scenario, transitions to university have become a relevant issue for research and practice, mainly due to the need to ensure real opportunities for participation and inclusion for every student, especially those historically excluded from higher education.

As university students come from increasingly diverse previous backgrounds, transitions have also become more varied and less fixed, following unpredictable patterns rather than a linear progression from school to college and from college to the workplace. In this context of greater flexibility in individuals' trajectories (Ecclestone, 2009), transitions are now viewed as ongoing processes of becoming, as people move permanently across different settings and identities. From these understandings, transitions have been approached

at different scales. Some authors have paid attention to educational transitions, such as the one from school to college or throughout the university (Baker, 2018a; Quinn, 2010); others have also examined transitions across settings and genres (Baker, 2018a; Spelman Miller & Stevenson, 2018).

Literacy is central in transitions to – and throughout – higher education. Disciplines are areas of knowledge defined by their intellectual traditions, discussion areas, data collection, analysis practice, and particular genres and discourses (Tusting & Barton, 2016), all of which entail using specialized academic literacy practices. Writing is also one of the most common means for assessment, having a gate-keeping role (Lillis & Scott, 2008; Lillis, 2001) by regulating access and academic progress and sometimes narrowing educational opportunities for underrepresented groups. In this manner, writing is critical in students' transitions into, throughout, and out of higher education. Nontraditional students – defined by Lillis (2001) as individuals historically excluded from higher education due to factors such as race, social class, and gender - may face challenges when it comes to academic writing as they may lack previous experience with dominant literacies (Lillis & Scott, 2008). Moreover, their writing experiences may be categorized as less valued under deficit discourses drawing on negative stereotypes, which can lead to overlooking their skills and knowledge from other life domains, impacting their transition to university.

Numerous studies have explored the significance of writing during the transition into university (Jessen & Elander, 2009; Pessoa et al., 2014; Regalado, 2004; Stokes, 2014; Wahleithner, 2020). While some have developed fresh conceptual perspectives on transitions (see Baker, 2018a; Nordquist, 2017), many rely on rigid and linear understandings. Such approaches view the transition as a process that can be organized in stages (Everitt-Reynolds

et al., 2018), a difficult moment to be smoothed over and bridged (Hebdon, 2015; Kodama et al., 2018), and writing in transition as a process of academic acculturation that should lead to academic success and curricular progression (Jessen & Elander, 2009; Regalado, 2004; Stokes, 2014). However, these positionings are often implicit, and only a few studies on academic writing have fully explored the concept of transition. Moreover, longitudinal studies that follow students' trajectories across educational systems are scarce (Baker, 2018a; Bazerman, 2013; Smith, 2020) and studies that account for both the transition from high school to college and across life domains are even more rare.

Some longitudinal studies have shown the complexities of such transitions. Drawing on four-year-long ethnographic case study of linguistic minority students' transitions, Harklau (2001) found that students experienced significant differences between high school and college, for instance in the way instructional time was arranged, and in the assumed responsibilities of teachers and students in the learning process. While writing practices did change from high school to college, these changes were located in broader cultural ecosystems of school and college which were just as salient for students. Harklau argues for the importance of a social-practice perspective on transitions into college literacy practices which recognizes the importance of such changing social and cultural norms and expectations.

Kapp and Bangeni (2020) conducted a qualitative longitudinal study to observe how black working-class students in an English-medium University in South Africa develop their sense of self while transitioning across domains and establishing connections between their home and academic discourses. The study illustrates the importance of students' agency when transitioning to the specific ways of learning and participating in higher education.

However, this research does not account for the specific writing practices that shape students' transition to new social roles and identities at university and their opportunities for participation in higher education. In contrast, Baker (2018b) explored the experiences of students in the UK as they transitioned from A-levels to university and navigated their literacy practices. Baker found that there were significant differences in epistemological cultures and literacy practices across academic levels. While students relied on the subject textbook as the unique source of knowledge at A-levels, they developed more complex texts informed by multiple sources at the university level. However, Baker's study did not consider the role of social class in shaping students' transition to college and their writing experiences. Our research aims to fill these gaps by providing insights into the ways nontraditional students experience transitions into university, and across domains and writing practices.

This longitudinal study explores how students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds experience changes in writing practices and social roles as they transition from high school to university. We rely on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of *becoming* as a lens to better understand the fluid changes of these students as they move through different contexts, writing practices, and identities. The analysis allows us to comprehend the dynamism of students' actual experiences of transition. Based on these results, we suggest some strategies to assist students in transitioning into university life and academic writing practices.

### **Challenging Linear Representations of Transition to University**

The transition to university is often described as a linear, fixed-stage process (Holmegaard et al., 2014; Tinto, 1988; Weaver, 2013). Following Van Gennep's (1960) *rites*

*of passage* framework, some research portrays the transition to university in predefined phases, such as the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation into a new group described by Hillman (2005). This linear approach to transition emphasises induction into university culture (Gale & Parker, 2014), where students' previous trajectories, beliefs and practices must be neutralised and subsumed into a dominant academic culture. Such a view neglects the diverse experiences and struggles of underrepresented students (Colley, 2007; Nordquist, 2017; Quinn, 2010). We believe that it is important to recognise the individual trajectory of each student and not judge them solely based on academic performance or institutional values. In fact, while dropping out is often considered a failure, students may leave university for valid reasons, such as unfavourable circumstances or timing (Quinn, 2010). Universities should be accommodating and flexible towards students who may have different paths and paces in navigating their academic careers.

Non-linear perspectives on transitions are more in line with people's flexible and dynamic life trajectories (Colley, 2010; Ecclestone, 2009; Ecclestone et al., 2010; Gale & Parker, 2014). These perspectives take into account the actual movements of individuals who transition in and out of university, those who move from school to a job and then to university, or students who study and work simultaneously. Such perspectives do not depict transitions as sudden shifts from one stable context to another or as a linear process. Rather, transitioning is a constant state of being, particularly in times of increased flexibility in individuals' life paths (Ecclestone, 2009). This approach also recognises that individuals may hold multiple identities and navigate different narratives and subjectivities (Gale & Parker, 2014).

This understanding of transitions commonly relies on the notions of *rhizome* and *becoming* (see Amundsen, 2021; Gravett, 2019; Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2018). A rhizome is a non-hierarchical system with multiple entryways and exits. According to Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018), this concept is helpful in rethinking students' ways of knowing in transitions. They found from interviews with university students that decision-making in the process of entering university is often fluid, emergent, or accidental and does not necessarily follow a rational evaluation of alternatives. In fact, "their knowing was more of an ongoing happening, an absorption, immersion, and gathering that followed non-linear pathways and was subject to recursive iterations which often produced accidental becomings" (p. 1261). The notion of becoming refers to an ongoing unfolding of the self (Amundsen, 2018) and emphasizes the fluidity of identity as a process of permanent change and development.

Such a view entails conceptualizing identity as fluid, multiple, and in permanent motion. The approach to transition as becoming leads us to avoid generalizing students' various, unique, ongoing, and rhizomatic experiences into stages or predictable universal processes. More fragmented experiences with transition are common in less economically privileged students, as reported by Quinn et al. (2005) in their study with working-class and first-generation students, who dropped out of university before completion but mainly expressed their desire to return to university. Some of those students left university because of the tight economic situation of their families and not because they were necessarily "unprepared".

Lifecourse trajectories are fragmented, dynamic, and unpredictable for many people. Transitions are ongoing processes in individuals' lives; as Quinn (2010) points out, "we are always lost in transition, not just in the sense of moving from one task or context to another,

but as a condition of our subjectivity” (p. 123). People are continually moving regarding their identities, roles, and how they envision possible futures. They are also in constant material motion as they engage in daily activities in concrete settings using specific tools and artifacts such as texts. Higher education institutions should recognise this complexity and offer a flexible curriculum and academic support in learning and writing that acknowledges students’ multiple previous trajectories, rather than focusing on their failure to meet expectations modelled from mainstream transitions of privileged students.

### **Writing in Transitions from a Literacy as Social Practice Perspective**

When students move from school to university, they are not just entering a new homogeneous culture. They are simultaneously engaging in various social domains, such as home, work, and political groups. Each domain has its own literacy practices that are unique to that context (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Barton et al., 2007; Brandt & Clinton, 2000). Therefore, describing the shift from school to university as a move between two isolated contexts ignores the intricacies of human activity and how literacy practices shape and are shaped by these activities (Montes & Tusting, 2024).

Entering university could be better understood if we recognise how students are already moving across contexts, languages, and genres every day. In this vein, Kagan (1991) identifies *vertical transitions*, those that unfold over broader periods of time and organize people’s narratives of their own life trajectories, like entering university, going through a divorce, starting a new job, etc., and *horizontal transitions*, those unfolding on a daily basis such as moving from a school setting to a social community or from university to home. Spelman Miller and Stevenson (2018) even describe moving across genres as microlevel

transitions. As can be seen, in the study of transition, there has always been a recognition of multiple scales, giving us analytical tools to see transition as a complex process that can be looked at on different scales.

According to Burgess and Ivanič (2010), writers' identity unfolds over three different timescales. The *socio-historical timescale* refers to the wider social processes that shape the discourses and possibilities of selfhood available to people at specific times in history. The *ontogenetic timescale* describes the biographical trajectories of individuals. The *microgenetic timescale* focuses on specific acts of writing in particular settings, moments, and times. These three timescales provide different levels of analysis for transitions in both writing and life. For example, students experience new writing practices as they move from school to university in the ontogenetic timescale. However, they also transition between different contexts and writing practices in the microgenetic timescale as they engage in political groups, pursue personal interests, and participate in online communities.

## **Methodology**

Eleven non-traditional students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were the participants of this study. Six were enrolled in academically oriented schools and five in vocational ones. Both school types follow the same curriculum, except that vocational schools offer professional specialisation starting from the age of 16. All the participants came from highly vulnerable schools, as per the educational vulnerability index of the Ministry of Education, which accounts for students' socioeconomic environment

(Correa et al. 2019)<sup>3</sup>. They were also enrolled in an inclusion program that offered a special admission route for non-traditional students in higher education in Chile. We targeted students from such programs to ensure their continuity across educational levels. We contacted them via email and gave them detailed information about the conditions of participation and the characteristics of the study via text and a short informative video. Students agreed to participate through informed consent and legal guardians' consent when they were underage. We stored their personal information in encrypted folders and used pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Nine of our participants joined the study when they were attending secondary school and then continued their participation until their first year of higher education. We interviewed them twice while attending school between August and October 2021, with a time gap of at least a month between interviews. We interviewed them twice again while attending university, first between July and August 2022 and then again between November and December 2022. To gain a better understanding of some of the categories that had previously emerged from our data, we recruited two more participants who were already enrolled in university and who came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and had accessed university via the same inclusion program. In the case of these participants, we explored their school experiences retrospectively. We interviewed them twice while they were studying at university, first in October 2022 and then again between November and December 2022. We conducted a total of 40 interviews over a period of 17 months. We also

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<sup>3</sup> We worked with schools with a vulnerability index of 80% or higher, meaning that at least eight out of ten students were categorised as vulnerable according to socioeconomic factors.

kept conversations with four participants via WhatsApp to clarify aspects of their interviews until March 2023.

We conducted *literacy history interviews* (Barton & Hamilton, 2003/1998; 2000), focusing on participants' life experiences, including those related to literacy, and *talking around text interviews* (Ávila Reyes, 2021; Lillis, 2001; 2008). We recorded and transcribed all interviews for detailed analysis. Additionally, we collected 56 texts that were not analysed themselves but discussed in the *talking around texts interviews*. The students chose these texts because they were either meaningful to them or represented the most common writing practices in school.

