CHAPTER 7.

STUDYING WRITING THROUGH THE LIFESPAN WITH GROUNDED THEORY

Ryan J. Dippre
University of Maine

By almost any measure, grounded theory (GT) has been a massive success as a methodology since its inception in the 1960s. Three common texts referenced by grounded theorists—Glaser and Strauss' (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*; Corbin and Strauss' (2014) *The Basics of Qualitative Research*; and Kathy Charmaz' (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*—have nearly three hundred thousand citations combined, according to Google Scholar. GT has become, in most ways we can measure, a highly influential, frequently applied approach to making sense of qualitative and quantitative data. Indeed, GT's very success limits what we can generalize about it: in the half century since its inception, grounded theory has certainly taken on a life of its own, with new generations (Morse, 2009), approaches (Charmaz, 2014), and theoretical underpinnings (Clarke, 2005) shaping how and why people take up this methodology. In this chapter, I outline the key components of GT, make the case for how this can be used to study writing through the lifespan, and articulate a process that lifespan writing researchers can use to get to work through text-based interviews.

DISCOVERING GROUNDED THEORY

Because of the range of GT's uses today, it is easy to forget that grounded theory's discovery happened in the field of sociology and was a response to specific methodological issues in the field of sociology during the 1960s. U.S. sociology in 1960s appears to have been a period of some tumult. Quantitative methods were continuing a development begun decades before, and quantitative researchers were clashing with qualitative researchers in ways that challenged not just methods but the aims and purposes of sociology (Charmaz, 2014). As would be exemplified in Leo Coser's 1975 address excoriating micro approaches, the very notion of what counts as sociology was, at times, in question.

The lone paragraph above is insufficient to capture the depth and complexity of the decade, but it does highlight the clash between qualitative and quantitative, micro and macro sociology. This clash is at the heart of the development of grounded theory: two people (Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss) with different training, at different points in their careers, found a way to engage in qualitative research that would be sensible to journal reviewers and editors in a discipline that, in the words of Charmaz (2014), "marched toward defining research in quantitative terms" (p. 6) at that time.

Glaser and Strauss met at the University of California, San Francisco, where they conducted studies on death and dying in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; 1979). Strauss arrived at UCSF with a well-established career, having earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Glaser, on the other hand, was a recent Ph.D. from Columbia, where he trained under Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton. The two worked together on *Awareness of Dying* and its associated articles in what Gynnild and Martin (2011) refer to as a "peer-to-peer mentoring relationship" (p. 3). After the success of that study, Glaser and Strauss realized that, while trying to generate sociological theory about dying in hospitals, they had stumbled upon a new approach to studying qualitative data. They then produced *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, which brought grounded theory forward as a qualitative methodology to sociologists.

The differences of Glaser and Strauss's training and inclinations shaped the assumptions underpinning GT's invention. Influenced as he was by the interactionist focus at the Chicago school, Strauss brought a focus on the attentions of those under study; how they made sense of the world around them, how they created that sense through collaborative work, etc. Glaser, on the other hand, was from Columbia, having trained under Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton. He came to see grounded theory as a method that "aggregates incidents like surveys aggregate people" (1998, p. 31) in order to find meaningful patterns in data.

In Glaser's work with him, Lazarsfeld "did not perceive any research method as wholly quantitative or wholly qualitative. He showed constantly how all research contained both elements" (1998, p. 29). This bridging of qualitative and quantitative methods served as a spark for Glaser's later work with Strauss. Glaser also drew on the work of Merton, under whom he studied the construction of logical theory (Glaser, 1998). For Merton (again, in Glaser's experience), "substantive concepts had to be related by theoretical codes to generate theory of the middle range" (p. 30). Glaser's work in grounded theory allowed for a construction of theory that bridged qualitative and quantitative work (Lazarsfeld's influence) to generate more abstract theory from interlinked concepts (Merton's influence) but also—and this is where Glaser sees his contribution as moving

beyond Lazarsfeld and Merton—beginning the work of theory by abstracting from data collected, not from the logical deduction of social action.

