

PART 2.

**A SELECTION OF “ANDS”:
IMAGINING METHODOLOGICAL
FUTURES IN LIFESPAN
WRITING RESEARCH**

The first portion of this volume demonstrates, if not conventional, then at least conventional-ish methodological approaches to studying writing through the lifespan. These are approaches with considerable histories that have been proven useful not only in particular sites and with particular participants, but across a wide range of settings, circumstances, and populations. In Part II, we enter the “yes, and” of improvisation: our contributors offer new considerations, new visions, and new critiques that can usefully inform the ongoing work of LWR.

We begin with “An Autoethnographic Springboard to More Extensive Lifespan Writing Research” by Kathleen Shine Cain, Pamela Childers, and Leigh Ryan, which offers insights into the uses of autoethnography for LWR. Their chapter intentionally sits between Parts I and II as their autoethnographic account traces the ongoing improvisations of research-in-process. Their chapter also provides a compelling case for the possibilities that autoethnographic work offers to lifespan writing research.

The next two chapters identify important considerations for methodological design in LWR. Joe Cirio and Jeff Naftzinger’s “A Matter of Time and Memory: A Methodological Framework of Memory for Lifespan Writing Research” calls our attention to the role of memory, how it might be conceptualized, and how we might theorize with and through memory when studying writing through the lifespan. In Chapter 13, Soledad Montes and Karin Tusting offer powerful suggestions for conceptualizing transitions in “Writing in Transitions Across the Lifespan.” They ask us to re-examine our definitions of “transition,” drawing on a considerable body of work in New Literacies to challenge assumptions about writing, literacy, and the lifespan that may then productively complicate future lifespan writing research.

The next four chapters suggest novel applications to LWR for more recent and emerging methodologies. Erin Workman’s “Centering Positionalities in Lifespan Writing Research through Institutional and Auto/Ethnographic Methodologies” uses her personal experience as a lens into institutional and auto-ethnography,

calling attention to the lived, material, practiced world of institutions and their roles in shaping the complexity of our literate lives. In Chapter 15, Karen Lunsford, Carl Whithaus, and Jonathan Alexander draw connections between their project of “wayfinding” and writing through the lifespan in “Wayfinding: The Development of an Approach to Lifespan Writing.” Then Matthew Zajic and Apryl Poch consider LWR from a quantitative perspective, offering a range of ways to take up quantitative approaches to LWR questions in “How Might We Measure That? Considerations from Quantitative Research Approaches for Lifespan Writing Research.” Flexing the range of valuable approaches to LWR, Chapter 17 turns us to poetry and the role that it can play to make sense of the complicated and nonlinear literate lives that we and our research participants live. Sandra Tarabochia’s “Becoming Researcher-Poets: Poetic Inquiry as Method/ology for Writing (through the Lifespan) Research” gives productive examples of what poetry can do for researchers, an effective rationale, and a straightforward approach to getting started.

We close our volume by turning to several larger issues underlying our individual and collective methodological choices. The final four chapters provide a range of important, challenging critiques to the existing agenda of Lifespan Writing Research, including important considerations as we design future studies. These chapters ask us to think carefully about what comes next, about how we proceed (individually and, insofar as we are able, as a group), and about how LWR might serve as a vehicle to meaningfully engage a range of issues in and beyond the work of academic writing and research.

In Chapter 18, “Approaching Lifespan Writing Research from Indigenous, Decolonial Perspectives,” Bhushan Aryal argues that lifespan writing researchers should give explicit attention to the home languages and literacies of our participants and the ways that all of our participants’ languages and literacies are caught up within structures of power. He challenges lifespan writing researchers to consider whether and how our work represents Indigenous voices, victims of colonialism, and those whose literacy practices fall outside of white Englishes.

Next, Jeremy Levine comes at school-fostered literacies from a very different angle in “Motivating Lifespan Writing Research Toward Education Policy,” asking what lifespan writing researchers really aim to achieve. Levine suggests that if our collective research accomplishments are going to change the systems in which our writer-participants find themselves, then we likely need to give more serious consideration to making that work both intelligible and powerful to policy makers. He outlines key factors driving much of the educational policymaking around writing, providing a range of possibilities for lifespan writing researchers interested in designing studies for policy impact.

We conclude with Suellynn Duffey’s case study of Kim’s rich, powerful set of literacies that make stark the limits of methodologies. In Chapter 20, “A Graduate School “Drop-Out”—After School,” Duffey demonstrates how Kim’s literacies were decoupled from schooling and thus were likely to be overlooked by any kind of academy-based research project. Even more significant, Kim’s profound literacies were revealed gradually to Duffey across many years of many different kinds of contact; their depth and complexity is incompatible with many data collection plans. Kim’s story also bears on how we construct literacy success as both researchers and teachers and how we employ methodologies to understand it.