Data analysis involved a recursive process of qualitative coding. During each interview, we took notes to track topics and relevant issues. These notes became our exploratory categories, or preliminary codes. Next, we used NVivo qualitative analysis software to adjust our preliminary codes and develop a more exhaustive coding scheme, and an operational definition for each code for consistency. We conducted two rounds of analysis, adjusting our coding scheme as we compared data against data (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, we related our codes and topics to theory, previous research, and our memos.

In this paper, we have gathered selected excerpts that show how academically successful students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds navigate changes in social roles, contexts, and writing practices as they transition from school to college. We chose quotes from our data that were originally categorized under the codes of *biographical accounts* (students' experiences in their trajectories from school to work or university), *identities* (self-descriptions and expectations for the future), *self-sponsored literacy practices*

(personal reading and writing practices), *school writing, university writing, and workplace writing* (literacy assignments in school, university and the workplace respectively). These excerpts shed light on students' experiences transitioning from school to work or university and their engagement in new identities and writing practices across domains.

## **Results and discussion**

### *The desire to pursue higher education*

Our participants often expressed their desire to attend university after completing their secondary education. This desire was often fueled by the hope of social mobility, as can be observed in the following conversation with Tisúa, a student from a vocational school.

-Interviewee: What drives you to study like this?

-Tisúa: Wanting something better for me

And later in the same interview...

-Interviewee: Why do you think your parents are so supportive

-Tisúa: Because they want me to be better than them.

Some students have always viewed going to university as their only option, seeing it as a chance to "be somebody," as expressed by Alejandra, a student from an academically focused school:

-Alejandra: Maybe it has more to do with the fact that I was always presented with a model of what life should be like, where you get into school, you get good grades, you get into college, and you are somebody. So, without that, you're not

somebody. So maybe... I know you don't need to go to college to be somebody and have your life and everything, but it's something that was rooted in me, that if you're in school, you have to go to college.

Alejandra expressed that she may have been influenced by the societal expectation that success is achieved through a specific path of education, including attending college. She acknowledges that this is not necessarily true, and that one can still lead a fulfilling life without following this path. However, this expectation has been ingrained in her, and it is experienced as an enormous pressure, as can be noticed from the following excerpt:

-Alejandra: It was always like: «what are you going to study» and «what are you going to do?» So the idea of not getting into college kind of scared me a lot.

In this way, students' experiences after finishing secondary education are impacted by traditional views and social expectations, resulting in significant pressure for first-generation students. This shows the impact of social structure and socially determined expectations on how people face life transitions (Ecclestone et al., 2010) and illustrates how people's agency is always constrained by their position in social structure and social values. Although linear paths are often assumed in the narratives of the participants in this study, this is not always the case.

#### *Accidental becomings in the transition from school to university: the case of Dana*

This view of transitions as a one-way route from school to university and from university to a profession contrasted with the experiences of some of our participants who, on the contrary, evaluated various alternatives for their future, such as combining work and

studies or taking a sabbatical before entering university. Although most of our participants expressed a desire to attend university, students' actual trajectories were less linear and predictable than expected. Such was the case of Dana, who attended a vocational school. During her final year of secondary education, she informed us that she had no immediate plans to attend university. Her father was a gardener and had been preparing her for the business since she was ten years old. Upon finishing school, Dana intended to take over and work as a gardener to save enough money to pay for her future university studies.

- Dana: I want to work to pay for my studies. I mean, my dad can pay for my studies, but I would like to pay for it myself so that I will work for a while, and then I have the idea to enter university to study advertising.

Our participant was also considering working and studying at the same time:

-Dana: I have to see how I will sort it out because, to be honest, even if I study advertising, I would like to keep my job maintaining gardens because it is what I know most about, and if it comes a moment when I am tired of carrying the machines, cutting the grass, the heat and everything, so if it comes the moment when I say I cannot do it anymore I can work in that what I studied<sup>4</sup>

In Dana's case, the decision to go to university was triggered by her unexpected high score in the national university admission exam and was enabled by the fact that she could receive free education, thanks to the *gratuity law* implemented in the country in 2016

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<sup>4</sup> This excerpt was first quoted in Montes & Tusting (In press).

(Espinoza et al. 2021). Despite having weak support from her father, she entered a competitive public university in the country, mainly supported by her friends who were also pursuing further studies.

-Dana: Yes, so I was happy at the beginning when I did well, I said: «Hey! Studying would be good for me now that I've got good marks and I don't think I'll have the head to take the test again later on». And a friend of mine said to me: «Dana, you did a great job, you did great! You should enter university straight away». And I said: «Yes, yes, I'm seriously thinking about it».

Dana's case exemplifies what Taylor and Harris-Evans (2018) call *accidental becomings*. These are paths that unfold in unpredictable ways, influenced by emotions, experiences, and unforeseen life events. They are not determined by rational decision-making or pre-set plans. In fact, some of our participants did not consider attending university as their only option, and their transitions were not predetermined. Some of them had previous work experience (N=5), planned to work or take a sabbatical before attending university (N=3), or had to take breaks from their studies with the intention of returning to university later (N=1). Their transitions were not linear stages but were rather multiple alternatives. Their eventual decision to pursue university studies depended on various factors, such as exam results, parental or peer support, financial opportunities, and work experiences. Their transitions after school were rhizomatic; they were non-linear and non-hierarchical and spread in many directions.

### *Multiple ongoing becomings and identities*

Some participants from our study, like Dana, combine work with their studies. This implies that they enact various social roles and identities when they enter university apart from being students, which is the case for many non-traditional newcomers in the university (Amundsen, 2021; Taylor & Harris, 2018).

Our participants from vocational schools had prior experience as workers during their professional internships, which were a mandatory part of their vocational training. As a result, before entering university, they were more than just school students and had the opportunity to explore different identities and social roles that influenced their writing practices and writing identities. Through their internships, they underwent complex processes of becoming and adopting new identities and roles that shaped their biographical trajectories. Participants shared their experience of navigating adulthood while attending secondary school, including María, a vocational student.

María: And there I was, all dressed up in formal clothes; I was just like a little chick because it doesn't...it gives you nerves not to be accompanied, but it is like your adult self that has to go out in that circumstance.

These transitions from school to the workplace also involved new ways of doing things through writing and material artifacts (reports, contracts, etc.), which mobilise new identities. Pepsi, another participant from a vocational school, describes how writing played a role in his internship in a human resources unit. Writing tasks at the workplace signalled a new phase of adulthood for him, where things were done for authentic purposes and entailed

real consequences. He explained that writing tasks were not “*for a grade anymore*” but “*formal documents*” in which “*there was money involved*”. He adds:

I dealt a lot with writing up things, obviously more related to legal documents, where they made me write contracts, they made me write reports, and they even made me write important contracts for the company, like things like payroll, bonuses, and things like that.

In this vein, we have observed that students from economically disadvantaged schools bring complex trajectories, writing practices, and identities to university. As they go through various transitions in life, transitioning to higher education is just one of them. At the same time, recent educational policies in the country have expanded access to students who bring these diverse experiences and writing practices into the university—practices that are not readily visible in the classroom curriculum (Doyle, 1992; Deng, 2018) but become apparent when acknowledging students’ trajectories and transitions before and during higher education studies.

#### *Multiple writing practices across timescales*

We observed that our participants engaged in multiple writing practices mediated by artifacts as they participated in activities from diverse life domains, enacting different social roles. Their experiences with writing across time and domains can be organized within the three timescales described by Burgess and Ivanič (2010) and explained above: *sociohistorical*, *biographical or ontogenetic*, and *microgenetic* timescales. These distinctions allow us to observe people’s transitions at different levels, such as biographical transitions

from school to university, and micro transitions in the same life stage as moving between university and workplace.

Recognizing different timescales allowed us to represent the diversity of writing practices students engage with. Such complexities prevent us from depicting students' transitions as movements from one homogenous stage or set of experiences (school) to another homogenous space (university). On the contrary, while students attend school (*biographical timescale*) they also engage in various social practices where writing plays a role in their daily activities (*microgenetic timescale*). Hence, their identities and writing experiences cannot be reduced to those situated in schools, and when they enter university, they bring with them all those diverse experiences with writing that can be harnessed for deeper and more meaningful learning.

This diversity is summarised in Table 1, which includes the domains, practices and artifacts that our participants engaged with while they were attending school, completing internships, and attending university. We report here artifacts that were mentioned, even if they were referred to only once. We did not quantify mentions of each artifact as the number of times they were referred to did not reflect their relevance or impact on students' experiences (for example, multiple-choice tests or exams were sometimes mentioned just once by some students, but they were always referred to as the most frequent type of assessment at school). We captured all the artifacts that were mentioned in different biographical moments to observe how the types of artifacts and practices change over time and across domains. We listed those that were described as more frequent first.

Table 1. Students writing practices and artefacts across timescales

Sociohistorical timescale: possibilities for selfhood (role models, discourses, values, etc.)							
Biographical timescale							
		Attending school		Completing an internship for a vocational major	Attending university		
Microgenetic timescale	Domains	Academic (School)	Self-sponsored	Professional	Academic (University)	Self-sponsored Professional	
	Practice	Taking a school assessment. Studying for school assessments.	Communicating with peers. Documenting experience and venting. Finding things out and taking part. Exploring creativity through fictional writing.	Responding to internship tasks.	Taking a university assessment. Studying for university assessments.	Documenting experience and venting.	Performing a part time job. Searching for a job. Advertising a personal business.
	Artifacts	Multiple choice exam. Open-ended exam questions. Lecture notes. Summary. Mind-map. Emails. Essay. Report. Curriculum Vitae. Contract.	Text message. Cellphone notes registering events and thoughts. Instagram post. Diary entry. Book and game review. Poem. Novel. Formal letter to school authorities. Letter for friends or significant others. Film script.	Stock list. Contract. Report.	Lecture notes. Report. Essay. Open-ended exam questions. Multiple choice exam. Summary. Mind-map. Email. Sketch notes. Project. Logbook.	Text messages. Cellphone notes registering events and thoughts. Diary entries. Biography of a family member.	Reminder notes WhatsApp and SSMM ads. Curriculum Vitae Letter of interest

We observed from our data that students scarcely wrote as part of a school assignment, as we have shown in paper 3 of this thesis. School assessments were usually mediated by multiple-choice exams or short answers and rarely involved more extended written pieces. In contrast, our participants typically (but not always) wrote extensive texts, such as reports or essays, or longer and more complex answers to open-ended exam questions at the university. These findings are convergent with what Baker found in her research with students moving from A-levels to universities in the UK. She observed a strong assessment culture (Baker, 2017) in A-levels and a shift to more complex writing tasks at the university (Baker, 2018a). The prevalence of multiple-choice tests or exams in our study can be

observed in the following excerpt from Cristóbal, a student from an academically oriented school. He notes that tests were the most frequently assigned tasks, particularly in language, philosophy, and history, despite these subjects typically requiring more complex and lengthy writing.

The most common ones were basically tests, in other things like language and philosophy, like these more humanistic subjects, except for history, there were more types of works, essays, texts, of producing things, although in language there were many tests, mostly the same, in history they were mostly tests and from there on, only tests.