Glaser and Strauss' work to bring their backgrounds together led to a method that successfully navigated the tensions of the era. It allowed for the continued study of social action through qualitative means but did so in a way that could address methodological concerns of the growing number of quantitatively-oriented researchers at the time. GT managed to navigate the qualitative-quantitative, macro-micro battles that were taking place across the discipline successfully and escaped from that raucous period in a position to grow exponentially over the course of the next several decades.

WHAT HAS BEEN DISCOVERED?

The above section usefully characterizes the time period that saw GT's initial discovery. But . . . *what* was discovered? What *is* GT? What does it do? How does it do it?

To begin with, grounded theory is a way to generate explanations *of* data, *from* data. That is, it does not *test* hypotheses on data, but rather allows theory to be generated from the concurrent collection and analysis of data. What exactly is meant by theory is another matter (see Charmaz, 2014), but we can refer to "theory" for the moment as a sense-maker for a set of data. Grounded theorists try to make sense of a set of data that they collect by generating a theory that organizes data in meaningful patterns. A good example of this kind of theorizing in writing studies might be Deborah Brandt's (2001) sponsors of literacy. The notion of sponsorship helps her trace out meaningful patterns in the literacy histories of her research participants.

The way that grounded theorists generate theory is through the act of *constant comparison*. Under the banner of "all is data," grounded theorists collect information in a range of ways—observation, interview, document and artifact collection—and, as they collect it, engage in *coding*, affixing descriptive labels to bits of data that abstracts the social action at work in a meaningful way. The coding process is ongoing and recursive.

Two tools help the researcher through this process of collecting and analyzing data. The first tool is the *memo*: researchers write notes of varying length and detail to themselves as they try to understand how their codes fit together to make sense of their data. The memo is where the coded data begins to fit together (or not) into a developing theory. The second tool is *theoretical sampling*: the researcher lets the emerging theory of what's happening with the social action guide their data collection and analysis. Eventually, the theory that the researcher generates is built up sufficiently to *saturate* the data. Saturation means that the

theory now explains the phenomenon of interest at a particular research site, and more data only provides additional examples of the theory at work.

These basic components make up a methodology of grounded theory. Through the use of these components together, the researcher engages in a logic of inquiry that leads from the words, actions, and objects of the people at a selected research site to an abstracted theory that explains the data in a way that, generally speaking, resonates with both the people at the research site and the interests of the researcher's discipline. In GT parlance, theory *emerges* from the ground of a research site; it is not *forced* onto a set of data.

As I mention above, GT has proliferated considerably in the past half century. We can effectively differentiate from what Glaser (1992; 1998) calls *classic grounded theory* (CGT), Corbin & Strauss' (2014) approach to GT, Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory, Clarke's postmodern approach to situation analysis, and a slew of other approaches that make up what Morse (2009) frames as *second generation* grounded theory. Each of these approaches varies in one way or another from the others, but all have the same core of components and an aligned logic of inquiry at their hearts.

GT AND LWR

Lifespan writing research, as defined in Dippre and Phillips (2020), "examines acts of inscribed meaning-making, the products of it, and the multiple dimensions of human activity that relate to it." The goal of this examination is to "build accounts of whether and how writers and writing change through the duration and breadth of the lifespan" (p. 6). This definition attends to writing (of course), but it also turns attention to the actions *surrounding* writing. This is important for understanding how we might operationalize grounded theory for lifespan writing research. Because of GT's sociological roots, we need to call our attention not just to words but to *social action*. Through GT, we can understand how particular actions are recognized by the writer and those around the writer *as* writing, or some activity related to it, and how that shapes future social actions.

