

CHAPTER 8.

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE MULTIDIRECTIONAL
NATURE OF FAMILY
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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Over the last four decades, scholars have been working to uncover the nuances of family literacy learning. However, the discussion has often highlighted the impact that parents or adult family members have on the literacy development of children (Baker, 2013; Brandt, 2001; Cook-Cottone, 2004; Purcell-Gates, 1989; McDermott, 2004; Morrow et. al., 1993). In contrast, when scholars have examined a child's influence on the literacy development of older generations, this has typically been approached through a framework of bilingual literacy (Appleby & Hamilton, 2006; Auerbach, 1989; Baird et al., 2015), or the concept is mentioned but is not the focus of study (Barton et al., 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Brandt, 2001; Kress, 2003). The research I undertook for this project was intended to uncover how literacy development has moved forward and backward through the familial generations of my own Caucasian, English-speaking family who has spent generations in northeast Ohio.

In their influential text, *Local Literacies*, Barton and Hamilton (2012) claim, "Literacy practices can change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making" (p. 7). As one of the six tenets Barton and Hamilton (2012) outline as a framework for understanding literacy, this one highlights an understanding of literacy development as fluid, of literacy practices and beliefs as constantly in flux, and of literacy learning as happening in structured and non-structured environments. This is true not just for individuals, but, as this chapter will show, across living familial generations as well. Below, I draw together lived history narratives of six members representing four generations of my family (ages 20–85), whose literacy practices appear to have evolved from a reluctant or minimal participation in most literacy practices to a complete and purposeful immersion into multiple literacies that span community, family, and the academy. I examine how my own family's literacy practices

and attitudes have traveled and changed across generations. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, I demonstrate ways that literacy development does indeed possess a multidirectional nature, moving back and forth along generational lines. Such an understanding of this multidirectional quality of literacy can likely inform the way scholars understand how literacy learning fluctuates and moves throughout one's lifetime by providing a broader frame for understanding literacy development and for promoting more inclusive practices in research and in classrooms.

THE MULTIDIRECTIONAL NATURE OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Literacy scholars articulate the concept of literacy in increasingly broad ways as new technologies and practices have developed. Thomas and Takayoshi (2017) contend, "The substance of literacy increasingly involves a complex accumulation of reading and writing practices across all areas of human existence" (p. 4). They maintain a broad conceptualization of "writing" to include "print/alphabetic texts, digital media, and performed, embodied compositions" (2017, p. 4). Similarly, Barton and Hamilton (2012) argue, "[I]n literacy events people use written language in an integrated way as part of a range of semiotic systems; these semiotic systems include mathematical systems, musical notation, maps and other non-text-based images" (p. 9). These conceptions of literacy as social *and* beyond alphabetic text inform the definition of literacy I use in this chapter. I also draw heavily from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy's (NAAL) definition: "Literacy is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (National Center for Educational Statistics, para. 3). This definition of literacy includes reading and writing alphabetic text, mathematics, and the languages of computer programming.

Literacy development, like literacy itself, often is described in unidirectional, accreting terms. In *Literacy in American Lives*, Brandt (2001) defines literacy development as the "accumulating project of literacy learning across a lifetime, the interrelated effects and potentials of learning over time" (p. 7). Brandt's focus throughout the chapter in which she discusses the evolving literacy practices of four generations of one Wisconsin family is on how each new generation builds and borrows from the literacy practices of the generation before, even as they construct their own. Brandt's findings demonstrate that individuals may never stop building and modifying their own literacy practices throughout their lifetimes. While I certainly don't deny the existence or the power of the kind of generational accumulation that Brandt describes, here I am more interested in

uncovering other directions in which literacy may move and other ways that relationships foster literacy development. Earlier generations—parents, grandparents, etc.—continue to develop and accumulate literacy practices that are built and borrowed from later generations—children, grandchildren, and so forth—and from siblings or other generational peers.