As can be seen in Table 1, despite this lack of opportunities for extensive writing at school, our participants commonly engage in self-sponsored writing practices in various non-academic contexts while attending school (*biographical timescale*), such as composing a poem to express feelings, writing biographical accounts and thoughts as cellphone notes, keeping a diary, writing political messages in social media, among others. For example, Pepsi told us about his practice of sending videogames reviews to his friends via WhatsApp:

For example, I also have several friends who like some things that I do, some games, some texts that I read, so the only big thing that I write are recommendations and synopsis of these texts, of these games

Another participant told us that he joined a political organization when he was a school student. He had got involved in politics because of his mother, who was an environmental activist. He explains: "*I was always, that is, when I was a kid, I was... I lived*

*in a political environment*“ and adds, *“They made me read about politics since I was 13 or 14 years old”*. Vicente participated in a left-wing student movement as a propaganda secretary. He explains how he used writing in social media to promote political messages:

Vicente: What did I write? I wrote... I don't know how to define it; it was about politics, and for example, publications about politics on Instagram, I wrote, how do you say it? I mean, they asked me to write...an Instagram publication has the photo, and below it has the text, right?

Interviewee : Right.

Vicente: Yeah, I would write that text. I would write that text when they asked me to write.

Interviewee : Who asked you to write this?

Vicente: In my political organization. I used to write several texts about that.

The fact that students engage with a variety of self-sponsored writing practices has been reported before (Ávila Reyes et al., 2020 Ávila Reyes et al., 2021; Ivanič et al. 2009; Zavala, 2011). However, we found that the extent to which our participants engage in those practices changes over time as they move from school to university.

At the university level, our participants typically (but not always) wrote extensive texts, such as reports or essays, or longer and more complex answers to open-ended exam questions. However, the variety of writing practices narrows in terms of the domains they were produced in. Students express not having time to read and write for pleasure or in non-university contexts and concentrate their efforts in understanding the new academic learning and writing demands:

Interview with Yeyo (university level)

Interviewee: Yes, yes. Hey, Yeyo, in the last interview you told me that sometimes you wrote poems or messages to your girlfriend, do you still write those things? how... what things do you write outside the university?

Yeyo: No nothing, nothing anymore, now I write mostly in notes on my cell phone, I write basically what is important and what I need, things like that (...)

Interview with María (university level)

Interviewee: (...) moving on to other types of writing, when we talked, I remember you used to write poems. Do you still write them?

María: No, no, there is no time, there is no time, I only write summaries.

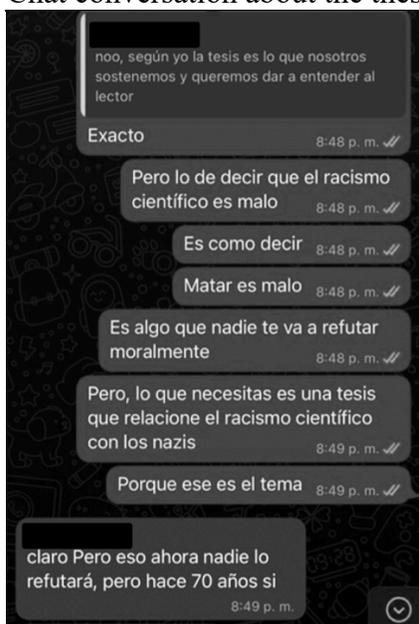
Despite this scope reduction in students' reading and writing practices, they still use what they have learned in non-university settings to make sense of their current university learning and writing demands. Elías explains how reading recreational nonfiction books helped him to build arguments in argumentative writing at university; others, such as María and Yeyo, have maintained writing practices for studying that they developed independently at school (such as summaries or mind-maps). Similarly, Alejandra, a student from an academically oriented school, told us how she and her classmates used text messaging, a non-academic writing practice, to organise the writing of a group essay. As can be seen in the following image, Alejandra discusses with their peers what counts as a thesis and what does not.

Image 1. Chat conversation of Alejandra when she was attending university

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### Chat conversation about the thesis in a group academic essay (original and translation)

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Student: -Noo, according to me, the thesis is what we state and what we want the reader to understand.

Alejandra: -exactly  
-But to say that scientific racism is bad  
-It's like saying  
-Killing is bad  
-It's something that no one will morally refute.  
-But, what you need is a thesis linking scientific racism to the Nazis.  
-Because that's the issue

Student: -Of course, nobody will refute that now, but 70 years ago they did.  
-Not the killing

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Vanesa also relates her academic writing in one of her modules in Architecture with her previous experience in a poetry workshop she attended outside school when she was in secondary education:

They always ask me, whenever I go to do a sketch, they ask me to write something about what I'm drawing, that for me was like, ah, thank goodness, I took a literature workshop to be more prepared for this, because basically it's like a kind of poetry.

These productive connections among writing practices across domains have also been observed by Calderón Araya et al. (2023), who find that high academic achievement students can transfer knowledge from their vernacular literacy practices to their academic literacy demands at the university. In the same direction, these results show that students can harness their previous writing experience to respond more creatively and effectively to academic

writing. At this point, it is worth noticing that self-sponsored writing practices and academic writing do not exist in completely isolated and distinct domains. Students, on the contrary, bring to the university their literate experience as a whole to make sense of new challenges and use their various linguistic repertoires and practices to encounter academic demands.

Our data shows that these students recognize several transitions along their life trajectories (biographical timescale), such as starting an internship or leaving school and entering university. They also transition among domains, identities and writing practices that shape their daily life experiences and impact their transition into university. Students write in various domains while in school, in a job or at university. Their writing practices and the artifacts mediating these practices are shaped by the social contexts in which they are participating. The variety of self-sponsored writing practices tends to narrow when moving from school to university, as they focus on mastering more and more complex writing demands in their university courses. However, they bring their cross-domain experiences as writers to encounter these new academic challenges, connecting vernacular and institutionalized practices and potentially providing new ways to explore facets of students' academic writing.

## **Conclusions**

This study followed students from marginalized backgrounds as they transitioned from high school to university and examined how their writing practices and social roles changed. We used the concept of *becoming*, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and the notion of *timescales* from Burgess and Ivanič (2010), to better understand the fluid

changes in these students as they moved through different contexts, writing practices, and identities.

Our research found that many non-traditional students had prior work experience. While they expressed a desire to attend university, some viewed it as just one potential path for their future. Moreover, their decision to pursue university studies was sometimes the result of *accidental becomings* rather than the consequence of pre-planned rational decisions. Our data also showed that students from economically disadvantaged schools had taken on different social roles and identities when they entered university. Additionally, our participants who came from vocational schools had previous experience of becoming adult workers during their professional internships, bringing more complex identities and experiences with writing to the university and reinforcing Ecclestone's (2009) observations of diversity in individuals' trajectories.

Finally, we observed that our participants engaged in multiple writing practices mediated by artifacts as they participated in activities from diverse life domains, enacting different social roles. Despite the lack of opportunities for extensive writing at school, our participants commonly engaged in self-sponsored writing practices in various non-academic contexts while attending school, such as composing a poem to express feelings, writing biographical accounts and thoughts as cellphone notes, keeping a diary, writing political messages in social media, among others. This variety of writing practices narrows down when they enter university as they privilege academic writing demands. However, to cope with the demands of academic writing at university, students often rely on their prior writing experiences outside of academia. Overall, our data showed that these students experience several transitions along their life trajectories, such as starting an internship or leaving school

and entering university. They also transition among domains, identities, and writing practices that shape their daily life experiences and impact their transition into university.

Based on these results, we suggest some strategies to assist students in transitioning into university life and academic writing practices based on Gravett's (2019) ideas of transitions as rhizomatic and fluid, troublesome, ongoing, diverse, and enriched by students' multiple experiences. First, as transitions are *rhizomatic and fluid*, students bring a wide variety of previous educational, work, and leisure experiences with them that can enrich university learning and academic writing experiences. Even though the educational system attempts to place boundaries around writing practices for distinct stages across time and educational levels (Nordquist & Lueck, 2020), students cannot be reduced to one homogenous average trajectory. Second, as transitions are complex and *troublesome* (Harklau 2001; Quinn 2010), we should consider negotiation and resistance of academic writing as a natural part of the learning process in higher education rather than hoping students incorporate academic writing conventions blindly. Third, as writing practices and identities attached to them are *ongoing*, writing support should not be exclusive to the first year, as students do not adapt to one unified and stable set of conventions once and for all. Fourth, as students experience *diverse* previous and current experiences with writing, writing support cannot predefine a homogenous group of students with the same knowledge and experiences but offers opportunities for students to bring their varied writing experiences to build up from them to get to new learnings. Writing assessment at university could be broadened to recognize multiple ways of learning from students' different learning trajectories, incorporating recognition of feedback and collaborative work in the writing learning process. Sixth, we should celebrate students' *multiple experiences*, previous

knowledge, and ways of knowing, opening up opportunities for historically underrepresented groups (Lillis & Scott, 2008). Teaching academic writing should be an invitation for students to both challenge and bring in their existing ways of thinking and writing.

## CONCLUSION

Higher education worldwide has undergone significant expansion and diversification, particularly in terms of student enrolment and demographic diversity. In this context of widening participation, studying educational transitions of historically marginalised students becomes particularly relevant. This research explored students' writing experiences from vulnerable contexts in their transition from secondary school to university.

First, I explored the concept of transition in the field of writing studies and educational research in an unpublished literature review. To do so, I conducted a literature review in which I examined how transitions have been conceptualised in studies about writing in the transition from secondary school to higher education. I found that writing studies have not accounted for the concept of transition. As a result, most studies see transitions as a transparent background, missing the opportunity to critically reflect on how different understandings of transition can shape the way we collect, explore or analyse data. Moreover, research on writing in the transition to university typically focuses on the first year, and few studies explore such transition longitudinally, tracking students' trajectories from secondary school to higher education (see Baker, 2018; Harklau, 2001). It is also worth mentioning that none of the studies I collected in the literature review included vernacular writing practices during transition, which also reflects a traditional understanding of the phenomenon of transition itself.

In my second paper, published as a book chapter by the WAC Clearinghouse (USA), I examined the contributions of a rhizomatic approach to transition and its methodological implications for *Writing Across the Lifespan Research*. I emphasised the relevance of openness, motion and repetition throughout the research process. With the principle of

*openness*, I emphasised the need to acknowledge diverse trajectories when I looked at transition and to avoid exploring future possibilities from mainstream social expectations. Regarding the principle of *motion*, we highlighted the relevance of looking at transition as a process of change that is dynamic and permanently unfolding over time. Following this principle, I suggest looking at transition at a *biographical timescale* (Burgess and Ivanič, 2010) as individuals move through their biographical trajectory over time, but also at a *microgenetic timescale* as people transition across domains in one time frame. Finally, to observe transitions openly and in motion, we suggest the need for repetition or long conversations (Lillis, 2008) in the engagement with participants over time.

In the third paper, currently in preparation for publication, I introduced a cross-sectional qualitative study with 13 secondary school students from economically deprived backgrounds who wanted to pursue higher education. In this study, relying on 26 interviews, I explored how students in their last year of secondary school express their identities and agency in writing, both within and outside the classroom. From this work I could thoroughly explore secondary school students' experiences with writing as they were preparing for their after-school possible futures. We found that secondary school students have scarce opportunities for identity work and agency in school writing, but when these opportunities are available, writing becomes more meaningful and motivating. We also observed that students use vernacular writing to construct their desired future professional identities, which challenges the very idea of domains as delimited spaces with circumscribed roles and social identities.