GT's power comes from its ability to carefully attend to how social action becomes understood, framed, and bound within a particular context. As you'll see below (in the "Trio of Death" section), the theory is rendered from the codes and categories at a particular research site. These codes and categories bound the claims of the theory and provide the starting points for future applications of that theory, whether that be with further grounded theory analysis or a take-up of the theory for teaching, learning, or design purposes. The open-endedness of the theorizing, in other words, creates productive conditions for future uptake.

This open-endedness is of particular importance in lifespan writing research. One of the great difficulties in understanding writing through the lifespan is the incredible diversity of writing that individuals encounter throughout their lives. By generating focused theories in one part of the lifespan that can serve as a sensitizing lens for further studies in other parts of the lifespan, we can identify patterns of social action with and around writing that resonate with one another.

Below, I propose a "second generation" approach to grounded theory (Morse, 2009), one that builds on the foundational work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and the later work of Charmaz (2014) to create a pathway toward meaningful theory generation. To be clear, this is not the *only* way to go about applying grounded theory to lifespan writing research. What I articulate here, though, is a way of using GT that has proven useful to me in my own work (i.e., Dippre, 2021) and pairs productively with the broader issue of understanding writing through the lifespan.

GETTING TO WORK: TEXT-BASED INTERVIEWS, GT, AND LWR

In the above section, I traced out some of the theoretical roots and historical happenstance that influenced the development of GT. In this section, and the subsections that follow, I will show how to put that knowledge to work to generate and act on a sensitizing lens that will allow researchers to generate some theoretical claims about writing through the lifespan. As I mention above, I'll be working across text-based interviews from one interview participant at a time to generate our insights, and letting the theory emerge from the lived reality of those participants' writing lives.

Specifying a Sensitizing Framework

A sensitizing framework is something I organize on my way into a study, as a way of making sense of what it is that interests me, how I plan to mobilize the components of grounded theory, and how that mobilization connects to the foundations of the methodology. Once I've established each of those three, I'll find a way to create some orienting questions that I'll use as I craft my research site. Each of these components—identifying interests, mobilizing the components, connecting to GT foundations, and creating orienting questions—are needed to have a GT study that follows a logic of inquiry, rather than a set of collected methods with various degrees of compatibility.

To begin with, what is it that interests me about a potential research site? Why am I intending to collect data there? No doubt my motivations, like all of

our motivations, are multiple, but for whatever reasons I have, I've chosen *this particular* site for study. Once I have a sense of what interests me, I can start to build connections between that interest—and, in particular the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of those interests—and the historical development of grounded theory. I identified several theoretical starting points for building connections earlier in this chapter: the Chicago school, the second Chicago school, Lazarsfeld, and Merton. These are the schools of thought through which the first iteration of GT developed in the 1960s. Later schools of thought, which Morse (2009) refers to as the second generation of grounded theory, brought in other approaches, such as constructivism (Charmaz, 2014) and postmodernism (Clarke, 2005).

The list of options I present in the above paragraph probably sound like a bit of a mess. It seems like we can start just about anywhere, and link GT to just about any theoretical framework. As true as such a statement might feel, though, it's not actually the truth. At some point, the work one has to do to resolve incongruities between the foundations of GT and one's own theoretical assumptions becomes too much work to be worth the effort, and the result might not even be reasonably referred to as a "grounded theory." What I'm looking to do is to work up some basic connections with some of the underlying theoretical assumptions that are implicit in GT so that I can figure out how I can best mobilize the components I mention above toward a study of my interests.

Researchers can start this work by making explicit some of their own theoretical assumptions. For instance, you might imagine, if you're working through a Vygotskian lens, that our understanding of the world is mediated by language, and that this language is shared, but not wholly shared. This has some connections with the Chicago school through Strauss (and, by extension, Hughes and Blumer). These assumptions can lead you to a particular understanding of the components of GT and how you might make use of them (more on this below). Before you get into those components, though, you need to start by articulating the assumptions that you have, and identifying links (and disconnects) from the foundations of GT.

