

Cooking, Recipes, and Work Ethic: Passage of a Heritage Literacy Practice

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I have explored the concept of heritage literacy in previous research (Rumsey 2009). Heritage literacy is the set of multimodal literacy practices used within any community or family across multiple generations and over time. In learning to read and write, as with using any system or technology, people must adapt, adopt, or alienate themselves from particular ways of reading and writing in order to maintain cultural boundaries. Heritage literacy offers a way of conceptualizing how people decide the extent to which they will draw upon intellectual inheritances they've been given from predecessors. In the summer of 2005 I conducted auto-ethnographic research within my home community, called "Smalltown," to better understand the passage of literacy practices between generations and inter-generational technology usage. One finding of this study is of particular note to readers of Literacy and Technology because it concerns the often-overlooked literacies and technologies of cooking and recipe writing, specifically as they were manifested within a population that seems particularly opposed to technological innovation: the Amish. This article, then, explores technological and literacy innovations in an environment where one would least expect to find them.

Let me offer a bit of background of the study. My participants fit into two categories: key participants: comprised of four living generations within my own family, and community participants: people within the community who were living Amish or grew up Amish but opted not to continue within the community. My own family's heritage is Amish as well. Most of my participants, both key and community, were women. This is so partly because Amish women were more apt to talk with another woman, it would have been inappropriate and disrespectful of the community for me to

interview men apart from their wives, and the four generations of my own family that participated are all members of my matriarchal lineage.

Once I coded my data, four different types of literacy practice emerged: *Faith*, *Work*, *Coming of Age*, and *Gathering and Communing*. Literacy artifacts of cooking and recipes fit neatly into the heritage literacy pattern of *Work*, so this article also concerns itself with work. Work within my community refers not only to specific actions done to complete a task but also the concept of “work ethic” or the attitudes and beliefs that dictate how one performs daily tasks. Both work and work ethic are deeply informed by core Amish values of responsibility, modesty, and hospitality (Hostetler), and these core values are evident among the responses given by those currently living Amish and those whose heritage is Amish but who live English. In other words, the same sense of integrity, responsibility, hospitality, and morality is evident in all participants regardless of their lifestyle or livelihood.

Cooking practices and recipes are the foundation of my analysis for several reasons. First, food could be seen historically and traditionally as a “centerpiece of women’s work” (Schenone xii) and therefore a representative sample of the work done by the women interviewed for this analysis. Second, cooking has a long history of technological advancement and change (e.g. standardized measurements, indoor plumbing, electricity, and modernized kitchen gadgets). Third, cooking is representative of multimodal meaning making passed between generations of women. “For generations, women’s ways of cooking were never even put into written words but rather were passed on largely through action, from mother to daughter, friend to friend, and only recently, via diaries and cookbooks and the faded ink of recipe cards” (Schenone xv). And fourth,

cooking, recipes, and food are a deeply important aspect of any cultural heritage, including my own community.

Recipes represent the larger literacy practices within the community, specifically women's work, insofar as they show the "cultural ways of utilizing literacy that people draw upon during a literacy event" (Barton 5). Cultural heritage, according to Stern and Cicala, researchers of ethnicity and culture, is directly linked to food. They quote Janet Theophano, a researcher of the interplay between culture and food:

In the study of American ethnic groups, food has been viewed, like language, as an indicator of the degree to which the group has retained or shed its culture of origin. In fact, it has been argued that food is one of the last aspects of culture to be discarded, that food is particularly resistant to change (Stern and Cicala, *Creative Ethnicity*, 42).

In other words, food is an obvious way a culture passes on intellectual inheritances and is a rich source of evidence of the ways in which community adopts and adapts or alienates themselves according to the constraints, or contexts, of their cultural environment.

The concept that literacies are best understood when examined their context is not a new one. This argument has been made for decades by sociocultural literacy researchers such as Brian Street and Shirley Brice Heath. Specifically I use Street's term "literacy practice" as a combination of the actual events of literacy (Heath) and the cultural, social, and political underpinnings. Work, specifically in terms of recipes and cooking, makes sense given my use of Street's term. The combination of empirical literacy artifacts of recipes, the literacy events of cooking and learning to cook, and the "folk models" or ways of conceptualizing these events together make this a literacy

practice. This article seeks to answer the following questions: How 1.) is work heritage literacy, 2.) is work multimodal, 3.) do participants use recipes as a literacy tool, and 4.) do participants develop facility with this literacy practice?