Third, I conducted a longitudinal study, published as a research article by *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura (RLEE)*, in which I explored the experiences

of 11 students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as they transitioned from school to university. Relying on data from 40 interviews conducted over seventeen months, I utilised Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming* to comprehend students' navigation of different contexts, writing practices, and identities along their transition. I observed that students engage in a wide variety of writing practices and enact diverse social roles and identities through them as they move across secondary school, to internships, social or political activities, and university. We also found that the rich variety of writing practices students engage with narrows down when they enter university, as they invest most of their time in their studies, including disciplinary writing. Notably, they use their previous vernacular writing experiences to face academic writing demands.

Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of transitions as a social phenomenon and of the complexities of writing throughout educational transitions, particularly of those experienced by historically marginalised students. As a whole, I believe this collection of papers represents theoretical and methodological contributions to the field of writing studies. First, they provide a conceptualisation of transition as a unit of analysis for the study of literacy. By using the concept of transition as a change of context, social roles and identities both socially determined and agentively shaped, we recognise that finishing school is constrained by a series of social expectations, values, and desires, but at the same time we acknowledge the very specific circumstances of people's life and space for self-determination. This means that we can recognise the fact that finishing school can be a challenging time as students make socially constrained decisions about their future and, at the same time, they are experiencing simultaneous changes of social roles and identities as they participate in different life domains. This complex transition scenario shapes

experiences with writing, and acknowledging this complexity helps us to better support students who navigate these changes, particularly those from non-privileged backgrounds, for whom the future might be more uncertain.

Second, the empirical articles included in this thesis repeatedly show that students engage in diverse writing practices, social roles and identities as they move from secondary school to higher education. Significantly, the notion of “domain” as a clearly bounded space associated with specific social identities—distinct and separate from other domains—tends to become increasingly blurred if we looked at this data. As illustrated in the first empirical article presented in this thesis, students engage in writing practices that allow them to position themselves as future professionals or as university students, often through seemingly informal means such as cellphone notes or WhatsApp conversations. Likewise, they draw on resources from their vernacular writing experiences to navigate academic writing demands—for instance, by summarizing content as they did in school, or by incorporating poetic forms of writing to respond to disciplinary writing tasks. These findings suggest a form of continuity in students’ writing experiences. There is a subject who walks through a life trajectory and across transitions, who brings with them multiple identities, roles, and practices—originating in various domains. Students bring their histories and experiences, what they have learned, and the identities they have identified with across domain boundaries.

Finally, there are at least two methodological contributions of this thesis. First, it provides the methodological principles of openness, motion and repetition to explore transitions in writing studies. Second, by bringing together transition conceptualisations and New Literacy Studies, it offers a model to organise data collection in three timescales

throughout a transitional period: sociohistorical timescale, biographical timescale, and microgenetic timescale. This analytical tool provides a replicable system to look at and organise complex data in the transition and, at the same time, helps us to visualise the various layers of life course transitions.

## LIMITATIONS

This research, while offering theoretical and methodological contributions to the study of writing transitions, also presents certain limitations.

First, the empirical studies involved a relatively small group of participants (13 students in the cross-sectional study and 11 in the longitudinal study), which limits generalizability. Although the depth of qualitative data offers valuable insights, broader patterns across diverse institutional and cultural contexts may not be fully captured. Moreover, the findings reported in this thesis should be interpreted in consideration of the contexts and specific circumstances of the participants, including the fact that they were academically outstanding first-generation students. This is a relevant consideration, as exploring after-school transitions of students from marginalized contexts and the role of literacy in such trajectories is still uncovered by this research.

Second, the longitudinal component covered seventeen months, which provided significant detail but did not extend into later stages of students' university experience. As a result, the long-term sustainability of the strategies students developed to navigate writing in higher education remains unexplored. Third, while this research emphasised vernacular and academic writing practices, other modes of communication (such as multimodal or digital practices beyond texting and notes) were not systematically included, potentially leaving out key aspects of students' literacy repertoires. Finally, the research was conducted in a specific socio-economic and geographical context, which may limit its applicability to other regions or educational systems with different structures and resources.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Building on the findings and limitations of this research, future studies could expand the exploration of writing transitions in several ways. First, longitudinal studies that accompany students before the final year of secondary school and beyond the initial years of higher education could contribute with nuanced accounts of transitional writing practices as they change over time. This would provide a fuller picture of the sustainability of the strategies students develop and how they make sense of their writing throughout their life trajectories.

Second, expanding the scope to include larger and more diverse populations, both in terms of academic trajectories and institutional types, would allow for greater comparative analysis across socio-economic, geographical, and cultural contexts. In particular, future research could investigate the experiences of students who are not necessarily academically outstanding, and of those who might not transition to university but encounter literacies in their jobs and every life after finishing secondary school. I believe it is particularly key to understand how literacy plays a role in lifelong journeys and transitions within them. Such an understanding would allow to develop school literacy, academic literacy and adult literacy support to smooth transitions of those who might be in disadvantage.

Third, further work could explore multimodal and digital writing practices more systematically, examining how students draw on a wide range of communicative resources to construct their identities and navigate transitions. Attention to such practices would enrich our understanding of students' literacy repertoires in increasingly digitalised educational environments.

Finally, future could examine how some implications of these findings for writing instruction can be tested in classroom practices and institutional policies. Such work would have the potential to generate actionable strategies to support historically marginalised students in their transitions, bridging theoretical insights with practical educational impact.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this thesis carry important implications for both research and practice. Conceptually, the study positions “transition” as a central unit of analysis for writing studies, demonstrating how literacy practices are deeply entangled with shifting social roles, identities, and contexts. This reconceptualisation can inform future scholarly work by encouraging researchers to move beyond fixed notions of domains and instead to examine the fluid, overlapping nature of students’ literacy trajectories.

Methodologically, the principles of openness, motion, and repetition introduced here provide a framework for engaging with participants in ways that recognise the complexity and continuity of their lived experiences. This approach has the potential to inspire future qualitative research designs that are more responsive to students’ voices, histories, and agency.

From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight the importance of recognising and valuing students’ vernacular writing practices as resources for navigating academic demands. Teachers, curriculum designers, and higher education institutions can draw on these insights to create pedagogical and institutional supports that legitimise students’ diverse literacy repertoires, rather than narrowing them to disciplinary writing alone. Moreover, by acknowledging the challenges faced by historically marginalised students during transitions, institutions are better positioned to design inclusive policies and interventions that foster equity and social justice in higher education.

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## APPENDIX

### 1. Appendix 1: Participants E-Mail Invitation

\*Participants received a Spanish version of this e-mail. The Spanish version was faithful to the contents expressed in this document.

**Dear [Name]**

My name is Soledad Montes, PhD student at Lancaster University. Through this email I would like to invite you to participate in a study about the development of writing in young school and university students.

#### **Why is this study important?**

Writing practices have changed along the years, we need to understand better how young students write today in order to help teachers, directors and educational policy managers to better understand the writing challenges faced by students in different contexts.

#### **What would my participation involve?**

To be part of two interviews, to record some of your writing habits and to select two texts written by you that you find significant. All the information you provide will be used anonymously, so don't worry!

#### **Any benefits for you?**

Besides you will join a friendly space where you can share your own experiences about writing, you will receive a **GIFT CARD of £10** at the end of the process as a reward for your collaboration.

#### **What if you are under 18 years old?**

You can still take part, but your parents or legal guardians must give their consent too. In that case, I will explain to them all the details of the study, so they know clearly what this is about. This will allow them to help you on taking a smart decision about getting involved in this study or not.

#### **Do you want to help?**

Just indicate your interest in participating in the study in response to this email and I will contact you with all the details you need.

I hope to see you!  
Kind regards,  
Soledad

## **2. Appendix 2: Data Collection Instruments**

### *2.1. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE | Literacy history interview (school level)*

#### **History, circumstances, and life transitions**

- In which school do you currently study? Where is it? Were you always there? How did you get to that school?
- Over the years at your school, was there any year that felt different or new to you?
- What do you normally do after school? What do you like to do in your spare time?
- What do you like/dislike about your school/high school?
- What was it like to move to secondary education, did it change anything for you?

#### **Writing at School—Practices and Identities in the Present**

- How has the last year of secondary school been for you?
- Who would you say has been your greatest supporters this year?
- Which subjects do you like the most? Did you always like those?
- How have school assessments been this year? Do you think they have changed, compared to previous years?
- What are those texts you have written like? What do you usually write for high school?
- To what extent could you give your opinion in those texts?
- What has it been like for you to write those texts? (you like it, it's easy, hard)
- If you had any difficulty with writing, who would help you? Have you ever reviewed comments on your writing?
- Generally, what media do you use to write? (by hand, on a computer, etc.)?
- And where do you usually write?
- Is there anything you especially like to write? What do you like about writing that?

#### **Writing Outside School—Practices and Identities in the Present**

- Is there anything you like to write outside of school?
- What have you written about these activities?
- How did you write \_\_\_\_\_? Where were you? With whom?
- In the last year, have you had to carry out procedures or obtain information to solve something practical? How to request information about PACE find out how to apply, find out about benefits? What was it like to write that text?

#### **Imagined futures**

- What are your plans for the next year? What do you think are your main future challenges?
- What are your plans for when you finish fourth grade?

#### **Closing**

- Is there anything else you want to comment on or add?

## 2.2. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE | *Literacy history interview (university)*

### *History, circumstances and transitions*

- Our last interview was at the end of September last year, and you were finishing your final year of school. What has happened since then?
- Try to go back in your memory to that first day you entered [university]... could you describe that day?
- And after that day, think about what followed. What is a normal day like in your [university]? What kinds of daily activities do you do? Which activities were new to you?
- Think about your life before entering [university] and now, how do you think it has changed? (How have your daily routines changed? How has your social life changed? How has your relationship with your family changed?)
- What were your expectations before entering [university]? How was your actual experience?
- If you have any problems at [university] (academic or personal), who do you turn to?
- What helps you keep going when things get difficult at [university]?
- Who has supported you during this transition?

### *Current practices and identities – academic writing*

- Tell me about your [university courses]... What [courses] are you taking this year?
- How was it for you to learn these new contents?
- What is it like to write at [university]?
- Do you think entering university has changed the way you write? How? What is the difference?
- Is there anything you like to write for university?
- Have you already had some [assessments]? ROUTE YES
- What [assessments] have you had in your courses so far?
- What were they like (essays, tests, etc.)? Could you describe them?
- What do you think they expected you to do in the (essay, test, etc.)? How did you find out what they expected?
- How did you submit these assignments? (Is there a platform, system, etc.?)
- Try to remember a time when you were completing one of these tasks (essays, reports, tests, etc.)... Could you describe that moment? (Where were you? What were you using to write? Could you describe the whole situation so I can picture it?)
- What was it like for you to write that (essay, report, test)? (Did you like it/not like it? Did it seem easy or challenging?)
- How do you feel before an assessment at [university]? Could you describe a particular situation? Was it the same in school? What makes you feel that way?
- What do you think helped you write this [assessment]?
- Are there any other [assessments] you will have this year?
- What do you think these [assessments] will be like? How will you find out?
- Have you already had some assessments? ROUTE NO

- What kinds of [assessments] will you have this year in your courses?
- What do you think [these assessments] will be like? How did you find out about this? (How do you know this?)
- How are these [assessments] presented? (Is there a platform, system, etc.?)
- How do you plan to prepare for these [assessments]? Have you received any help to face these [assessments]?
- When will your first [assessment] take place?