The idea that literacy develops in multiple directions is not entirely new, however. Scholars have researched how children assist parental literacy learning (Auerbach, 1989), how siblings impact each other's literacy development (Gregory, 2001), and how children become “language brokers” for adult family members (Perry, 2009). However, most of these conversations are framed in discussions of second language learning (Appleby & Hamilton, 2006; Auerbach, 1989; Baird et al., 2017). For instance, Elsa Auerbach (1989), addressing the false assumption that the natural movement of literacy acquisition is unidirectional from parent to child, writes, “[W]ork with immigrants and refugees indicates that the distribution and sharing of language and literacy practices in families is complex and by no means unidirectional from parents to children . . . Clearly, a model [of family literacy development] that rests on the assumption of unilateral parent-to-child literacy assistance, with a neutral transfer of skills, misses important aspects of this dynamic” (p. 171). Appleby and Hamilton (2006) also work with bilingual learners but focus on relationships between teachers and children. They argue, “[S]ituated literacy and communication practices are complex, intergenerational, and multidirectional . . . Rigid boundaries between teacher and learner are challenged” (p. 205). For compositionists, the multidirectional nature of literacy development is similar to the recursivity of the writing process, wherein stages of writing such as inventing, drafting, revising, and editing are conceptualized as occurring in a nonlinear fashion. As Perl (2014) writes, “We go back in order to go forward” (para. 1) When creating a piece of writing, one stage may be revisited multiple times. Writers often do not move cleanly and discretely from one stage to the next but cycle forward and backward as needed. Likewise, literacy development is not stagnant but continues to move; relationships with literacy continue to grow and develop, being acted upon by the past, present, and future.

In this chapter I trace that movement through four generations of my own family. By conducting semi-structured interviews and examining the historical context of my participants, I suggest ways that literacies have developed in this family in multidirectional ways: from parent to child, child to parent, sibling to sibling, and more. I also argue that complicating our understanding of literacy development by identifying these multidirectionalities is vital for understanding writing development across the lifespan.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

For this project, I employed a feminist research methodology, purposefully working to disrupt the binary construction research methods can often take, i.e., researcher as powerful and participant as vulnerable (Wickramasinghe, 2009). Feminist research methodology pushes for researchers to be reflective of their practices (Burns, 2003; Cushman, 1996; Powell & Takayoshi, 2012) and self-reflexive, making parts of the self unfamiliar (Gorzelsky, 2012; Takayoshi et al., 2012). Feminist methodology is most applicable in this project because I am a member of the participant family, and the roles that I simultaneously inhabit—grand-daughter, daughter, niece, sister, mother, researcher—necessarily affected the interviews and the information provided by the participants. Should a researcher outside of the family conduct this research, it is highly likely that different memories would have come to the fore, and true but, nevertheless, alternate remembrances would have manifested.

My literacy memories represent the third generation of a family whose literacy practices have evolved from participating only enough to get the job done to a complete and purposeful immersion into multiple literacies that span community, family, and the academy. I did attempt to bracket my involvement by recording my own memories before recording the memories of others and by attempting to not interject my own memories into theirs. It is inevitable that my own interpretations of my family and their experiences have leaked through into this analysis. However, being a member of the participating family also helped me to know when to push on a certain topic. For instance, when I asked my grandmother about her memories of her own employment, she originally only mentioned work done with a publishing company. However, because I knew she had also worked for many years arranging weekly bingo trips, I knew to reiterate the question, adding that this could include self-employment. This jogged her memory, and she spoke about the activities she engaged in while arranging bingo trips. If I had not been familiar with the family history, I may not have known to clarify my question in such a way.

I audio-recorded semi-structured lifespan interviews with each of the six research participants. Each interview lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours, and most were conducted in the participant's home. Face-to-face interviews were used instead of electronic questionnaires or similar approaches because of the rich, collaborative meaning-making that is typical when people engage in face-to-face conversation. Selfe and Hawisher (2012) argue that "intimate and richly situated information emerges most productively from interviews, especially when such exchanges are structured or semi-structured" (p. 36). As the starting point for my interviews, I used the questions developed by Brandt (2001) for *Literacy in American Lives* because they seemed to fit my goal of triggering memory

recall of past literacy events. I devised and added questions of my own that paralleled those but that centered on reading and writing practices involved with the participants' work lives. I also added questions regarding socioeconomic aims for children and literacy practices used in order to reach that desired status. These questions were added in order to understand connections participants made between their literacy practices and their current or desired socioeconomic status. One week prior to the start of my interview process, I emailed a copy of the interview questions to each participant so they could prepare for the interview.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio files and used open coding to uncover the literacies discussed. Once the first round of open coding was complete, I organized them into themes: academic—literacy practices tied to formal or informal schooling; private—literacy practices not shared with others or performed only when alone; and public—literacy practices that occur in public spaces, such as the workplace or organizational meetings. For each of these themes, I then fractured those codes into moments of personal literacy practices and moments about the literacy practices of others. From this, I identified instances of multidirectional literacy development. I also noted an affinity for literacy practices outside the realm of “English” or language arts, such as the language of computers and of mathematics.