To answer these questions, I first offer a detailed description of the concept of work as described by my participants. Then I analyze cooking and recipe tools and practices as a type of work practice performed by women in the community. I show how cooks create connections between technologies (recipes) and their cultural values and how recipes are tools best understood within their context. Contextualized understanding of this literacy practice allows me to further develop and describe the specifics of heritage literacy and how my participants pass on an intellectual inheritance. Context also allows me to show what factors impact the adoption or adaptation of literacy tools longitudinally over time.

How Participants Described “Work”

A common question that I asked my community participants is what parents or grandparents had taught them. To this question, almost every participant promptly responded “to work.” Overall, participants’ responses center on work as specific action (e.g. one woman, Miriam¹, stated that her parents taught her “*to work*: to can, sew, garden, and work the fields. They taught [her] to live Amish and to cook”) or on what can best be described as “work ethic” (e.g. Naomi listed “how to work” and “morals” in the same sentence, and Deborah said “there’s a lot of things they taught me, you know, work and be respectful...”).

¹ Pseudonyms have been given to all community participants. Key participants opted to use their real first names.

For members of this community, the attitude they have while performing a given job or chore matters far more than the task itself. John Hostetler states “The attitudes that are of utmost importance in Amish society—cooperation with other human beings and learning to like work—are acquired informally by working with others in the family and community, not by attending school” (Hostetler 247). The attitude and work ethic of members of my community are directly related to a deep and inherited sense of their faith and guiding principles of Biblical scripture (e.g. Colossians 3.17 states “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”² I Thessalonians 4.11 instructs readers “...to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands...” And Micah 6.8 says “He has told you, O man, what is good; / And what does the LORD require of you / But to do justice, to love kindness, / And to walk humbly with your God?”)

I asked several participants to describe what they meant by work. Emma described her inherited work ethic as “being there everyday, doing a good job at whatever I do.... When I’m on the job, I hold up my end.” Similarly, Sarah and Amos, English participants who were raised Amish, said that this work ethic “means that you are dependable, not afraid of work; there’s a lot of integrity. You work hard and are honest.” Finally, Marie said, “Mom taught me to work, be on time, and be honest. The one thing Dad always said, ‘Do it right the first time because if you don’t have time to do it right the first time, how are you going to find time to do it a second time?’”

There is a strong work ethic reflected within the actions of my own family members. My sister, Merry, recalls her memories of our grandmother Edna:

² Scripture references are taken from The New American Standard version. This version offers “a rendering as close as possible to the sense of the original Greek and Hebrew texts” (biblegateway.com).

I remember when we were there she never sat still for very long. To get a clear picture of her is hard, I know this sounds weird, but there's this blur. All the sudden she'd be moving from the kitchen to the living room. Vacuuming. Or mopping. I remember she mopped a lot. Or she'd go to the kitchen to the bedroom and back. I'd just see her walk by. I didn't follow her; I'd be doing my imagining thing [playing] and all of the sudden she'd drift into the picture and take us to a picnic or whatever. She always kept busy, but I never knew doing what. That was Grammy, and she's still that way. She vacuumed more than any person I ever knew.

Merry is noting that our grandmother always seemed to be busy at physical work, whether cleaning, cooking, laundry, or other chores. Her recollections make clear that as a child, she was allowed time to relax, play, and use her imagination, but it was a special occasion for Grammy to stop work and take us on a picnic.

My mother, Lucy, relates similar memories of Edna, her mother, during her own childhood. I asked how much she remembers Edna reading. She replied, "Mom was never still long enough to read... Mom did everything at home. Mowed the lawn, the garden... Mom didn't drive until I was 7 or 8. She couldn't go anywhere. She did everything." Again, it is important to note that work seemed to be the focus of my grandmother's time; rarely did she have time to read or do other things she enjoyed because work took precedence. Now that her children are grown and she is a grandmother, my grandma still cleans but she also has time to read and go to musical performances. I also note that the kind of work that Grandma did was always physical work. Working with one's mind, as an academic would, seems to not count as work.