*Current practices and identities – vernacular writing*

- Last time I spoke with you, you told me that you enjoy writing (romance novels). Do you still write those novels?
- What motivates you to write these texts?
- Last time I spoke with you, you also told me you wrote (notes on your phone to record things that happened to you, like a diary). Do you still write those notes?
- What motivates you to write these texts?
- What other things do you write that are not for university?

*Imagine future*

- What are your plans for the next year? What do you think are your main future challenges?

2.3. *TALKING AROUND TEXT INTERVIEW (school and university)*

**Context, media and spaces**

- What was the moment of writing like, if you could go back and see yourself...
- how are you, where are you, what are you wearing, what do you see...?

\* Explore the situation of writing

- Time (consider deadlines and time constraints)
- Domain
- Purpose
- Participants
- Activity involved

\* Explore the process of writing

- Place
- Space
- Actions
- Tools

**Reading aloud**

- Could you read it aloud for me? How does this sound to you?

### **Decision making**

- You used a “we” here, who are “we” for you?
- Why did you choose to use this form?

\* Explore writer’s textual choices, particularly consider:

- Remarkable differences with school texts choices
- Authorial voice (use of first person, hedges, boosters, discourse markers, use of metaphors, etc.)
- Intertextuality (direct/indirect quotations, sources, using quotation norms, etc.)
- Knowledge treatment (reproducing, repeating, voice, comment, compare, etc.)

### **Identities**

- Why did you choose this piece of writing? What do you like about it?
- What happens to you when you listen to your writing? When you read it, is there any specific part in which you recognize yourself? Like yes this is me speaking!

\* Explore writers’ sense of ownership and attitude towards their writing

- The extent to which students like or dislike the piece of text being discussed
- The extent to which students see themselves in their writing (I can tell I wrote this/ This is clearly me speaking/ This is very much my own style)/ Questions: In which part of this text can you see yourself? where would you say, “yes, this is clearly me speaking” or “I can see myself here” In which part of your text you would say “nah this is not me at all”. Where can you recognize other’s voices?

### **Closing questions**

- Last time we talked, you told me that your writing had changed after entering university in this way...how do you see it now? Do you see something new or different going on with your writing? / Do you feel your writing has changed since the last time we talked?
- Is there something else you would like to add

### 3. Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

Project Title: Writing practices across the lifespan: the transition from school to university

Name of Researcher: Soledad Montes; Supervisor: Karin Tusting

Email: [s.montessanchez@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.montessanchez@lancaster.ac.uk); [k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk)

\*Participants received a Spanish version of this document. The Spanish version will be strictly faithful to the contents expressed in this document.

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage:  
[www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection)

I am Soledad Montes, a PhD student at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about the development of writing in young school and university students. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

#### **What is the study about?**

This study aims to analyse how young students in school and university write for different purposes and in different contexts as a part of their daily life. You probably write on a daily basis, either a Facebook post or an essay for school or college. So then, you are a writer! How do you face those writing tasks? What do you like or dislike about writing them? These are some of the questions we would like to address with you.

#### **Why have I been invited?**

I have approached you because I want to know how students like you face writing as a part of their own life trajectory. Also, I want to work with students who, like you, are academically outstanding in their own contexts.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I take part?**

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following: 1) take part in two interviews of 45 minutes approximately, 2) complete a 15-minute questionnaire and 3) submit at least 2 pieces of writing that are meaningful for you.

#### **What are the possible benefits from taking part?**

Taking part in this study will allow you to be more aware of how, why and for whom you write on a daily basis. At the end, this awareness could help you to become a better writer. In addition, in the interviews you will join a friendly and secure space where you can share your own experiences and fears about writing.

#### **There will be any compensation for my contribution?**

You will receive a GIFT CARD of £10 at the end of the process as a reward for your collaboration.

**Do I have to take part?**

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

**What if I change my mind?**

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any ideas or information you contributed to the study and destroy them. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 6 weeks after taking part in the study.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. However, it is important to be extremely cautious in the context of a pandemic. For this reason, interviews in this study will take place on-line unless public health conditions permit safe in person interviews. In addition, you have to consider that you will invest certain amount of time being part of this study.

**Will my data be identifiable?**

After the interviews, only I, the researcher conducting this study, and my supervisor, a Lancaster University professor, will have access to the ideas you share with me. The same will be the case with your writing pieces and logbook. I will keep all personal information about you (for example your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.

**How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?**

I will use the information you have shared with me for research and educational purposes only. This will include PhD thesis, academic conferences and journal articles. I will also present the results to staff members of Universidad de Chile Learning Unit in order to help them to better support students writing. When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (for example from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your anonymity in our publications.

**How my data will be stored**

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me and my supervisor will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my personal address. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (for example your views on a

specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

**What if I have a question or concern?**

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself, Soledad Montes ([s.montessanchez@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:s.montessanchez@lancaster.ac.uk)) or my supervisor, Karin Tusting ([k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk) / Lancaster University postal address: C013, C - Floor, County South, LA1 4YD).

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact Daniela Serey, Coordinator of the PACE-University strategy at Universidad de Chile (email: [daniela.serey@uchile.cl](mailto:daniela.serey@uchile.cl)/ Tel: +56 9 7380 7528) or Professor Uta Papen, Head of Linguistics & English Language Department (email: [u.papen@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:u.papen@lancaster.ac.uk) / Tel: +44 (0)1524 593245).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.  
Thank you for considering your participation in this project

#### **4. Appendix 4: Participants verbal consent protocol**

**I have approached you because of the unique insight that you can provide to this study;**

- Have you had the chance to read the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) that I have shared with you?  
If YES => Ask if everything is clear and if they have any queries. Answer any questions about the study and then proceed to question 2)  
If NO => review and discuss the PIS there and then. In case of special wishes proceed as it is indicated in question 6).

**Now I am going to ask you some question regarding PIS, so we can be sure that everything was completely clear for you:**

- Do you understand that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study and within 6 weeks after you took part in the study without giving any reason?  
If YES => proceed to next question  
If NO => discuss any doubts, and then proceed to next question.
- Do you understand that any information given by you may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but your personal information will not be included, and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project?  
If YES => proceed to next question  
If NO => discuss any doubts, and then proceed to next question.
- Do you understand that your name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without your consent?  
If YES => proceed to next question  
If NO => discuss any doubts, and then proceed to next question.
- Do you understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure and data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study?  
If YES => proceed to next question  
If NO => discuss any doubts, and then proceed to next question.
- Do you have any comments or special wishes regarding preserving the anonymity of yourself?  
If YES => discuss the participant's wishes and make a note of them, commit to respect them if feasible. In the unlikely event that the participant would request something that you may not be able to do (like use their real name or agree to talk but

not agree to be quoted) this participant would be ineligible for participation in the study and the interaction would have to end.

If NO => proceed to next question

- Do you agree to participate in the study on the terms discussed in the PIS?  
If YES => Thank you, make note of consent, proceed to questions.  
If NO => Thank you, gather feedback if any, end interaction.

## 5. Appendix 5: Legal guardians online form

### **Project Title: Writing practices across the lifespan: the transition from school to university**

Name of Researcher: Soledad Montes; Supervisor: Karin Tusting  
Email: s.montessanchez@lancaster.ac.uk; k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk

The following questions was presented in an online form after the display of the participant information sheet in an online format.

#### **Information for consent**

1. Do you understand that your child's participation is voluntary and that he/she is free to withdraw at any time during his/her participation in this study and within 6 weeks after he/she took part in the study without giving any reason?

YES => proceed to next question

NO => information box: reinforce that participation is voluntary and offer to contact the researcher by email, phone or video-call if more details are required.

2. Do you understand that any information given by your child may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but his/her personal information will not be included, and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project?

YES => proceed to next question

NO => information box: explain further and offer to contact the researcher, phone or video-call if more details are required.

3. Do you understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure and data will be kept according to Lancaster University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study?

YES => proceed to next question

NO => information box: explain further and offer to contact the researcher, phone or video-call if more details are required.

4. Do you understand that your child is joining this study under his/her consent?

YES => proceed to next question

NO => information box: explain further and offer to contact the researcher, phone or video-call if more details are required.

## **6. Appendix 6: Informative video**

[https://youtu.be/CzHpR\\_ZJ53Y](https://youtu.be/CzHpR_ZJ53Y)

## 7. Appendix 7: Translated interview excerpts

Original excerpt	Translation
<p>Lo escribía en un cuaderno. El cuaderno era como el borrador y de ahí lo pasaba a una hoja en blanco porque me gusta, así como dice mi papá como cuando se trata así come de algo como formal lo paso a una página en blanco y ahí no se ven los cuadrados de la hoja.</p>	<p>I would write it in the notebook, the notebook was like the rough draft, and from there of course I would transfer it to a blank sheet, because I like, as my dad says, to make it more professional when it's something sort of formal so then I transfer it to a blank page so you don't see the squares of the notebook. (p. 39 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Participante: ahora es todo por la pantalla Investigadora: Todo por el computador Participante: Sí, todos los trabajos son por el computador Investigadora: y ¿cómo ha sido ese cambio para ti? Participante: Ha sido duro, porque a veces sufrí con la tecnología, aunque seamos de la juventud que entiende, a mi me costaba mucho Investigadora: ¿Y qué fue duro para ti? Participante: los Word</p>	<p>Participant: now it's all through the screen. Interviewer: Everything on the computer Participant: yes, doing all the assignments on the computer I: and how has that change been for you? Participant: it's been rough! Because sometimes I had a hard time with technology, it is said that young people understand, but I had a hard time with it. I: What part was hard for you? Participant: Using Word (p. 43 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Participante: tuve que aprender a usarlo Investigadora: ¿Y cómo ha sido ese proceso de aprendizaje? Participante: primero fue difícil, y después fue fácil. Investigadora: ¿Y qué es lo que ha sido fácil para ti ahora de escribir en el computador? Participante: Yo creo que porque cuando escribes en el computador te tomas el tiempo de escribir los puntos, las comas, cuando escribes a mano es más rápido Investigadora: Y ¿por qué piensas que pasa eso? Participante: Para que se vea más lindo, no sé, pero en papel uno escribe todo de una</p>	<p>Participant: I had to learn how to use it (the computer). I: and how has that learning process been? Participant: at first it was difficult and then it was easy. I: and what has been easy for you now about writing on the computer? Participant: I think that when you write on the computer you take the time to write the dots and the commas, when you write by hand you write quickly. I: and why do you think that happens? Participant: to make it look nicer, I don't know, but on paper you write like all at once. (p. 43 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Tengo que ver como lo voy a hacer, porque sinceramente incluso si estudio publicidad me gustaría mantener mi trabajo en jardines porque es de lo que más sé y si llega el momento en que ya estoy cansada de llevar las máquinas, cortar el pasto, el calor y todo, si llega el momento que digo “ya no puedo más” puedo trabajar en lo que estudié</p>	<p>I have to see how I will sort it out because, to be honest, even if I study advertising I would like to keep my job maintaining gardens because it is what I know most about and if it comes a moment when I am tired of carrying the machines, cutting the grass, the heat and everything, so if it comes the moment when I</p>