PARTICIPANTS

My family's story is set within one Ohio city whose economic well-being rose and fell with the birth and decline of the industrial United States. In the mid-nineteenth century, Stark County became a center for the manufacture of farm equipment, and Ohio was the leading agricultural center of the country (Sterling, 1998). After the farm equipment industry began to move west, steel became a major industry in the area due to the abundance of water and it was during this time that the city reached the peak of its prosperity (Sterling, 1998). Since the late 1960s, the city has seen a continued decline in businesses and population (Sterling, 1998). Kenney (2003) notes

In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a national trend toward a service-oriented economy. Industrial jobs gave way to banking, retailing, insurance, medicine, law, and government. Manufacturing jobs have been consistently moving overseas. (p. 145)

causing the steady decline of population and prosperity in a once booming city.

The Stark County, Caucasian family represented in this study had four living adult generations on my maternal side at the time of my data collection. This

offered a unique opportunity for a gaze into their literacy practices as they occurred across generations. For each of the four generations, I interviewed one or two representatives: Shirley, my grandmother (85); her daughters, Jeannette (my mother, 63) and Joyce (my aunt, 52); Jeannette's daughters, both me (42) and AnnMarie (my sister, 38); and finally, my son, Zane (20).

Shirley, my grandmother, was born in 1933, the second child of the family. She grew up in a household that included her mother, her father, an older brother, four younger brothers, and two younger sisters. In 1941, when Shirley was eight years old, the US launched into World War II. At that point

rationing became a way of life as supplies were redirected to the war effort. In 1940, 68 local industries manufactured \$140 million worth of products for the war effort. [A local manufacturer] was making bearings for the British and French before Pearl Harbor. It was the kind of increased production that pulled Stark County—and the nation—out of the grip of the Great Depression. (Kenney, 2003, p. 127)

Though the city in which they lived seemed to prosper from the manufacturing of wartime materials, Shirley's family did not benefit. Her father was in and out of work and her mother's job was caretaker of the home and children. Regarding her family's literacies, Shirley recalls very little reading and writing occurring in her childhood household.

Shirley's daughter and my mother, Jeannette, was born in 1954 and she describes the family of her youth as consisting of her mother, father, four sisters, and two brothers. Jeannette grew up in a city that was quickly declining economically. Jeannette's childhood family literacy memories focused on large family gatherings that occurred in December and July. These gatherings were meant to build comradery between family members who didn't see each other often and activities were always planned for the adults and children, such as the annual Christmas talent show, swimming, miniature golf, and sometimes board games like Scrabble and Pictionary. Often, however, the adults could be found sitting around the tables in small groups playing games of rummy or poker. Like Shirley, Jeannette recalls little reading and writing in her childhood home but her current household has full bookshelves and reading is a constant activity, in part due to her husband and mother-in-law's habits of passing time with a book.

Joyce, my aunt and the youngest of Shirley's children, was born in 1966. She reports that her father would come home from work and read the newspaper at the dining room table. This daily reading habit likely played a part in Joyce's own relationship to reading. Her earliest memory of using books on her own was when she was around four years old. Her parents had a set of encyclopedias that

she used to build literal walls around herself when she played. By high school, due to divorce, Shirley could no longer afford the requisite tuition cost of the private, Catholic education that Joyce's older siblings had enjoyed. Subsequently, Joyce attended the area vocational high school where she studied data processing. Before Shirley's passing in 2019, she and Joyce lived in the same home in which there were multiple bookshelves overflowing with books because of the love of reading Joyce developed over the course of her life.

I am Jeannette's first child, born in 1976. My most vibrant early literacy memories are of reading time in elementary school and typing my own stories on an electric typewriter at our dining room table. AnnMarie, my younger sister, was born in 1979. When asked about her earliest literacy memories, she flippantly remarked, "I remember those lined papers that [we] had, and [we] would learn to write letters." However, as we talked further, she admitted that there was a time when reading and writing became an important activity for her. As she entered her teen years and the emotional rollercoaster that often accompanies them, she began journaling and writing poetry to work through her own feelings.