Finally, my great grandmother, Cora, relates similar stories about her mother's work and work ethic:

My mom was very particular about her food and her house... on Fridays the upstairs were cleaned and the beds changed and everything... and then the downstairs was cleaned on Saturdays. We'd scrub the kitchen real hard with a broom, then we'd go out on the porch and the porch would have to be scrubbed. Everything had to be scrubbed. The windows had to be washed every Saturday. Everything was clean and then the baking was done.

Great Grandma remembers that work was done thoroughly and with pride. Note that the floors were scrubbed "hard with a broom." Also note that cleaning "had to be" done. Hard work and cleanliness, apparently, was not an option, and the quality of one's work directly correlated to how physically hard it was. As in the previous recollections, "work," in these contexts is always physical work.

While the description of the Amish work ethic is thus far positive, often work ethic and "doing a good job" translates into working all the time or being constantly busy "doing." My own family members, as is shown in the above quotes, have a history of constant work. Because work is tied so closely to the Amish perception of morality and integrity, guilt often results when a person perceives herself to be not working or not working "hard enough." Emma said, "Sometimes I feel guilty if I'm not working." My grandmother, Edna, recalls memories of her aunt and namesake: "Aunt Edna said that if she ever had one regret, it was that she didn't take time when she had company to just sit and visit. Except on Sunday. She thought she had to keep working." Rebecca, my great

grandmother's sister, remembers the strain this type of guilt placed on her mother and grandmother as they lived in the same home:

[Grandmother] was ambitious. She'd always get up early [even though] she didn't do her own cooking, washing or sewing; there was no need to get up so early. It bothered my mom to take a nap at noon if Grandma knew she was not working... Mom never wanted to be caught resting if Grandma knew it. Mom shouldn't have been that way; it was her home.

It wasn't that there was a competition between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Rather, Rebecca's story emphasizes that her mother took immense pride in the quality and quantity of the work she did. Rebecca noted that her own daughter, who is English, "thinks that the Amish think it is a sin to rest." Rebecca goes on to say, "They don't think it is a sin, but they don't rest. A lot of them don't, but maybe not all of them. They do teach not to be lazy."

As I shared portions of this article with participants, Rachel wrote me a letter in response. She noted that while her family does work hard, they also play. She wrote,

I can still hear my mother say, 'All work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy,' so we had 'Fair Play.' My home life consisted of having 'Family Time,' a quiet time [where] each of us read a good book, going on a picnic, the whole family putting together a big picture puzzle, or going to a small town park... We were taught to help plant seeds when quite young, and we taught our children the same. This too was good family time. Children were more appreciative for our garden goodies....

Rachel's response offers some interesting insights into the nature of work within this community. First, as noted above, play is an important part of family life, just like work. Also, there is work ethic evident even within the acts of play that Rachel describes. Planting seeds and sharing this activity as a family is *both* work and play. Work and play together, then, create group cohesion. Finally, Rachel's description puts into perspective that while there is a strong sense of work ethic and hard work within the community, this sense is tempered by a commitment to social activity.

My observations of community members and my own family reflect both the positive and negative aspects of work. During my data collections, when I would arrive at the home of a participant, she would be working. Bethany, Ruth, Becky, Deborah, Martha, Jane, and Leah were all caring for children of various ages at the same time as doing other tasks. Solomon had just come in for lunch from working his fields, and as we chatted, his wife Ida cooked their lunch, which they shared with me. I caught Rachel as she was about to start hoeing in her garden. Dorothy and her daughters were coming out of their home with paint splatters covering them from a day painting the living room. Yet these people, who obviously were hard at work, were generous with their time and hospitable to me as I stopped them in the middle of their workday. I stopped at many homes and Amish businesses where interviews were declined because they were too busy. It was summer, the height of garden harvests, yet so many people kindly offered me 30 or more minutes of their time for something that could easily be seen as "restful."

These illustrations of work ethic show that for my participants, passing on attitudes and integrity is as important, if not more so, as the methods and tools for work activities themselves. Still, the methods and tools of this literacy practice also are

important and can shed additional light both on the attitudes of work ethic and upon the concept of heritage literacy. The next section looks more closely at some specific methods and tools of cooking that have been passed on.