	<p>say, 'I cannot do it anymore', I can work in that what I studied.</p> <p>(p. 82 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Tienes que leer un libro al mes y te hacen una prueba, pero no es en realidad sobre escribir sobre ese texto, es más que nada la prueba y las preguntas de la prueba y te preguntan de qué se trataba el texto o resumir el texto en tus propias palabras, pero más que eso no nos hacían escribir mucho.</p>	<p>You had to read a book a month and then take a test, but it wasn't really about writing about that text, it was mostly just the test and the test questions, and they asked about what the text was about or to summarize the text in your words, but more than that, they didn't make us do much writing (Yeyo, vocational school, literacy history interview).</p> <p>(p. 116 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Entonces no me quería salir de lo que la profesora puso en el PPT, porque si y me salía de eso y ponía mis propios conceptos sobre eso, quizás la profesora me lo hubiera puesto como inválido, porque eso es lo que ella está enseñando, entonces no me gusta jugar fuera de lo que la profesora está enseñando incluso si no estoy de acuerdo con el punto, porque sino tengo que debate con ellos y defender mi punto y es más trabajo.</p>	<p>So I didn't want to go out of what the teacher put in the Power Point, because if I went out of that and put my own concepts about it, maybe the teacher would mark it as invalid, because that is what she is teaching, so I don't like to play outside of what the teachers teach, even though I disagree with the point because otherwise I have to debate with them and defend my point and it's more work (Alejandra, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).</p> <p>(p. 117 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Tengo que hacer un comentario personal y eso es lo que más me gusta, porque puedo hablar del tema sin tener que informar. Entonces puedo expresarme sin límites y decir lo que pienso sobre el tema.</p>	<p>I have to make a personal comment and that's what I like the most, because I can talk about the subject without having to inform. Then I can express myself without any limits and say what I think about the topic (María, vocational school, talking around text interview).</p> <p>(p. 120 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Investigadora: Y ¿qué te gusta de la escritura? Dana: Así, el área de expresar es que igual la escritura es como un universo tan amplio a donde uno puede expresar, opinar.</p>	<p>I: What do you like about writing? (...) Dana: So, the area of expressing is that writing is like a wide universe where you can express yourself, giving your opinion (Dana, vocational school, literacy history interview).</p> <p>(p. 120 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Es como que era había que seguir una estructura siempre, así como la estructura que te dan en el colegio y siempre no sea estas cosas D del lenguaje nunca me ha gustado cuando me imponen a hacerla cuando yo las quiero hacer por mí mismo, yo las paso super bien y cuando me dicen "tú puedes crear la estructura", yo lo hago y lo disfruto y es como super entretenido</p>	<p>It's like always having to follow a structure, just like the structure they give you at school and in these language things, I have never liked it when they impose me to do it. When I do it by myself, I have a great time and when they tell me: "you can create the structure", I do it and I enjoy it and it's like super entertaining (Pepsi, vocational school, literacy history interview).</p> <p>(p. 121 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Yo digo que es como algo mío. Porque me gusta cómo explicar y también dar detalles,</p>	<p>I say that it's like something of mine. Because I like to explain and also give like details and</p>

<p>sinónimos, y es algo que siempre hago en todo lo que escribe, me gusta, no me gusta dar una sola palabra, no, me gusta seguir dando más explicaciones al tema</p>	<p>synonyms and it's something I always do in everything I write, I like, I don't like to give like a single word, no, I like to keep giving more explanations to the subject (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview). (p. 121 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Alejandra: No, o sea, no es algo que use, no el tipo de vocabulario que uso regularmente, entonces me da como vergüenza. Investigadora: O sea, no te sientes identificada con el estilo de escritura de este texto (risas) Alejandra: No Investigadora: ¿Y cómo tu escritura sería diferente de esta? Como una escritura que tu sientas "ah, esta soy yo". Alejandra: Más formal, más impersonal porque yo no, ee..usualmente escribo cosas, y no involucro ese tipo de sentimentalismos, por decir,, como que generalmente narro de otra manera.</p>	<p>Alejandra: No, I mean it's not something I use, it's not a type of vocabulary that I use regularly, so I'm kind of embarrassed. Interviewer: I mean, you don't feel identified with the writing style of this text (laughs). Alejandra: No. Interviewer: And how would your writing be different from this one?...like a writing with which you feel "ah, this is me". Alejandra: More formal, less...more impersonal because I don't know, ee...I usually write things and I don't usually involve that kind of sentimentalism, so to speak, so I usually narrate in a different way. (Alejandra, academically oriented school, talking around text interview) (p. 122-123 on the thesis)</p>
<p>(...) O a veces cuando me siento enojada empiezo, así como para desestresarme: "hoy día 9, no sé de junio, me siento enojada porque me pasó esto y la verdad es que no, y yo por mi parte" así como contando lo que pasó en el día a día.</p>	<p>(...) or sometimes when I feel angry I start like this to de-stress: "today June 9th, I don't know about June, I feel angry because this happened and the truth is that, no, I... for my part" as well as telling what happened in the day to day (Dana, vocational school, literacy history interview). (p. 123 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Hace unos días. Porque...ahora estoy teniendo un poco más de tiempo y a veces cuando me siento muy... no sé, cuando me siento muy emocional, como con emociones muy fuertes, me gusta escribir, como para canalizar lo que siento en algo más. Y así es como esto salió</p>	<p>A few days ago. Because... now I'm having a little more time and sometimes when I feel very... I don't know, I feel very emotional, with very strong emotions, I like to write, like channeling what I feel into something else. And that's how this [a text] came out (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview). (p. 124 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Y también me gusta escribir poemas, porque no hay mucha estructura y puedes escribir lo que quieras y poner las palabras que quieras y repetir, y suena bien y es bacán el proceso de escribir un poema porque tú ya tienes el tema y después las palabras fluyen y piensas en cómo te estás sintiendo en el momento y es como que, se escribe solo</p>	<p>(...) and I also like writing poems because there's not as much structure and you can write whatever you want and put the words you want and repeat and it sounds nice and it's great the process of writing a poem because you already have the theme and then the words flow and you go thinking about how you are feeling at that moment and it's like...it writes itself (Samuel, academically oriented school, talking around text interview).</p>

	(p. 124 on the thesis)
<p>Pero como estaba diciendo, yo no era muy bueno para lenguaje, entonces parece que poco a poco, con la ayuda de mi familia obviamente, y cuando me corregían algunas palabras o cuando escribe en WhatsApp y me dicen: “así no es”. Me acuerdo que cuando era más chico, no sé, escribía “hola” sin “h” (risas). Cuando más grande, no me gustaban esos errores, era como, no sé, no me gustaba eso de mí. Después empecé a cambiar todas esas cosas, mi ortografía, me dije a mi mismo: “no, tengo que cambiar mi ortografía, las comas”. Como que, si voy a entrar a la Universidad, estoy seguro que voy a tener que escribir informes y voy a tener que tener una buena ortografía, voy a tener que usar las comas y usar puntos, bueno, entonces he estado como integrando todas esas cosas en mi vida</p>	<p>(...) but as I was saying, I was not very good at language, so it seems that little by little, with the help of my family, obviously, and when they correct some words or when I am writing on WhatsApp, they tell me: ‘that’s not how it is’. I remember that when I was a kid, I don’t know, I used to write ‘hello’ without ‘h’ (laughs). When I grew up, I didn’t like those mistakes, it was like, I don’t know, I didn’t like that of myself. Then I started to change all those things, my spelling, I said to myself: ‘no, I have to change my spelling, the commas’. Like if I’m going to enter a university, I’m sure I will have to write reports and I will need to have very good spelling, I will have to use commas, and I will have to use periods well, so I’ve been integrating all those things in my life (Federico, vocational school, literacy history interview)</p>
<p>Investigadora: cómo ha sido para ti escribir esta investigación  Tisúa: ee, sí, me gusta, porque aprendo más investigando y escribiendo  Investigadora: mm...super, y ¿de qué son estos informes de investigación que tuviste que escribir?  Tisúa: son sobre protocolos de seguridad para los niños.  Investigadora: mm...y ¿qué tienes que escribir en esos protocolos? ¿Cómo se ve ese texto, ese protocolo que escribiste?  Tisúa: las medidas de seguridad de no dejar a los niños solos, que se pueden caer y pegar, ee...no dejar las puertas abiertas del patio porque los niños pueden salir o pueden entrar animales peligrosos.</p>	<p>(p. 126 on the thesis)</p> <p>Interviewer: What has it been like for you to write this research?  Tisúa: ee...yes, I like it, because I learn more by researching and writing.  Interviewer: mmm...super. and what are these research papers you have had to write about?  Tisúa: they are about safety protocols for children.  Interviewer: mmm...and what do you have to write in those protocols? ...what does that text look like, that protocol that you write?  Tisúa: the safety measures of not leaving the children alone, that they can fall and hit, eee...not leaving the doors of the gardens open, because the children can get out or dangerous animals can get in.  (Tisúa, vocational school, literacy history interview)</p>
<p>Hoy es un día muy importante para mí, empecé la práctica en un jardín en Las Condes. Es un viaje largo para mi, pero si quiero algo mejor y me están dando esta oportunidad tengo que apreciarlo y valorarlo. El jardín lo van a inaugurar el martes 4 de octubre, así que tenemos que ayudar con la decoración. La directora es muy amorosa y dijo que nos iba a</p>	<p>(p. 128-129 on the thesis)</p> <p>Today is a very important day to me, I start my professional internship in a nursery school in Las Condes, is a very long journey for me, but if I want something better and they are giving me this opportunity I have to appreciate and value it. The nursery will be launched on Monday 4th of October, so we have to help with the decoration. The head of the school is</p>

<p>ayudar con todo lo que necesitáramos. Estoy tan feliz, ya quiero que sea la inauguración y estar con los niños.</p>	<p>really nice and said that she will help us with everything we need. I am so happy I already want it to be launched and be with the children. (Tisúa, vocational school, literacy history interview) (p. 129-130 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Investigadora: ¿Qué te lleva a estudiar así? Tisúa: querer algo mejor para mí</p> <p>Investigadora: ¿por qué crees que tus papás te apoyan tanto? Tisúa: porque quieren que yo sea mejor que ellos</p>	<p>-Interviewee: What drives you to study like this? -Tisúa: Wanting something better for me And later in the same interview... -Interviewee: Why do you think your parents are so supportive -Tisúa: Because they want me to be better than them. (p. 146 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Alejandra: Quizás tiene más que ver con que siempre me presentaron un modelo de cómo tenía que ser la vid, donde vas al colegio, te sacas buenas notas, entras a la universidad y eres alguien. Entonces, sin eso, tu no eres alguien. Entonces quizás...yo sé que no necesitas ir a la universidad para ser alguien y tener tu vida y todo, pero es algo que fue implantado en mí, que si tu vas al colegio, tienes que ir a la universidad.</p>	<p>-Alejandra: Maybe it has more to do with the fact that I was always presented with a model of what life should be like, where you get into school, you get good grades, you get into college, and you are somebody. So, without that, you're not somebody. So maybe... I know you don't need to go to college to be somebody and have your life and everything, but it's something that was rooted in me, that if you're in school, you have to go to college. (p. 146-147 on the thesis)</p>
<p>-Alejandra: fue sempre como: “qué vas a estudiar” y “qué vas a hacer”, entonces la idea de no ir a la universidad como que me daba mucho miedo.</p>	<p>-Alejandra: It was always like: «what are you going to study» and «what are you going to do?» So the idea of not getting into college kind of scared me a lot. (p. 146-147 on the thesis)</p>
<p>-Dana: quiero trabajar para pagarme los estudios. O sea, mi papá me puede pagar los estudios, pero a mí me gustaría pagarlos yo misma, así que voy a trabajar por un rato y luego tengo la idea de entrar a la universidad para estudiar publicidad.</p>	<p>- Dana: I want to work to pay for my studies. I mean, my dad can pay for my studies, but I would like to pay for it myself so that I will work for a while, and then I have the idea to enter university to study advertising. (p. 148 on the thesis)</p>
<p>-Dana: Tengo que ver como lo voy a hacer, porque sinceramente incluso si estudio publicidad me gustaría mantener mi trabajo en jardines porque es de lo que más sé y si llega el momento en que ya estoy cansada de llevar las máquinas, cortar el pasto, el calor y todo, si llega el momento que digo “ya no puedo más” puedo trabajar en lo que estudié</p>	<p>-Dana: I have to see how I will sort it out because, to be honest, even if I study advertising, I would like to keep my job maintaining gardens because it is what I know most about, and if it comes a moment when I am tired of carrying the machines, cutting the grass, the heat and everything, so if it comes the moment when I say I cannot do it anymore I can work in that what I studied (p. 148 on the thesis)</p>
<p>-Dana: Sí, al principio estaba feliz cuando me fue bien, dije “Oye, estudiar sería bueno para mí ahora que tuve un buen puntaje y no creo que tenga la cabeza para dar la prueba de</p>	<p>-Dana: Yes, so I was happy at the beginning when I did well, I said: «Hey! Studying would be good for me now that I've got good marks and I don't think I'll have the head to take the</p>