Currently, my household includes my husband and three children. Not only do we have overflowing bookshelves, but there are reading materials on tables, on countertops, and piled on the floor. AnnMarie's current household includes her husband and four children. She says she makes sure books are always available to her kids, remarking, "If they like to read then they will like learning and will seek out opportunities to learn more and go somewhere in life . . . If they like to read and learn then they will not find school so bad and will make it through college." She seems to have been correct, as higher education has played a major role in many of our lives over the last few decades, as will be shown below.

Zane, my eldest child, was born in 1997. When asked about his earliest literacy memories, he mentioned the nightly bedtime reading he and I engaged in from his birth through his sixth-grade year. The two books he mentioned by name from this time were *Peter and the Star Catchers* (Barry & Pearson, 2004) and *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 2011). "Those I remember specifically," he said. When pressed as to why these two stand out to him, Zane reflected,

It isn't so much the books themselves that mean much to me. It's the fact that it was a way for us to spend time together at a point in our lives when we didn't often have much time. Those memories really shaped my enjoyment of reading and storytelling because it is something I've always associated with spending time with you.

Not only was our quality time influential for Zane, but his father's video game activities and love of computers lent themselves to Zane's own interest in

such pastimes, leading him to alphabet video games he could play on his own by the time he was three years old. Zane was recently working on his bachelor's degree, but realizing he was unhappy with his chosen major, he completed enough classes to earn his associate of science degree in general studies and is now taking a break from education to decide what he truly wants to do.

MULTIDIRECTIONAL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN ONE FAMILY

The experiences reported above suggest some of the ways in which literacy doesn't simply accumulate down through generations but that it instead has multidirectional impacts as one member's literacies reshape the literacies of other members of one's own generation, future generations, and even past generations. The literacies of younger generations are often the impetus for new literacy development among older generations. For example, my grandmother, Shirley, grew up and raised her children with the mindset that the skills of reading and writing were necessary to have, but she did not seek out multiple avenues for the use and development of these skills. When asked how much reading and writing were valued in her childhood home, Shirley's daughter, Jeannette, recalled, "I think it was more of a necessity than a value, really—[a necessity] for getting through school."

This seemingly apathetic relationship to literacy was likely influenced by the cultural climate in which Shirley grew up, the relationships generations before her had had with literacy, and her own personal interests in such activities. Shirley was born in 1933 and thus her early years were influenced by the Great Depression and the impact of the Second World War. Though she, herself, may not have been overtly aware of these events during her early childhood, her parents and the world around her certainly were. Not only was the nation suffering from financial declines and high unemployment rates, but these were lean years for the family. With an alcoholic father, a stay-at-home mother, and eight children in the home, there wasn't much time for literacy development. At one time, the living room in her childhood home was even turned into a bedroom for her grandfather, whom she watched pass away from leukemia. Add to such living conditions the fact that in 1930 4.3 percent of the US population 14 years and older was considered illiterate (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) and it can be imagined that for many like Shirley and her family, the ability to read and write may have been seen as a tool of necessity or an unaffordable luxury; there was likely less opportunity to develop particular literacies as hobbies or personal pursuits. Even so, as she grew and the world around her changed, so did Shirley's literacy development,

which was later also influenced by her children's and grandchildren's relationships with literacy.

Both Shirley and Jeannette mentioned reading comprehension as something they had always struggled with. Of reading books, Shirley mentioned repeatedly how much she did not enjoy it. Jeannette, on the other hand, said of high school, “[The] reading part was fine. Comprehension—whenever I would get tested on that—I was average.” This movement toward an acceptance of reading may have stemmed from Jeannette’s father, whom she mentioned often reading the daily newspaper or a fishing magazine at the dining room table. In fact, when asked about her current reading practices, Jeannette laughed, “Reading has been a part of me now that I don’t have kids.” Now that she is retired and finds herself with more time on her hands, she enjoys the enlightenment she feels her religious texts bring her, so she engages in the activity more often.

Sisters Jeannette and Joyce do not recall ever seeing their mother, Shirley, reading for enjoyment, though they both recall seeing their father engaging in reading of many kinds. Though I only have vague childhood memories of my mother reading novels, reading fiction has always been something I loved; it offered me a glimpse into different lives and constantly offered new perspectives. Zane, my son, continues to build on such affinities as he has books in multiple formats—paper, electronic, and audio.