Recipe Analysis

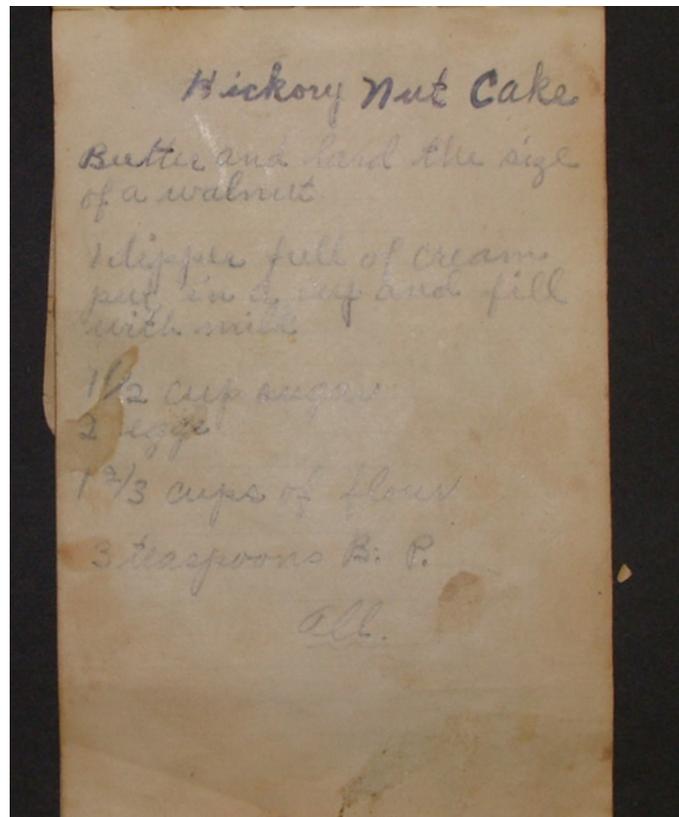
To more fully explore the concept of work as a heritage literacy practice, I now shift my focus to a specific set of recipes. My great grandmother, Cora, has a tablet of paper in which her mother and grandmother kept recipes. The pages are yellowed with age and smudged with fingerprints and perhaps spilled ingredients. The tablet is bound at the top and all the recipes are handwritten. Here is a picture of the tablet and other loose papers kept in their original box:



Some recipes within the collection are titled as to whoever gave the original recipe. For example, one recipe is for “Annie Miller’s Cream Sugar Cookies.” Other times the original author of the recipe is noted elsewhere in the recipe: a Devil’s Food Cake recipe states at the bottom “this is Ola Ruth’s Cake.” Another recipe is titled simply “Cake” and

at the bottom someone has written “From Lydia Ann.” Finally, some recipes in the collection bear no identification of the writer, and at times, of the food being prepared!

Most of the recipes within the collection are for desserts. I’ve selected one recipe because it is representative of the lot and because it exhibits distinct characteristics of contextualized and passed on knowledge. The recipe I’ll be analyzing is one for “Hickory Nut Cake.” Here is an image of the original:



Though I took the photograph using a good quality digital camera, the age and condition of the recipe has resulted in a somewhat faded image. The recipe reads:

Hickory Nut Cake

Butter and lard the size of a walnut

1 dipper full of cream put in a cup and fill with milk
1½ cup sugar
2 eggs
1 2/3 cups of flour
3 teaspoons B.P.
All.

It is necessary to understand the context of the recipe to value how it relates to work and heritage literacy. First, note that the recipe uses both standardized and non-standard measurements. The writer of this recipe could have been “in process” with learning standardized measurements, as these standards began to be fully used in the later half of the 1800s. However, even the “non-standard” measurements were standard for the writer. The size of a walnut is obviously a familiar size to both the person who wrote this recipe and her intended audience. Similarly, the “dipper” that measures cream was a standard measurement in that household. Perhaps these measurements were a way to protect the recipe from copying or to keep it within the family. The various measurement techniques show that the recipe writer took her work seriously. She is using what she knows to create food; she is in the process of learning new techniques; and she has taken the time to write down this process for future reference and building of techné.

