

PART 1.

RIGOROUS CRAFTING + RADICAL IMPROVISATION: LWR IN ACTION

The authors in Part I first introduce us to a methodology that they've found useful for conducting their own LWR. In some cases, authors are introducing a well-known methodology to readers and describing what it offers to LWR in particular. In other cases, authors describe a new methodology that they've developed specifically to support lifespan writing research, along with that methodology's historic roots.

As established researchers who have been using the methodologies described here for years (and sometimes decades), these authors provide valuable methodological introductions that are solidly grounded in real-world research experience. Our intention is that by homing in on the affordances of methodologies for lifespan writing research, those who are unfamiliar with a particular methodological tool might use these chapters as primers as they plan their own research. Each author provides an overview of the methodology along with its origins (disciplinary, historical, etc.) and key turning points, making visible how the methodology can support lifespan writing research by offering examples from their own work.

These chapters also take us straight to the heart of improvisation as a lens for understanding lifespan writing research. Though they begin in recognizable strands of well-known methodologies, these authors also make clear the necessity of improvising new approaches in order to meet the moment of their particular projects. For no research plan survives first contact with reality. Not completely. Not all the way. Whenever we plan out a course of action in research, we find ourselves faced with the unexpected, the unanticipated, and we need to engage with these pleasant (or unpleasant, as the case may be) surprises in ways that allow our methodologies to move forward. Much of this complex intersection between plans and reality cannot be captured by merely a description of a methodology: one must see the methodology in action, as much as possible, to make sense of the continuous, deeply disciplined improvisations that bring a methodology to life. Toward that end, our authors each offer a companion or "application" chapter which brings the methodology to life. These companion chapters engage with research sites, participants, existing research, etc. to demonstrate the rich realities of their approaches to studying writing through the lifespan.

We begin in elementary school settings, moving through the lifespan to methodologies featuring older adults' writing. In Chapter 1, "Temporal

Discourse Analysis as an Analytic for Lifespan Writing Research,” Catherine Compton-Lilly opens this section by introducing us to temporal discourse analysis (TDA), an analytical tool she developed to work in tandem with a range of research methodologies. TDA investigates change across time by examining participants’ language choices and sense-making moments. Her chapter also highlights the improvisational work that infuses the methods and methodologies of this volume, noting that TDA is a tool she developed because, after years of data collection, she felt that her existing method was missing things. She developed TDA in order to analyze the relationships between her early and later data more rigorously and shares it with us here, using the cases of Adam and Gabby to illustrate TDA’s uses. In her companion chapter, “Writing Elementary School: The Cases of Gabby and Adam,” Compton-Lilly shows how TDA is able to “reveal the unique sense-making” that Gabby and Adam engaged in with schooling and literacy over the course of five years. By looking closely at the ongoing negotiations of activities, images, and texts over time, Compton-Lilly demonstrates how temporal discourse analysis can effectively trace the complex contours of children’s acts of literacy over time.

Jennifer Sanders, Sarah Donovan, Joy Myers, and Danielle DeFauw then share in Chapter 3, “Methodologies for Lifespan Writing Research: Using Composite Narratives in Narrative Inquiry,” how one of the latest innovations in narrative inquiry, composite narratives, can help lifespan writing researchers to synthesize the experiences of substantial numbers of participants in ways that are powerful to both researcher and participant. Describing its roots in narrative inquiry, Sanders et al. argue that composite narratives can help researchers identify patterns across larger participant pools without sacrificing the complexity and richness of qualitative methodologies. Composites also offer a way to share research findings in meaningful ways with audiences beyond the academy. In their companion chapter, “Using Composite Narratives to Explore Writing Teachers’ Development Across Their Careers,” the authors demonstrate the possibilities that composite narratives offer lifespan writing researchers. The authors share four composite narratives in their entirety, shedding important light on the trajectories of growth that teachers have regarding writing pedagogy throughout their careers which then also impact their students’ writing experiences.

In Chapter 5, “Interpreting Research with Participants: A Lifespan Writing Methodology,” Collie Fulford and Lauren Rosenberg describe a methodology of interpreting and writing research along with their adult participants. Drawing on a history of co-investigating and co-authoring within writing studies, they argue that “through acts of revisiting and dwelling with participants, we can center interpretive relationships” in our work. Given the imperative within much lifespan writing research to cultivate long-term relationships with participants,

Fulford and Rosenberg provide an invaluable framework for crafting ethical, productive, meaningful partnerships with the writers we research for and with. In “Co-interpretation in Action,” the authors then put their approach to co-interpretation to work as they co-author with ongoing, long-term research participants Gwen Porter McGowan and Adrienne Long. This chapter takes us from the warm, feel-good idea of deepening our relationships to the nuts and bolts of how these two researchers have actually gone about composing together with their participant co-authors. As they put their co-interpreting principles into action, Fulford, Long, Rosenberg, and McGowan offer vital insight into how to move from a researcher-participant relationship towards equality, giving particular attention to the role that race has played in their relationships.

Ryan Dippre, in Chapter 7, “Studying Writing through the Lifespan with Grounded Theory,” then introduces us to grounded theory as a methodology for lifespan writing research. Dippre traces grounded theory’s roots from sociology, its incorporation into writing studies, and its particular affordances for lifespan writing research. His step-by-step approach to the mechanics of engaging in grounded theory research will be particularly helpful for researchers who are considering or developing a grounded theory project for the first time. In the next chapter, “Deepening and Keeping the Present: Grounded Theory in Action,” Dippre explores the lifespan literate action development of Anna. Blending grounded theory with ethnomethodology and sociohistoric theory, Dippre identifies the process of *deepening* and *keeping* the present that Anna engages in through her writing—and, as a result, how that process contributes to her own agency in different aspects of her life.

We conclude with Teresa Jacques, Jonathan Marine, and Paul Rogers’ methodology for a meta-analysis of longitudinal writing studies. Chapter 9, “Improving Systematic Reviews of Longitudinal Writing: Definitions, Questions, and Procedures,” walks readers through the authors’ decision-making process as they seek to understand the methodological choices in the field’s longitudinal studies of writers. This chapter provides a rare opportunity to see the complexities of developing a meta-analysis which both the authors and editors hope will encourage more people to undertake these much-needed assessments of the state of writing studies’ collective knowledge. Next the authors put their methodology to work on 54 longitudinal studies of writing in K-20 schooling dating back to 2000 in “Implications of Longitudinal Writing Research Methods for Lifespan Perspectives on Writing Development: Results of a Systematic Review.” Here, we get to see the broader patterns that emerge when we look across longitudinal studies, rather than just within them.

These chapters create a two-way view of methodologies, offering us not just descriptions of how to study writing through the lifespan, but examples of how

these studies can be brought to life. With these companion chapters, we hope that lifespan writing researchers will be encouraged to take up new studies of writers and writing at different points in the lifespan, informed by both the realities of their research settings and the methodological options presented here.