Once I've got a sense of my interests in the site, some records I might need, and the connections between my interests and the underpinnings of GT articulated, I can think about the components of grounded theory, as specified above. For instance, how might I collect data? I will be conducting text-based interviews, sure, but that only covers part of the question. How will I create a record from my interviews? How will I study texts? How will I link texts and interviews? How will I transcribe interviews? Answering these questions can help me identify equipment I need, scheduling issues, and other practical concerns that I may want to think through.

When these questions are answered, I can begin to craft a specified and useful sensitizing framework. It's crucial that I make sense of the sensitizing framework correctly, here, to maintain a GT approach to collecting and studying data: I am not looking to apply a theory, such as heterogeneous symbolic engineering (Bazerman, 1999), to a particular research site. Rather, I'm figuring out how to mobilize my interests and theoretical understandings without losing sight of what's going on "on the ground" of a particular research site. I can do this with some generative questions that (1) start me on the process of record collection and (2) shove into the background, temporarily, my theories and assumptions, so that I can more effectively pay attention to what is going on at a particular research site.

There are many ways we can frame questions, of course. In my own experience, I've benefited best from a series of questions I modeled after the work of Green, Skukauskaite, and Baker (2012) and their work on interactional ethnography. Looking across my interests, the theoretical connections to GT's foundation, and the way I intend to make use of tools to pursue those interests, I identify a particular phenomenon of interest, broadly construed in the language that might relate to the research site (in my Part II text, this would be the interviews with my research participant). I avoid technical language for these questions. So, instead of asking "what counts as literate action?" I would ask "what counts as *writing*?" and explore a research site from there.

Here are the questions I start with, which you can also find in Dippre (2021):

1. What counts as X?

2. When?

3. Where?

4. Under what circumstances?

5. With what social and historical antecedents and consequences?

These are not questions I ask in interviews, but rather the questions behind the questions that I ask. So, if I want to know what counts as writing, I won't ask a participant "what counts as writing to you?" Instead, I might ask "what kinds of writing do you do?" From this question (and its follow-ups), I can begin to generate a sense of what counts as writing.

These kinds of questions are informed by my interests (the phenomenology of literate action) because they ask people about what they're experiencing and can serve as a starting point for pursuing observations of the kinds of experiences people have with literate action. They are also connected to the underpinnings of GT in several ways. First, they allow me to identify incidents and treat

them, as Glaser does, like survey data—points that can accumulate over time as the records I gather are dimensionalized into data. Since I'm working from the point of view of the participants, I can eventually engage in mid-range theorizing (connecting to Merton) that keeps the experiences of the participants as its frame (and thus the boundary of the theory). Finally, although the questions do not explicitly do this, they allow me to see the decisions about "what counts as X" as fundamentally social in nature (this becomes important as I build out the sensitizing framework for my study in the next chapter).

The Trio of Death: Records / Coding / Memoing

I cannot, in good conscience, take credit for this title. Back when I could charitably be called an athlete, one period of football practice was given to three drills, done back-to-back-to-back, that my teammate, Josh, referred to as "the Trio of Death." Then, it described the hopelessness I generally felt just before the drills finished. Now, it describes the hopelessness I generally feel after seemingly ceaseless movement among collecting records, coding data, and memoing about my coding.

So, why do I put myself through this Trio of Death? For me, it all goes back to the word "ground" in grounded theory. The work of generating a theory doesn't leave the ground very far, even when I'm engaged in what amounts to, in the end, rather abstract work. I can remain engaged with a research site, try to understand the lived reality of the people at the site, and—through that work—end up rendering a theory that reflects meaningfully (for researcher and participant) on the lived experience of literate action. There is no *forcing* of the data. I'm not at a site to explore, say, sponsors of literacy: I'm trying to understand the writing I see through the words, actions, and artifacts of people engaged in the writing. If the theory that develops connects to, extends, or revises sponsors of literacy in some way, that's an exciting breakthrough not just for an eventual reader of my work, but for me, in the process of my daily work with writers and their writing. The Trio of Death is almost as grueling as it sounds (although you don't actually die, so you've got that going for you), but you end up with theories about writing that, in the end, you can use to help writers write.