This recipe made sense with the constraints of the time period as it did with standard and non-standard measurements. Note that there are no instructions on assembling this cake except for the underlined “All.” There is no oven temperature, no baking times, or serving suggestions. Finally, note that there are no hickory nuts! These are crucial elements to creating this cake, and yet they are missing from this recipe. However, the seeming “lack” of information makes sense in the context of the time period. Instructions were minimal because the knowledge of techné for cooking and

baking surpassed a need for detailed instructions. Baking a cake was such commonplace work for women that instructions may not have been necessary.

Overall, for someone outside the household to make this recipe, extensive questions would have had to be asked. The vagueness of the instructions requires the social aspect of cooking—conversation—to pass on the knowledge. In other words, though cooking was “work” a recipe as vague as this one required conversation, fun, or “play” between friends to create it.

This recipe is also indicative of the financial constraints of the writer and the concept of work intertwined with play. The vast majority of recipes available in Katie’s book are for desserts. Considering the possible financial constraints that this cook faced, this recipe, along with other dessert recipes, was an extravagance. If a recipe cost a lot to prepare, it would be reserved only for special occasions, or those moments of “play.” The recipes that a cook made daily were never written, from what I can see, but instead were memorized. Only those recipes which were rarely made were written down, and this act of recording by hand implies that those recipes were highly valued as well. The day-to-day cooking from memorized recipes could be seen as “work;” whereas this recipe for an extravagant cake is evidence of that chore becoming play.

Another way of looking at how recipes are best understood in context is to look at the tools used to make this recipe. The cooking tools to create the hickory nut cake needed to fit within the limitations of kitchen cooking and early 20th century Amish cultural values. There were assumptions that the recipe writer made for her audience about how they work, and with what tools they would work. The Amish did not use, and still eschew the use of, electricity and the technologies that rely on electricity. First, note

that this recipe is handwritten in a bound notebook. While typewriters, type face, and printing were available when this recipe was written, handwriting is the default for recipes because of convenience and because of financial constraints and social values. Similarly, no electric mixers or other electronic cooking aides are listed. While at the time the recipe was written these technologies did not exist, the Amish still do not use them. My mother recalls that not having an electric mixer greatly shaped how and when particular desserts were made. Because of the amount of time needed to whip egg whites or cream by hand, certain recipes were, again, reserved only for special occasions. Mom said because they were poor,

I grew up without a mixer. We didn't have one. We grew up mixing everything by hand, even egg whites. We'd make this one kind of cheesecake where you had to beat Millnut by hand...it's kind of like evaporated milk... it was a brand sort of. It was a big deal to make because it took so long to make because of the Millnut and the Jello and the Cool Whip. We all loved it, but now it sounds pretty horrid.

Consider that ovens at the time the Hickory Nut Cake recipe was written were wood burning; hence no temperatures are listed (although other recipes from this book note "medium oven"). Serving suggestions were not relevant as food having the capacity to "entertain" was not a relevant concept within the community. Food was important, but not necessarily as a way to entertain or impress strangers. Rather, food was to nourish, to be shared, and to be eaten as family and friends gathered at the dinner table. True, women did and continue to take pride in their cooking, but food as a source of entertainment was a foreign idea.

The recipe uses very basic ingredients. While women took pride in their cooking, meals were generally very simple and made from easily accessible ingredients. One community participant, Miriam, noted that they cooked whatever was on hand. Miriam also noted in our interview that cooking has changed for her because she now has different ingredients to work with. “When I was at home, we cooked with whatever we had in storage: meat, potatoes, vegetables. Now I shop at stores that have a much wider variety of foods to choose from.”

The significant lack of hickory nuts in the list of ingredients are evidence of the basic ingredients available to the writer, and evidence certain assumptions she makes about her readers. First, hickory nuts are listed in the title of the cake; therefore a reader should know that they would be in the mix. Secondly, perhaps this cook had a hickory nut tree on her property and assumes that anyone else using the recipe would have easy access as well. Rebecca, my great grandmother Cora’s older sister, notes that at her home growing up they had a walnut tree. Most of their desserts contained walnuts because of the ready supply. Perhaps the same was true for the cook who gave this recipe to my great great grandmother. Basically, enough could be assumed by the recipe writer about the lifestyle and work habits of her audience, that the lack of hickory nuts in the recipe wasn’t a detrimental mistake.