<p>nuevo más adelante”. Y un amigo mío me dijo: “Dana, te fue súper bien, ¡te fue bacán! Deberías entrar a la universidad al tiro” Y dije, “sí, sí, lo estoy pensando seriamente”</p>	<p>test again later on». And a friend of mine said to me: «Dana, you did a great job, you did great! You should enter university straight away». And I said: «Yes, yes, I'm seriously thinking about it». (p. 148 on the thesis)</p>
<p>María: Y ahí estaba yo, vestida toda formal, era como un pollito, porque no te... da nervios no estar acompañada, pero es como tu yo adulto el que tiene que salir en ese momento.</p>	<p>María: And there I was, all dressed up in formal clothes; I was just like a little chick because it doesn't...it gives you nerves not to be accompanied, but it is like your adult self that has to go out in that circumstance. (p. 150 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Tuve que enfrentarme harto a escribir, obviamente más relacionado con documentos legales, done me hicieron escribir contratos, me hicieron escribir informes, y incluso me hicieron escribir contratos importantes de la empresa, como plantillas de sueldo, bonos y cosas así</p>	<p>I dealt a lot with writing up things, obviously more related to legal documents, where they made me write contracts, they made me write reports, and they even made me write important contracts for the company, like things like payroll, bonuses, and things like that. (p. 151 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Lo más común eran básicamente pruebas, en otras cosas como en Lenguaje y Filosofía, como en las asignaturas más humanistas, excepto en Historia, habían más tipos de trabajos, ensayos, textos como de producir cosas, aunque en Lenguaje habían muchas pruebas, generalmente lo mismo, en Historia eran generalmente pruebas y de ahí puras pruebas.</p>	<p>The most common ones were basically tests, in other things like language and philosophy, like these more humanistic subjects, except for history, there were more types of works, essays, texts, of producing things, although in language there were many tests, mostly the same, in history they were mostly tests and from there on, only tests. (p. 154 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Por ejemplo, también tengo varios amigos que les gustan las mismas cosas que a mí, algunos juegos, algunos textos que leo, así que la única cosa más grande que escribo son recomendaciones y sinopsis de estos textos, de estos juegos.</p>	<p>For example, I also have several friends who like some things that I do, some games, some texts that I read, so the only big thing that I write are recommendations and synopsis of these texts, of these games (p. 154 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Vicente: ¿Qué escribía? Escribía...no sé cómo definirlo, era sobre política, y por ejemplo, publicaciones de política en Instagram, escribía, ¿cómo se dice? O sea, me pedían que escribiera...una publicación de Instagram tiene la foto y debajo hay un texto, ¿cierto? Investigadora: cierto Vicente: sí, yo escribía ese texto, yo escribía ese texto cuando me pedían escribir. Investigadora: ¿Quién te pedía escribir esto? Vicente: mi organización política. Escribía muchos textos sobre eso.</p>	<p>Vicente: What did I write? I wrote... I don't know how to define it; it was about politics, and for example, publications about politics on Instagram, I wrote, how do you say it? I mean, they asked me to write...an Instagram publication has the photo, and below it has the text, right? Interviewee : Right. Vicente: Yeah, I would write that text. I would write that text when they asked me to write. Interviewee : Who asked you to write this? Vicente: In my political organization. I used to write several texts about that. (p. 155 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Interview with Yeyo (university level)</p>	<p>Interview with Yeyo (university level)</p>

<p>Investigadora: sí, sí. Oye, Yeyo, en nuestra última entrevista me dijiste que a veces escribías poemas o mensajes para tu polola, ¿todavía escribes esas cosas? Cómo...¿qué cosas escribes fuera de la universidad?</p> <p>Yeyo: No, nada, ya no escribo nada, ahora escribo principalmente notas en mi celular, escribo básicamente lo que es importante y lo que necesito, cosas así.</p> <p>Interview with María (university level)</p> <p>Investigadora: (...) y pasando a otro tipo de escritura, cuando hablamos, me acuerdo que escribías poemas, todavía escribes poemas?</p> <p>María: no, no, no hay tiempo, no hay tiempo, solo escribo resúmenes.</p>	<p>Interviewee: Yes, yes. Hey, Yeyo, in the last interview you told me that sometimes you wrote poems or messages to your girlfriend, do you still write those things? how... what things do you write outside the university?</p> <p>Yeyo: No nothing, nothing anymore, now I write mostly in notes on my cell phone, I write basically what is important and what I need, things like that (...)</p> <p>Interview with María (university level)</p> <p>Interviewee: (...) moving on to other types of writing, when we talked, I remember you used to write poems. Do you still write them?</p> <p>María: No, no, there is no time, there is no time, I only write summaries. (p. 156 on the thesis)</p>
<p>Siempre me preguntan, cada vez que voy a dibujar un croquis, me piden que escriba sobre lo que estoy dibujando, y eso para mí era como: “¡ah! por suerte que tomé un taller de literatura para estar más preparade para esto”, porque básicamente es como un tipo de poesía</p>	<p>They always ask me, whenever I go to do a sketch, they ask me to write something about what I’m drawing, that for me was like, ah, thank goodness, I took a literature workshop to be more prepared for this, because basically it’s like a kind of poetry. (p. 157 on the thesis)</p>

## TABLES AND IMAGES INDEX

### 1. Introduction. Table 1. Thesis by publication overview

Stage	Paper title	Status	Research questions
Phase 1: Literature review	Writing In Transitions From School To University: What Do We Know From Research And Theory?	Not submitted for publication	How has transition to higher education been conceptualized in writing research in the last twenty years?
	Writing In Transitions Across The Lifespan	Published as book chapter Full Reference: Montes, S. & Tusting, K. (2024) In R. Dippre & T. Phillips. (2024). <i>Improvisations: Methods and Methodologies in Lifespan Writing Research</i> . The WAC Clearinghouse. University Press of Colorado. <a href="https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2024.2289">https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2024.2289</a>	What are the methodological implications for Lifespan Writing Research of conceptualizing transition as becoming?
Phase 2: School level-cross sectional study	“Writing Is Like A Wide Universe Where You Can Express Yourself”: Exploring Identity, Agency And Meaning In Secondary School Students’ Writing Practices	Submitted to <i>Literacy Research and Instruction</i> , peer reviewed positively but not accepted for publication. Alternative journal suggested by editor. Seeking alternative publication venue.	How do secondary school students describe writing practices that hinder identity work and agency? How do students describe writing practices that support their identity work and agency? How does students’ identity work unfold across domains?
Phase 3: School to University-longitudinal study	Dynamic Becomings In The Transition To University: Experiences Of Non-Traditional Students Across Contexts And Writing Practices	Published as a journal article Full reference: Montes, S. & Tusting (2024). Dynamic Becomings in the Transition to University: Experiences of Non-traditional Students across Contexts and Writing Practices. <i>Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios de la Escritura (RLEE)</i> , 1(1), 78-98. DOI: 10.37514/RLE-J.2024.1.1.05	How students from marginalized backgrounds experience changes in writing practices and social roles as they transition from high school to university?

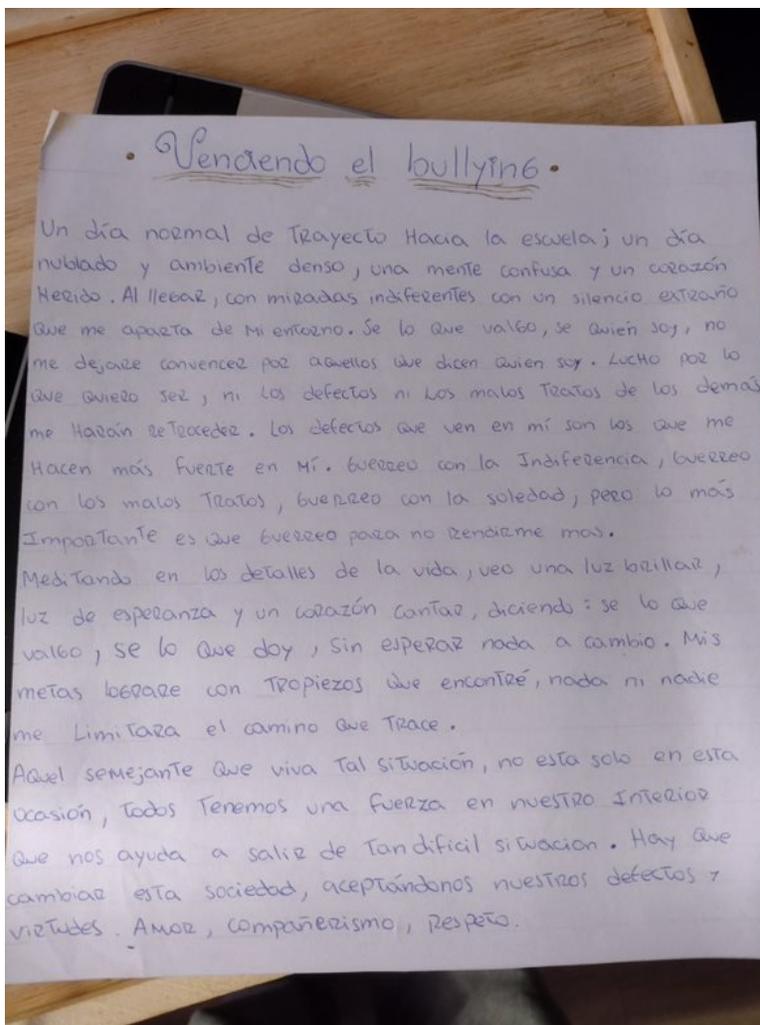
2. Methodological paper. Table 1. Aspects of Literacy Practices from Satchwell & Ivanič (2009)

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<b>Aspects of literacy practices</b>
Roles and Subject-positions inscribed in the practice
Values associated with the practice
Participants
Audience
Purpose
Text-type
Artefact
Medium
Mode
Content
Activity
Place
Time/Duration

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3. Methodological paper. Image 1. School assignment written in a vocational school in Chile



4. Methodological paper. Table 2. Questions to explore students' life trajectories and transitions based on a literacy history interview

<b>History, circumstances and transitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In which school do you currently study? Where is it?</li> <li>• Over the years at your school, was there any year that felt different or new to you?</li> <li>• What do you normally do after school? What do you like to do in your spare time?</li> </ul>
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<b>Current practices and identities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the assignments you normally have at school like?</li> <li>• Which subjects do you like the most?</li> <li>• Is there anything you like to write outside of school?</li> </ul>
<b>Imagined futures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your plans for the next year? What do you think are your main future challenges?</li> </ul>

5. Methodological paper. Table 3. Two excerpts from two conversations with the same participants

<b>Moment 1</b>	<b>Moment 2</b>
<p>Participant: now it's all through the screen.  Interviewer: Everything on the computer  Participant: yes, doing all the assignments on the computer  I: and how has that change been for you?  Participant: <b>it's been rough!</b> Because sometimes I had a <b>hard time</b> with technology, it is said that young people understand, but I had a <b>hard time</b> with it.  I: What part was hard for you?  Participant: Using Word</p>	<p>Participant: I had to learn how to use it (the computer).  I: and how has that learning process been?  Participant: at first <b>it was difficult</b> and then <b>it was easy.</b>  I: and what has been easy for you now about writing on the computer?  Participant: I think that when you write on the computer you take the time to write the dots and the commas, when you write by hand you write quickly.  I: and why do you think that happens?  Participant: to make it look nicer, I don't know, but on paper you write like all at once.</p>

6. Methodological paper. Table 4. Talk around text as artefacts

<b>Context, media and spaces</b>	What was the moment of writing like, if you could go back and see yourself...how are you, where are you, what are you wearing, what do you see...?
<b>Reading aloud</b>	Could you read it aloud for me?

