

## PART 1.

# EMBRACING THE RADICAL

Deepening our understanding of how writing changes across the lifespan is, on its face, a herculean task. Having named our massive research object, what now? The work of the Lifespan Writing Development Group (Bazerman et al., 2018) made clear that a diverse array of expertise is needed in order to fully grasp the complexity of writing across the lifespan. The authors in Part 1 take up that torch, articulating some radical new ways that diverse and evolving research traditions can provide important understandings and methodological approaches for lifespan writing researchers. These six chapters call on us to build exciting new frames for our work and to rethink research commonplaces such as “context” and “informing participants” so that our methods might more fully capture lifespan writing.

Anna Smith opens the collection by asking researchers how we orient ourselves ontologically to our work. She asks us to avoid traditional comparative frameworks and instead to consider orientations *through* which writing development is realized instead of just how, *across* times, spaces, and materials instead of in them, and *with* developing writers instead of simply about them. The second chapter, co-authored by Anna Smith and Ryan Dippre, argues for a much more complicated understanding of context as protean and always being constructed by writers and their communities. They suggest that when researchers treat context as protean instead of static, we are encouraged to focus on the “moment-to-moment work of literate action” and to approach that work from an actor-oriented perspective. Apryl L. Poch and Matthew C. Zajic then provide an overview of what quantitative approaches can contribute to the study of writing development, focusing in particular on the uses of Structural Equation Modeling and its uses for lifespan writing research. In the next chapter, Magdalena Knappik takes us on a deep dive into the “literacy autobiography,” arguing for its unique value for lifespan writing research. Drawing on sociological research, including German-language research that monolingual English readers wouldn’t otherwise be able to access, Knappik shows us how a richer understanding of the literacy autobiography as a constructed artifact reveals how writers are making sense of their own literacy development. Jeff Naftzinger’s chapter explores the work of “everyday writers,” or writers who don’t really consider themselves writers but, like most of us, engage in various quotidian writing tasks. Naftzinger argues that by asking everyday writers to define the tasks of writing in their lives, that researchers can gain a richer understanding of writing throughout the

lifespan. Finally, Lauren Rosenberg explores the powerful, generative capacity of revisiting research participants. Expanding upon feminist research traditions, Rosenberg argues that by revisiting our participants, researchers can foster participants' agency, even leading to new and more deeply collaborative research projects.

The underlying premise of this section (and this book) is that we can't bring something as large, diverse, and complicated as lifespan writing research to heel by simply doing the same old things. Taken together, these chapters nudge us out of our comfort zones methodologically and disciplinarily, asking us to reassess our work and retool it to capture *more*. While other chapters in the book, at least in part, report findings from studies that are currently under way or that have already concluded, these first chapters especially aim to help those who are just undertaking lifespan writing research or who are beginning new projects by urging us towards richer, more multi-faceted work.