In general, this recipe is best understood in context and within the constraints that surrounded cooking at the time it was used. There are a lot of assumptions that the recipe writer has made about her audience. She assumes that the reader has the same concepts about work and play, that the reader will be using the same tools for work, and that the reader will have the same work ethic to finish the cake, even though ingredients and

instructions are missing. I've asked my great grandmother if she remembers how to make the recipe, and could she teach me. Her response was to laugh, say no, and then say, "That's just how they wrote recipes back then." It is possible to recreate the cake today, but not without extensive experimentation, which costs time, money, and a lot of flat, burnt cake.

Stages of Literacy Development

To this point I've discussed examples of *what* participants pass on to offspring: conceptions of work and work ethic, and methods and literacy tools cooking as an example of work. My data also offers some insights into *how* participants pass on the abstract concepts of "work ethic" and the concrete usage of cooking tools. Participants pass on literacy knowledge in "stages" which occur as a person becomes more adept at reading, writing, and making connections between literacy tools and behaviors and attitudes of work. This section outlines the "stages" that a woman might pass through on her way to becoming literate in recipes and cooking. These stages reveal the specific moments and phases in the process of passing on a literacy inheritance, and show how heritage literacy is multimodal and best understood in context. There are three "stages" of cooking literacy development: *observation and modeling*, *purposeful instruction*, and *personal responsibility*. There is a sort of apprenticeship that occurs. A girl passes through a progression of responsibilities that is dependent upon her age and elders' perceptions of whether she can "handle" additional responsibility. Girls and women

adopt and adapt recipes learned from their mothers and grandmothers during this apprenticeship.

This three-stage process of the adoption and adaptation of literacy tools like recipes gives us insight into how generations pass on literacy knowledge and how technologies and tools are imbedded in cultural practices and values. Janet Theophano writes that generally,

modifications and modernizations of old recipes and the invention of new dishes in a woman's cookbook represent the combined efforts of many people. Contributions [come] from past generations and from individuals living side by side in small communities, connected to larger social circles, sometimes from one or more cultures.... And while we tend to think of cooking as a delight to our senses, the relationships formed through the creation of these culinary compositions are social, cultural, and economic (Theophano 12).

Note here that cooking is multimodal, passed between generations, and built in layers of understanding and context. By examining the process of acquiring this literacy, it is more apparent how literacy is a combined effort of an individual, the community, and the context, as well as the attitudes about work ethic that have been discussed so far.

Stage one, as noted above, is *observation and modeling*. Basically this stage describes how girls are taught to cook by observing the activities in a kitchen from their earliest years and "helping" by stirring gravy (in the case of my mother) or setting the table (Rebecca, Cora's older sister). Rebecca recalls that cooking, like other activities, was part of her *work*:

We had responsibilities. There were so many of us, we sorta had to take our turn to wash dishes. One would wash and the other one would have to wipe them. After a while there was another one along and we kind of passed on to something different. At a certain age, dad would be doing chores, and mom would be fixing breakfast. She'd call me downstairs to set the table. We all ate breakfast together... We had fried potatoes so often, big round skillet full of fried potatoes. And when she'd put them in the pan of hot lard, they'd make a loud noise. When I heard her dump the potatoes in the hot skillet and I wasn't up yet, boy I was up in a hurry to set the table.

Rebecca is sharing with us how her chores were age-dependent. Once she was old enough, and there was another child coming up behind her, she was shifted into a new role. She learned to do a given task by watching older generations, and when she was old enough she was given the responsibility. Also, Rebecca's story of the potatoes in the pan illustrates how important it was for her to have a good work ethic even at such a young age. Timeliness, dedication, and consistency were valued attitudes and were taught during chores as basic as setting the table for breakfast.