Unlike the college drills, the Trio of Death here is simultaneous; you're always going back and forth among collecting records, coding data, and writing memos. Note that I don't discuss collecting *data*—which is a common enough phrase in GT—but rather collecting *records*. Records are the things we make data out of—in our case, interviews, transcripts, notes from interviews, and the written texts that research participants share with us. I draw from Richard Haswell's (2012) definition of *datum* to describe records: they are once-occurring

historical artifacts that the researcher cannot change. When we are out looking for sources of information, records are what we collect.

Collecting records. As we collect records, we begin the process of making these into *data*. I fracture (Farkas & Haas, 2012), I pulverize (Brandt, 2016) the records into something that I can begin to code. This can happen in a variety of ways, of course. I might transcribe a recorded interview and segment the interviewee's responses into message units (Bloome et al., 2004) or topical chains (Geisler & Swarts, 2019). I might cut up a written text into paragraphs and code each paragraph. Or maybe each sentence in a paragraph. On the other hand, I might take extensive notes of a writer writing, and then code my notes. Whatever I choose (again, on the basis of what I worked out in developing my sensitizing framework), this act of pulverizing is a logic of inquiry in action, taking my records and *turning them into* data that can be analyzed.

The decisions about how to pulverize my records are shaped by the records I encounter. I can cut up a transcribed interview in one way, the notes from that interview in another way, and a shared text in a third way. What matters is not that the unit of analysis remain unchanged from one record to the next, but that any shifts emerge from the logic of inquiry that follows from my sensitizing framework. Since I'm starting with "what counts as X" and trying to get at the phenomenological experience of whatever X is, I can do this work by attending to the message units (Bloome et al., 2004) of speech that my participants engage in during interviews. The segments for analysis are bound by the intentions (as I can understand them) of the participants.

I can connect those meaning units to particular chunks of text in the text-based interview by letting the meaning units I see at work in the interviews bound the segments of the text I analyze. So, if an interviewee discusses the introduction to an academic article, I could use their sense of the introduction as expressed in the meaning unit to identify the starting and stopping points of those chunks of text.

Writing memos. Rendering data from records involves a great deal of decision-making. So, even before I actually begin coding (and, in fact, *while* I am coding—more on this in a moment), I am making decisions, and decisions that I need to keep track of. I can do this with memos: notes to myself of various length that track my decision-making before, during, and after coding. The memo is where theory is generated, in the end.

There are numerous resources—in particular, Charmaz (2014) and Glaser (2014)—that explain how to write memos in greater detail. What is crucial to me as someone engaging in GT is that each memo I write contains (1) the date and (2) exactly what I need to get a thought out of my head at the moment. Sometimes it's a sentence. Sometimes it's a few pages. But, whatever I decide,

I'm using the memo to keep a record of my thinking. The memos I write to my-self as I develop my sensitizing lens and start the work of collecting records and transforming data all will be helpful to me as I eventually work up and bound my theory.

One final note on memos: because GT is fundamentally recursive, I may find myself returning to earlier decisions and making different ones. I may de-cide that bounding interviews by meaning units leaves me with data that is too finely or coarsely grained for me to usefully generate theory, and I have to re-or-ganize and re-code by a bigger unit (such as an "incident" (Charmaz, 2014) or a smaller unit (such as a word). This move into a different unit of analysis is no cause for concern, and having a record of my initial decision *and* my subsequent decisions about bounding will be good to have on hand.

Coding. I don't quite code *as* I bound my data, but not that much time separates the two (and, as I mentioned, I'm collecting some records even as I'm coding data constructed from other records). It really depends on my data, in the end—if I'm coding interview notes, then I can sit down after the interview and start coding immediately. If I need to transcribe an interview before I code, that's a time-intensive task and naps are important. The fundamentally recursive nature of coding allows me to move back and forth across my data.