Across the generations of my family, there also seems to be a growing interest in and increased use of the language of mathematics and language interpretation. About compulsory education Shirley remembers, “I liked math. . . . I remember in my math class . . . the teacher would stand there and flash off numbers and you had to add them up as she goes along. And I used to raise my hand on all of them because I could add them really fast no matter what.” With pride in her voice, Jeannette also recalls a math-related school memory,

In third grade we had a math teacher and she had a contest . . . [and] there was going be first and second place. She had a section [of the math textbook] that if you completed within a certain period of time . . . she took you on an outing . . . I think Brown Derby. I came in second and had a boxed lunch with her.

She said this lunch was a highlight of her schooling because she never felt above average in any other academic area. Shirley used her inclination toward math to help her arrange and run bingo games, while Jeannette put hers to use in a career working in payroll departments.

Younger generations have also demonstrated increasing affinity for language interpretation. Of her position in medical coding, AnnMarie remarked,

I have to understand the doctor's language. Not all doctors use the same abbreviations or the same language, so it's not just you sit here and you punch this code in. It's a lot of using your thought process and then you have to read the codes because each code has a description and you have to make sure that you pick the right one.

During his interview, Zane talked about needing to understand various student needs in his recent position as a computer science tutor.

Normally the question [that students visit with] is that "I have a problem with my code, can you look at it, can you read it for me? Comprehend what is going on and maybe tell me where the problem is?". . . So I have to both know how to read it and understand it on a very deep level and then I also have to understand how to write it so that I can give an answer for, like "This is why it's broken. Here's how to fix it."

His description of the work of tutoring a subject such as computer science is thus similar to AnnMarie's description of interpreting the language use of various doctors.

From a multidirectional perspective of literacy development, faint lines can start to be seen crisscrossing among and between generational lines. Shirley, Jeannette, and AnnMarie all talked about their children when asked about people in their lives they associate with reading and writing. Shirley remarked on Joyce's journaling, a practice that has followed her into adulthood; Jeannette mentioned my pursuit of an advanced degree in the field of writing studies; and AnnMarie's first thought was of enrolling her daughters in a pre-school literacy program. The fact that the general question about who they associate with literacy consistently elicited primary responses about children suggests the literacy practices, values, and beliefs of one generation may be both affecting and being affected by their children.

Perhaps more clearly related to the concept of the multidirectional nature of literacy development is when Joyce, my aunt, recalled, "I remember when we were both very young, realizing that we both had an interest in writing. So maybe you should write you on there as being one of the people I associate with reading and writing because of all the conversations we had when we were younger." Joyce and I have had many discussions throughout the years about book recommendations and creative writing we were working on. Our sharing prompted our literacy practices to influence each other. For example, when I discovered and read *The Hunger Games* trilogy (Collins, 2010), she was the first person I talked to about it and our

conversation prompted her to read the books. Hence, the literacy practices of a later generation influenced those of an earlier generation.

The most interesting suggestion of later generations influencing earlier generations' literacy is that four of the six participants discussed entering or returning to a higher education environment at a non-traditional age—my mother, Jeanette; my aunt, Joyce; myself; and my sister, AnnMarie. In 2001 at the age of 47, after both my sister and I had graduated from high school and were no longer a time or financial burden, my mother earned an associate of applied science in business management. At 64 years old she made the decision to retire from the daily grind, to earn her State Tested Nurse Aide certification, and to stay home and care for her elderly mother-in-law who needed around-the-clock care.

Joyce also returned to school in her 40s. Though she did try a semester at a local community college in 1985, she decided it wasn't for her. She didn't try again until 2005, when she spent the next five years taking various classes at a few of the local campuses, all while maintaining a full-time job. Eventually, in 2010, she took all the credits she had acquired throughout the years, enrolled at the university regional campus, took two classes, and earned her associate of science degree. After that success, she remained enrolled, eventually earning a bachelor of arts in general studies in 2013. When asked what her family thought of her scholastic endeavors, she explained that they were mostly ambivalent, but that her brother-in-law "was the only one that questioned" why she was "spending money" and "to make sure that I get something from that education. It's a lot of money to spend."

Like my mother and my aunt, I, too returned to education later in life. For me, the difficulty was that I was a mother and a wife by the age of 21, so my young family had to come before my educational goals. However, in 2009 at the age of 33, then divorced and living as a single mother with three children and working part-time waiting tables, I earned my Bachelor of Arts in English. When I was on my own, it became important for me to show my children, who were then 9, 5, and 4, that there was more to life than living a shift-to-shift existence. The best way I knew how to do this was to return to school. Hence, though I was consciously attempting to influence their current literacy beliefs by showing them the value of school, it was, essentially, their possible future literacy attitudes influencing the choices I was making at that time.