	How does this sound to you?
<b>Decision making</b>	You used a “we” here, who are “we” for you? Why did you choose to use this form?
<b>Identities</b>	<p>Why did you choose this piece of writing? What do you like about it?</p> <p>What happens to you when you listen to your writing? When you read it, is there any specific part in which you recognize yourself?</p> <p>Like yes this is me speaking!</p>

7. Paper 1. Table 1. Literature Review Coding Scheme

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
Setting	University	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed in a university setting.
	School	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed in a school setting.
	University and School	Coding any article in which the data collection is developed both in a university and school setting.
Transition	Transition as induction	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as induction is developed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T1 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) The article focuses on transition as a critical stage, limited in time and attached to notions of failure and success which should lead to an integration process in a new academic context.
	Transition as development	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as development is displayed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T2 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) The article focuses on transition as identity shifts, self transformation or developments from one stage to another, it takes into account a more complex layering of experiences including movements between context and identities. There is a focus on the subject identitarian, biographical and learning trajectories over time. It is possible to identify the idea of becoming somebody or becoming a member.

	Transition as becoming	Coding any article in which a perspective of transition as becoming is displayed in at least one of the following ways: 1) authors that have been classified within T3 are quoted to define the way in which transitions are understood in the study; 2) In the article transitions are understood as an essential part of subjects' lives without pre-defined stages and it is recognized that students are always going through transitions on several levels (as daily shifts in context, language, genres, among others) and directions. Coding here any article in which a critical stance on transitions is explicitly stated; those articles in which transitions are seen as trajectories with more than one possible route; studies in which drop-outs are seen as possible alternatives instead of failures, and those which focus on more complex entanglements between social conditions, ideologies and institutional constraints.
	T0	Coding any article in which although transition is mentioned as a central issue, there is a lack of definition or a weakly developed definition of the concept. Articles in which it is not possible to identify a predominant approach to transition are also coded here.
Literacy related construct	Writing	Coding any article which focuses on writing as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on writing such as writing understood as social practice, as a skill set, as a cognitive process, among others.
	Reading & Writing	Coding any article which focuses on writing and reading as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on literacy such as reading and writing as social practice, as a skill set, as a cognitive process, among others.
	Information Literacy	Coding any article which focuses on information literacy as one of its main constructs. This could include different understandings of how people search, organize, use and value information.
	Digital literacies	Coding any article which focuses on digital literacies as one of its main constructs. This could include different perspectives on how reading and writing through technology is understood.
Discourses on Literacy	Writing as social practice (WSP)	Coding any article which explicitly defines writing from a social practice perspective, by 1) quoting relevant authors from this area of study (such as Hamilton, Ivanič, Lillis, Barton, among others); 2) defining writing as a social activity shaped by (and shaping) the social context, power relationships and identities. Some of these studies may include non academic writing practices since diverse expressions of students' literacy are recognized. We also included here papers based on the US Writing and Composition Studies tradition that paid attention to contextual dynamics and writing.

	Writing as genres and disciplinary conventions (WG)	Coding any article which explicitly focuses on academic writing from a genre based perspective or any approach highlighting writing as a disciplinary-specific practice. Writing is understood as a purpose oriented activity which take relatively stable structures according to social context and purposes. This approach can be recognized by 1) the reference to key approaches to genre such as English for Academic Purposes, SFL, among others; or 2) a focus on disciplinary genres or disciplinary writing conventions.
	Writing as Skills (WS)	Coding any article in which writing is understood as a set of linguistic skills that can be applied in different contexts. Within this frame, writing is commonly understood as a basic ability that should be learnt at school or at the university as a part of remedial efforts to "bridge a gap". This approach can be recognized by: 1) the systematic use of terms such as "writing skills", "writing abilities" or "writing performance", 2) a focus on textual features such as coherence, cohesion or lexical resources, 3) a lack of recognition of disciplinary-specific writing practices
	Writing as process (WP)	Coding any article in which writing is understood as a process in which students have to go through different activities such as searching for information, reading and summarizing readings, planning, writing and reviewing. This approach can be recognized by 1) the prevalent mention of processes in writing such as searching for sources, planning and reviewing, among others; 2) the systematic quotation of relevant authors from a process based perspective such as Flowers & Hayes, Kent, among others. 3) a dominant reference to constructs commonly related with process approaches such as metacognition, monitoring, reviewing, among others.

8. Paper 1. Table 2. Settings for data collection in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Setting</b>	<b>N</b>
Post-secondary education	20
Secondary education & Post-secondary education	9
Secondary school	3
<i>Total</i>	32

9. Paper 1. Table 3. Literacy related constructs in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Literacy related construct</b>	<b>N</b>
Digital Literacies	2
Information Literacy	7
Reading & Writing	12
Writing	11
<i>Total general</i>	32

10. Paper 1. Table 4. Perspectives on Literacy in studies on writing

<b>Perspectives on Literacy</b>	<b>N</b>
Writing as Social Practice	15
Writing as genre and disciplinary conventions	5
Writing as skills	2
Writing as process	1
<i>Total general</i>	23

11. Paper 1. Table 5. Transition perspectives in studies of writing during the transition to university

<b>Transition Perspective</b>	<b>N</b>
Transition as development	13
Transition as induction	12
Life as transitioning	7
<i>Total general</i>	33

12. Paper 3. Table 1. Set of emergent categories in interviews with secondary school student's cohort

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>School writing practices</b>	
	<i>Participants refer to or describe...</i>
Writing for assessment	writing assignments that involve a mark or formal assessment (for example, essay, reports, etc.)
Writing to learn and study	writing practices to understand, retain or reflect on school subjects (for example, note taking, make mind maps or summarizing.)
<b>Occurrence of writing and writing support at school</b>	
Absence of writing	the lack of writing assignments or mention of tasks where writing is minimal or absent (for example, multiple choice quizzes.)
Writing support	the support, training, or feedback they receive regarding their writing.
Absence of writing support	the lack of support, training, or feedback regarding their writing (for example, I had scarce guidance, I had to learn on my own, etc.)
<b>Self-sponsored writing practices</b>	
Pleasure and self-expression	writing for pleasure, entertainment, venting or expressing feelings (for example, writing poems, fictional writing, etc.)
Documenting experience	writing for keeping a record of their own experiences and reflect on them (for example, keeping a diary, personal cell phone notes, etc.)
Community engagement	writing for taking part in communities of interests (for example, writing to participate in an online community, etc.)
Communication	writing to communicate with others and build relationships (for example letters, text messages, etc.)
<b>Tools and technologies</b>	
	mediational tools or technologies they use for writing (for example, notebook, laptop, online platforms, etc.)
<b>Writers' identities</b>	
Current identities	who they are (attitudes, values, beliefs, roles), their abilities, interests or activities they like/dislike.
Future expectations	

their desires or expectations for their future, including ideas or people driving such expectations (for example, going to university).

Biographical identities

how their writing reflects or is linked to their own life trajectories.

Authorial voice

the writing styles or writing choices they perceive as their own (for example, I can recognize myself in this phrase.)

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**Meaningful writing practices**

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writing assignments they perceived as enriching, meaningful or enjoyable.

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13. Paper 3. Image 1: Façade of the school of Tisua (school cohort participant). Photo retrieved from Google Maps satellite imagery downloaded in November 2021



14. Paper 4. Table 1. Students' writing practices and artefacts across timescales as they move throughout their biographical trajectory

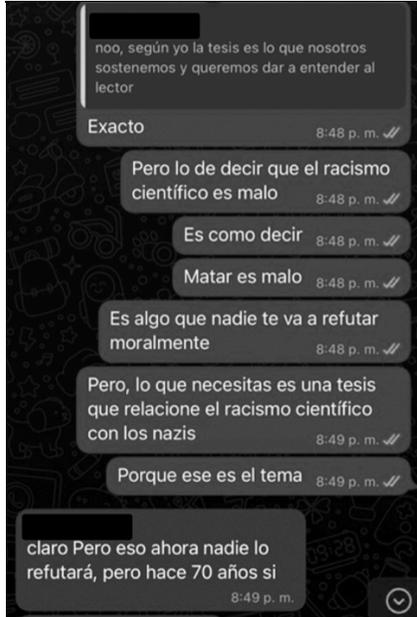
Sociohistorical timescale: possibilities for selfhood (role models, discourses, values, etc.)							
Biographical timescale							
		Attending school		Completing an internship for a vocational major	Attending university		
Microgenetic timescale	Domains	Academic (School)	Self-sponsored	Professional	Academic (University)	Self-sponsored	Professional
	Practice	Taking a school assessment. Studying for school assessments.	Communicating with peers. Documenting experience and venting. Finding things out and taking part. Exploring creativity through fictional writing.	Responding to internship tasks.	Taking a university assessment. Studying for university assessments.	Documenting experience and venting.	Performing a part time job. Searching for a job. Advertising a personal business.
	Artifacts	Multiple choice exam. Open-ended exam questions. Lecture notes. Summary. Mind-map. Emails. Essay. Report. Curriculum Vitae. Contract.	Text message. Cellphone notes registering events and thoughts. Instagram post. Diary entry. Book and game review. Poem. Novel. Formal letter to school authorities. Letter for friends or significant others. Film script.	Stock list. Contract. Report.	Lecture notes. Report. Essay. Open-ended exam questions. Multiple choice exam. Summary. Mind-map. Email. Sketch notes. Project. Logbook.	Text messages. Cellphone notes registering events and thoughts. Diary entries. Biography of a family member.	Reminder notes WhatsApp and SSMM ads. Curriculum Vitae Letter of interest

15. Paper 4. Image 1. Chat conversation of Alejandra when she was attending university

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Chat conversation about the thesis in a group academic essay (original and translation)

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Student: -Noo, according to me, the thesis is what we state and what we want the reader to understand.

Alejandra: -exactly

-But to say that scientific racism is bad

-It's like saying

-Killing is bad

-It's something that no one will morally refute.

-But, what you need is a thesis linking scientific racism to the Nazis.

-Because that's the issue

Student: -Of course, nobody will refute that now, but 70 years ago they did.

-Not the killing