The beginning of my coding will be *open* (Glaser, 1992) or *initial* (Charmaz, 2014) coding. In this phase of coding, I'll be reading through the data I've con-structed unit by unit, describing the social action I see happening in a few words in the margin. I'll keep a record, as I go along, of what the codes seem to mean to me. I may find some codes recur. I may find that a code comes along that ac-tually describes both the unit I'm looking at *and* a previous one—this is the kind of thing I would write a memo about, as it will shape my second stage of coding.

Let's contextualize this in the specific context of text-based interviews. I es-tablish my sensitizing lens, identify my initial questions, and conduct my first text-based interview. After the interview, I engage in open coding, creating and defining codes that emerge for me. I'm also memoing to keep track of the codes and their relationships to one another. After coding the transcript, I probably have a decent idea (through memo writing) of a few codes that seem like they can be useful. I can use those codes to develop my next set of questions for my next interview with this participant in (you guessed it!) a memo.

After my next interview, I'll again be open coding, although some codes from the first interview will no doubt recur—particularly those that shaped my interview questions. I might get more fine-grained codes that relate to the codes I established after my first interview. I might, at this point, be ready for a second stage of coding, which is sometimes called *focused* (Charmaz, 2014) or *selective* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) coding. At this stage of coding, I am bringing my

codes together in some way: trying to see the relationships among codes, perhaps creating broader codes that subsume the codes I found in my first interview, focusing my attention on codes that seem central to my emerging understanding of this writer's literate life, etc.

BEYOND THE TRIO: CORE CATEGORIES, SATURATION, LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I have moved beyond the Trio of Death: I've shifted from the gloom of never-ending collection / coding / memoing to the sense that maybe, just maybe, I won't be lost forever in a sea of memos. At this point, I begin rendering a theory. Rather than allowing the coding to run free, as it has been with open coding, I'm now narrowing down my selective coding to a particular category that will serve as the centerpiece for my theory. In these steps, I work my way from identifying that category and fully building out a theory to saturation, and the subsequent literature review.

Articulating a Core Category

As I engage in selective coding, I'll find particular codes pulling at my attention. They seem to provide insight in aspects of my data that seem crucial. I probably have a few codes that stand out in this way. But not all of these codes can be explained in a single paper. Perhaps, if I have a big enough data set, they can't even be explained in an entire dissertation. So these will have to be worked up one at a time, developing a core category from selective codes and dimensionalizing it through *theoretical sampling*, or further data collection that is shaped by the demands of my emerging theory.

By *category*, I am referring to the sense-maker of an emergent theory, a concept that is at the center of my emerging understanding of the literate action of the person I'm working with. Again, this the core of *this particular research project*. I'm homing in on something meaningful in the literate action of the writer(s) I'm studying to generate a publication. For instance, in my study of a writer's notebook practices over two decades (Dippre, 2021), I found *adapting/adopting* to be the emergent core category for making sense of how his notebook writing practice changed over time. The acts of adapting and adopting helped me pull together the various other codes I was working with in the transcripts and texts.

As I develop my core category, I'll need some additional theoretical sampling. While I'm still coding, though, I'm beyond the Trio of Death now. The sense of being adrift in a sea of codes and memos has given way to the excitement of having

an emerging theory. The momentum has begun to build, and the theoretical sampling allows me to see what I need for the theory to cross the finish line.

SATURATION

Eventually, my theoretical sampling gives way to saturation: no matter how much more data I collect, all I do is find more instances of my core category at work. This is not to say that I have created a comprehensive theory of literate action, of course, but rather that, in terms of data that directly falls under the theory I have articulated, I am explaining everything that I can. Once I've achieved saturation, I can turn to the literature, and start to work out the consequences of my theory on what we know about lifespan writing research.