After earning my bachelor's, I worked for a couple of years as a part-time writing tutor and an adjunct, student success instructor. Realizing that I had only gone from living shift-to-shift to paycheck-to-paycheck, I sought out and was awarded a graduate assistantship, enabling me to spend the next two years completing a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Composition. One year after graduation, I married a man who offered mutual support for our children and our

dreams. Four years of adjunct work later, I knew the writing classroom was where I wanted to be, but I craved the stability of full-time employment so I returned to school, once again earning a graduate assistantship, and I have now earned a doctorate in rhetoric and composition.

On a slightly different track, my sister, AnnMarie, returned to school, earning her Associate in Applied Science with Health Information Management at the age of 34. She, too, was separated from her husband and finding the freedom to pursue her own dreams. By the time she had earned her associate's degree, she had met a man who provided the stability she and her three young children had been lacking. That stability opened the opportunity for her to work full-time and to complete an online Bachelor of Science in Health Information Management.

Each generation's encouragement and success in a higher education environment likely impacted the decisions of the others to continue to engage in academic endeavors of their own. Also implicit in the arguments of AnnMarie's and my own return to school is an influence not only on, but *from* the literacy practices of our children. We have both at one time or another mentioned that one of the major reasons for returning to school was to impress upon our children the importance and difficulty of higher education, hopefully encouraging them to put in the hard work necessary to earn a degree before starting a family. AnnMarie stated, "I want them to go to college and finish with a degree—whatever degree they want—if it's at least an associate degree or if they want to take it all the way. I mean whatever one they want in the best field that fits them." AnnMarie's push for her children to complete some level of college is built upon a belief shared by each of the family members mentioned here—a belief that education is the path out of a hand-to-mouth existence. Each family member in this chapter has first-hand knowledge of the difficulties that come with living in poverty and many of us have used education to pull ourselves, our children, and our world views through that life and into financial and emotional stability.

DISCUSSION

Scholars have argued for a social-contextual model of family literacy and have pointed out that we all already inhabit multiple literacy worlds that differ from generation to generation (Appley & Hamilton, 2006; Auerbach, 1989; Kress, 2003). My study indicates this concept is important for all literacy learners and all aspects of literacy learning. Auerbach (1989) argues that more purposeful connections must be made between family literacies and academic literacies. As can be suggested from my brief portrayal here of my family, our literacy practices seem to have evolved from a rather ambivalent approach to literacy to complete and purposeful immersion into multiple literacies. Understanding

the multidirectional literacy movement within families can help literacy scholars and compositionists better understand the needs of the writers they study or those who enter their classrooms. As was mentioned earlier, many of these discussions of the multidirectional nature of literacy practices, attitudes, and beliefs are happening within the framework of English language learners and their family literacy dynamics. Without taking away from the importance of those conversations, helping to move such an understanding of literacy into the broader pedagogical realm of Composition Studies would help practitioners and scholars gain important insight into some of the invisible struggles so many of their students encounter as they try and fail and try again.

While the accumulation of literacy practices (e.g., Brandt, 2001) by later generations is an important and worthy focus, it is equally important to understand the multidirectional ways that literacies continue to develop among individuals throughout their lifespans. Though it is important for later generations to be flexible enough to reposition their literacy practices, so, too, must earlier generations. In fact, an argument may be made that for later generations to wholly embrace new literacies and literacy practices, earlier generations must provide a space in which such flexibility is modeled, making it necessary for parents' literacy practices to be influenced by their children.

To truly develop a "multidimensional understanding" of literacy development, as the Writing through the Lifespan Collaboration has called us to do (Lifespan Through the Lifespan Collaboration, n.d.), scholars throughout the disciplines of writing studies must continue to find ways to study both the explicit and implicit movements of literacy across generations, cultures, and eras. This is a big ask. As my study suggests, one way we can add to such multigenerational research is to build a better understanding of the multidirectional nature of literacy learning through the examination of the ways literacy practices move among generations. This research with my own family has provided an interesting glimpse into literacy development amongst family members and across generations. However, further study is needed to continue to tease out more nuanced examples of this phenomenon and its pedagogical implications. Additional, purposeful research on the multidirectional processes of literacy development across generations beyond the realm of bilingual literacy can help researchers and practitioners better understand this phenomenon and to continue moving the field forward.

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