The implications of stage one are first that cooking and baking are a highly gendered activity within the Amish community and to a lesser extent within my own extended family. After a girl finishes the 8th grade and graduates³, her "apprenticeship" is to learn to run a family home, cook, and raise children: the skills most necessary for a woman who is Amish. My immediate family is vastly different as my father cooks daily

³ The Amish are educated only until the 8th grade. After that, many enter a sort of apprenticeship with local employers or at home to learn life skills they will use in adulthood.

and my brother and husband are more than capable in the kitchen, but cooking within this community as a whole and within my distant family is exclusively a female practice. Secondly, observation and modeling is often part of play. Young girls pretend to be cooking long before they are old enough to approach a stove. This is commonplace for anyone who has toddlers. An example of this in my own family would be when my mother allows my niece to wash her plastic play dishes at the sink. My niece is, technically, playing, but she is imitating the work she has seen adults do.

The second stage is *purposeful instruction*. At some point in a girl's upbringing, usually between the ages of 10 and 13, specific cooking lessons are given by mothers and grandmothers. This stage is somewhat blurry in most community members' minds. Direct instruction on cooking most certainly occurred; however most women couldn't recall a specific incident or moment when they were taught to cook. When asked how she learned to cook, Naomi responded "I just picked up cooking. My mother and older sister probably taught me when I was 10 or 11." Naomi's response is representative of most of the community members' response to the same question.

More in-depth examples of purposeful instruction are evident in key participants' memories: my mother distinctly remembers that her grandma (my great grandmother) Cora taught her to make pie. This past summer my great grandmother also taught me to make pie. I remember my mother showing me specific ways of cooking and how to use particular technologies to achieve specific results. For example, she always instructed me to mix muffin batter with a fork so that you would not over-mix it. And finally, this past November, I sat in my sister's tiny apartment and helped her learn to cook with what was on hand in her freezer. She had tacit knowledge, long imbedded from our mother, such

as putting a lid on a pot of water to bring it to boil faster, but she needed instruction in how to create a meal from what she had on hand without specific recipes.

The implications of stage two are primarily that “learning to cook,” like any literacy acquisition, is an ongoing and inexact process. While some women remember receiving specific instructions, most do not. Instead, guidance was mixed with observation, assistantship, and small tasks as girls increased their abilities. This type of literacy learning distinguishes itself from the ways that most participants learned “to read” in school at designated times and locations. While learning to read is a graduate acquisition in a print-rich environment, there are still specific moments in school designated for this purpose. Unlike such purposeful moments in school, learning to cook is expected to be a gradual process that is imbedded within the framework of family and culture.

Stage three is *personal responsibility*. At some point in the development of this literacy practice, women are considered capable of creating dishes and meals on their own. Some women recall learning to cook without a recipe. In Miriam’s case no specific recipes were passed on, only the practice:

I remember that my mother used to say to us girls at noon, “It’s time to fix dinner.” Mother wouldn’t tell us what to fix, we had to figure that out for ourselves. We used to get frustrated because it would have been easier for us if mother had said what we should fix, but we learned to cook from what was on hand in the cellar. This ended up being one of the best things mother could have done for us.

My sister struggled with the very task that Miriam describes: to create a meal, rather than a single dish, from what was available in her cupboards. This is literacy that must work within the constraints of available ingredients and time, just as the Hickory Nut Cake recipe represented.

Other participants noted specific examples of learning to cook which did involve recipes. Deborah recalls that she watched her mother cook a lot then “she handed the recipes over and we had to kind of just follow direction... I mean, she helped us but we had to learn on our own.” Similarly, Dorothy mentioned that what is set on the table for her family on a given night depends greatly on who is doing the cooking. “My older daughters, especially the oldest two, really enjoy cooking and they always like to *try new recipes*.” Dorothy emphasized “try new recipes” when describing her daughter’s cooking because they really enjoy this process. While for some, cooking is a necessary part of daily life, for Dorothy’s daughters, it seems that to cook new dishes and meals is made exciting by the addition of new recipes.

Personal responsibility in cooking presupposes literacy learning. Note that Deborah’s mother handed over the recipes and then set her off to cooking. There is an assumption there that Deborah, at age 10, was capable of reading the recipes and had a knowledge base of the technologies and techniques needed to create a dish. Deborah had tacit knowledge of cooking, literacy capabilities to expand this knowledge, and she was then on her way to developing *techné*, or the craftsmanship of a job well done. Similarly, Dorothy’s older daughters have, perhaps, reached a more advanced and more abstract level of literacy because they are most adept at moving from written recipe instructions to their working knowledge of cooking. They like to experiment, which means they are

comfortable with recipes, but comfort with recipes usually leads to creation of one's own recipes. Hence their techné has developed further.