CONNECTING TO THE LITERATURE

At this point, I have a grounded theory that explains the social action I am tracing in a series of text-based interviews. Because of my sensitizing framework, my understandings of writing and how it happens have been caught up in the process of theory generation. But I have not yet done the work of connecting this theory explicitly to what we know about writing in general and writing through the lifespan in particular. Now that I *have* the theory, I can turn my attention toward the literature, and see what my findings resonate with, how I might craft a space for my project in the field in a way that will be both meaningful for my emerging theory and beneficial for lifespan writing research. At present, there are some volumes that I can turn to if I am looking for particular themes in lifespan writing research. I might draw on Bazerman et al. (2018) to generate some connections with their eight principles (p. 20-51) and see how my theory enriches or problematizes particular principles, or even how it identifies particular relationships across two or more principles.

Drawing on Dippre and Phillips (2020), I might turn to the definition of lifespan writing research (p. 6) and generate some potential revisions, enrichments, or problems with aspects of that definition. I could also turn to the end of that collection, either Dippre and Phillips' conclusion (p. 247) or Brandt's epilogue (p. 255) and build from those. Dippre and Phillips suggest *lines of inquiry*—"a rigorous investigation of a concept or set of concepts that can be traced through the lifespan and scaled from a case study to a large data set" (p. 253). Perhaps there is a line of inquiry that my theory can contribute to— Dippre and Phillips offer some suggestions, but I could also identify a new one. In her epilogue, Brandt closes the collection by identifying four questions of immediate import for lifespan writing research. Those questions may be

addressed, in part, by my theory, and I can build my literature connections out from there.

Finally, I can move from these broader structures offered from earlier volumes to the particular choices, questions, and conclusions offered by other lifespan writing researchers. In Chapter 8, I draw in particular on Dippre (2019), so I'll spare you the details here, but many other approaches (e.g., Brandt, 2018; Bowen, 2020) offer productive starting points for bringing together a theory with a larger discussion. Using particular chapters or articles as a starting point for bringing a theory into contact with the field can help you craft a focused link that (1) respects the boundaries of your theory and (2) provides a targeted, meaningful contribution to the ongoing conversation of lifespan writing research.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the greatest asset that GT has for lifespan writing research is its flexibility and durability. It is flexible, in that it can—and has—been used in a range of ways and to good effect in a variety of different fields. It is also durable, in that its various incarnations stand up well to a wide range of data, of settings, and of research questions. With GT—and, particularly, with second-generation GT oriented to text-based interviews—lifespan writing researchers can have a method that works well across different kinds of records, and that has a successful track record.

But, thanks to its open-ended nature, grounded theory is durable in another sense. As Fulford and Rosenberg demonstrate in their chapters, lifespan writing researchers may not know how their studies will unfold or how long they will take. By constantly attending to what is *on the ground*, what is in the records under study, grounded theory remains open-ended. Additional interviews, texts, surveys, etc. can be usefully integrated into ongoing work toward a particular grounded theory. If lifespan writing research is serious about not just multi-site but multi-*generational* research studies (and I hope we are!), then grounded theory provides a flexible, durable procedure for generating meaningful theory that can handle the perpetual open-endedness of such a project.

Finally, I encourage readers to see this chapter not as some kind of demand for orthodoxy, but rather a useful process for getting to useful insights about writers writing through the lifespan. Interested researchers can follow this process for text-based interviews, or they can look at other approaches, cited above, to use grounded theory in different ways. In Chapter 8, I use the process I describe here to generate a grounded theory about one writer's literate action throughout her life. In that example, you can see how I make particular choices while conducting a grounded theory study, which might help you firm up how you intend to go about the work of lifespan writing research through grounded theory.

REFERENCES

Bazerman, C. (1999). *The languages of Edison's light*. MIT Press.

Bazerman, C., Applebee, A. N., Berninger, V. W., Brandt, D., Graham, S., Jeffery, J., Matsuda, P. K., Murphy, S., Rowe, D. W., Schleppegrell, M., & Wilcox, K. C. (2018). *The lifespan development of writing*. National Council of Teachers of English. https://wac.colostate.edu/books/ncte/lifespan-writing/

Bloome, D., Carter, S. P., Christian, B. M., Otto, S., & Shuart-Faris, N. (2004). *Discourse analysis and the study of classroom language and literacy events: A microethnographic perspective*. Routledge.

Bowen, L. M. (2020). Literacy tours and material matters: Principles for studying the literate lives of older adults. In R. J. Dippre & T. Phillips (Eds *Approaches to lifespan writing research: Generating an actionable coherence* (pp. 111-126). The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2020.1053.2.07

Brandt, D. (2001). *Literacy in American lives*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/ cbo9780511810237

Brandt, D. (2016). Studying writing sociologically. Paper and Workshop on the 50th Anniversary of the Dartmouth Research Institute. Hanover, NH. August 1-8.

Brandt, D. (2018). Writing development and life-course development: The case of working adults. In C. Bazerman, A. N. Applebee, V. W. Berninger, D. Brandt, S. Graham, J. V. Jeffery, P. K. Matsuda, S. Murphy, D. W. Rowe, M. Schleppegrell, & K. C. Wilcox (Eds.), *The lifespan development of writing* (pp. 244-271). National Council of Teachers of English.

Brandt, D. (2020). Epilogue. In R. J. Dippre & T. Phillips (Eds.), *Approaches to lifespan writing research: Generating an actionable coherence* (pp. 255-249). The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2020.1053.3.2

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Clarke, Adele E. (2005). *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Coser, L. A. (1975). Presidential Address: Two methods in search of a substance. *American Sociological Review*, *40*(6), 691-700. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094174

Dippre, R. J. (2019). *Talk, tools, and texts: A logic-in-use for studying lifespan literate action development*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. https://doi.org/10.37514/PRA-B.2019.0384

Dippre, R. J., & Phillips, T. (Eds.). (2020). *Approaches to lifespan writing research: Generating an actionable coherence*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2020.1053

Dippre, R. J. (2021). Haikus, lists, submarine maintenance, and *Star Trek*: Tracing the rambling paths of writing development. In K. Blewett, C. Donahue, & C. Monroe (Eds.), *The expanding universe of writing studies: Higher education writing research* (pp. 381-397). Peter Lang.

Farkas, K., & Haas, C. (2012). A grounded theory approach for studying writing and literacy. In K. Powell & P. Takayoshi (Eds.), *Practicing research in writing studies: Reflexive and ethically responsible research* (pp. 81-95). Hampton Press.

Geisler, C., & Swarts, J. (2019). *Coding streams of language*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. https://doi.org/10.37514/PRA-B.2019.0230

Glaser, B. (1992). *The basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence vs. forcing*. Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. (2014). *Memoing: A vital grounded theory procedure*. Sociology Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies of qualitative research*. Transaction Publishers.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1965). Temporal aspects of dying as a non-scheduled status passage. *American Journal of Sociology*, *71*(1), 48-59.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1979). *Awareness of dying*. Transaction Publishers.

Green, J. L., Skukauskaite, A., & Baker, W. D. (2012). Ethnography as epistemology. In J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe, & L. V. Hedges (Eds.), *Research methods and methodologies in education* (pp. 309-321). Sage.

Gynnild, A., & Martin, V.B. (2011). Introduction: Mentoring a method. In A. Gynnild & B. V. Martin (Eds.), *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method, and work of Barney Glaser* (pp. 1-12). BrownWalker Press.

Haswell, R.H. (2012). Quantitative methods in composition studies: An introduction to their functionality. In K. Powell & P. Takayoshi (Eds.) *Writing studies research in practice: Methods and methodologies* (pp. 185-196). Hampton Press.

Morse, J.M. (2009). *Developing grounded theory: The second generation*. Routledge.