Implications

The work ethic described by my participants, my analysis of Hickory Nut Cake and the three-stage process detailed above offer several implications about multimodality and heritage literacy as a concept. First, multiple modes evidence the ways that context and literacy interact. Second, heritage literacy is developmental and recursive. And finally, heritage literacy is the process of passing on tools used in context, knowing how to contextualize new tools and technologies into an existing environment, and knowing when and how to alter a context to allow for new tools and technologies.

The multiple modes exhibited in the example cited in this article include pen and paper recipes, images, spoken instructions, smells and tastes of food during preparation and at meals, the layout of a home or kitchen, movements between sink, refrigerator and stove, the layout and order of a recipe, and the tactile connection in learning to make pie crust. These modes, coupled with the work ethic and practices of cooking and sustaining of community that surround these modes, create a rich environment of literacy and cultural context. Note that multiple modes here require physical connections between people and context and literacy. Note also that the same tasks are completed over and over again, evidencing both the connection between literacy and context and that heritage literacy is recursive.

Heritage literacy practices such as work, and specifically cooking and recipes, illustrate how connections between context and literacy play out within a community and a set of values. For example, the literacy artifact of a recipe is not just about "pen-and-

paper literacies.” Cooks create dishes to convey feelings, to nourish, to entertain, or to fulfill obligations. The meaning in the recipe is portrayed by the sight, the smell, the feel, and the image of a particular dish; it is not abstractly contained on a piece of paper with a list of ingredients. In other words, the tool is best understood in its context.

Heritage literacy is developmental and changing. Connection of object to context is always evolving and always growing because objects change and the context changes over time. The object changes because people adopt and adapt new or different technologies and literacies, such as my mother getting an electric mixer or a wider variety of ingredients being available in grocery stores. Also, recipes’ measurements and instructions have become standardized, and ovens’ temperatures can be regulated. Similarly, the context changes as families such as mine leave the Amish community and adopt electricity and other conveniences, as the expectations of a particular Amish district alter due to the bishop overseeing it, and as the needs of a family or a single person dictate how a recipe is used. What the community considers “work” changes the context as well. In my great grandmother’s recollections of work ethic, only physical labor was considered work, whereas writing an article such as this one might not be considered work in the same way.

Further, heritage literacy is recursive. As contexts and objects change, people adapt to these changes and change how they pass on their intellectual and literacy inheritances. The recursiveness of heritage literacy occurs because as tools and contexts change, older generations must depend on younger generations as much as the younger depend on the old. As a member of a “younger generation,” I need the work ethic that my great grandmother, grandmother, and mother have lived for decades before me. I also

need to understand the basic ways of food preparation. I learn that work ethic and their adoption of various tools and literacies from them. But as tools and literacies evolve and change, I often come into contact and adjust to these technologies before the members of previous generations do. The women in my family have allowed me to help them adjust to new technologies like new cooking techniques, or new cuisines. I also pass on this information to my sister as we continually balance what we are learning with what we already know.

This need to continually balance the new, the old, and the changing in terms of tools, technology, and cooking alludes to the fact that heritage literacy is an ongoing process. One does not learn to read and write longitudinally and recursively once. Rather, tools and contexts change, and people must adapt to the change, adopt new technologies, or choose to alienate themselves from technologies.

The contextualized understanding of heritage literacy does not permanently negate the tendencies of instrumental neutrality and the disassociation of humans from technology use. Heritage literacy is this process of passing on tools used in context, knowing how to contextualize new tools in new processes, and knowing when and how to alter a context to allow for new tools and technologies. Members of this community are constantly in the process of adopting and adapting cooking methods, food choices, and recipes. The dipper of cream is now $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, my mother has an electric mixer but chooses to make pie crust by hand, my great grandmother is now diabetic, so desserts are made with artificial sweetener, and she has developed a penchant for Mexican food. Similarly, participants who used tools in contexts of physical work, now use tools in “mental” work. They continually must find ways of reinserting old tools into new

practices and new tools into old practices. They must decide which tools and which practices to keep or adapt, and which to set aside (alienate) in order to ensure the continuation of their community values.

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