AN ANALYSIS OF THE LITERACY BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF FACULTY AND
GRADUATES FROM A PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The following qualitative study explored changes in literacy beliefs and practices and changes in messages about literacy in Secondary English teacher education courses in the past 15 years. Four distinct groups affiliated with the University of the Midwest (methods course instructors, English instructors, recently graduated teachers, and teachers graduated after 7 years) participated in this study. Data sources included individual in-depth interviews and written documents from the twelve participants, including syllabi, English and methods course assignments, and blogs and websites. A conceptual framework coined “permeable literacy continuum,” which included ideas from five influential literacy paradigms, was the basis for data analysis. This analytical framework responded to a need in the literacy research for more comprehensive frameworks that do not equate literacy to reading or writing.

Findings showed that participants’ literacy beliefs and practices have evolved to include ideas such as critical thinking, the use of multiple genres and forms of writing expression, and the integration of technology. However, the participants argued that working on formal aspects of language, including style and grammar are still pressing needs that the current context is ignoring. These lessons challenge traditional positions that have argued that literacy practices may become stagnant over time. These findings also challenge views of literacy and technology that create distinctions such as “digital natives” and “digital immigrants.”

This study identified a dichotomy between conceptions of reading and views of writing. Whereas participants admitted that their own written practices had changed in
varying (and sometimes radical) ways, they found little variation in the evolution of reading practices. This finding is an invitation to reconceptualize the research on literacy and English education, which has historically favored reading, to encompass the wider range of changes taking place in writing. It also calls for more dissemination and discussion about how reading is changing in the advent of new technologies.

Participants reported that in both English and methods courses, discussions about integrating multicultural and canonical texts, technologies, and critical thinking, as well as paying attention to middle and high school students’ literacy practices, have become an important feature over the years. This finding challenges traditional assertions in the literature that English courses and instructors hold canonical views of literacy, reading, and literature. The messages stemming from English and methods courses, rather than mixed or contradictory, were overlapping and sometimes even complementary. This poses a challenge to the assumption that methods courses and Arts & Science instructors are moving in separate, sometimes antagonizing, directions.

The findings in this study suggest a rethinking of traditional notions of literacy through a proposed new paradigm, *Foundational Literacy*. This paradigm would attend to elements of formal and informal language and other instructional considerations required for more critical thinking and a heightened use of technology. This study also confirmed my assertion that framing literacy paradigms as binary oppositions does not capture the true complexity of beliefs and practices found in today’s society.

This study also calls for a deeper conversation about what it means to teach English to preservice teachers. This would include reflecting on what instructors still need to
consider when preparing middle school and high school teachers. Finally, this study challenges teacher educators in methods courses and English to recognize that overlaps in the messages they are sending are more common than what they have traditionally thought.

Future research should include the analysis of literacy events within classrooms, more research about how messages about beliefs and practices play out in other content areas, and more follow-up on the effects of policies from past and current administrations on instructors’ and teachers' literacy beliefs and practices.
To Isabella and Manuela: One day you will learn that this was the reason Tío Raúl was away from you all these years.

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Chapter One

Researching a Multi-Faceted View of Literacy Practices

Over the past 15 years, the fields of English Education and literacy have experienced a series of changes in the ways scholars, theorists, researchers, and practitioners define and describe ideas related to what literacy, English, and English education look like in theory and in practice. In those 15 years, I myself have experienced many of those changes from multiple positions, both personally and professionally. I have moved on from being a preservice teacher to teaching for several years to completing my graduate degrees. This move has encompassed different jobs, two countries, and experiences with hundreds of students and scholars. In that time, my beliefs and concepts about literacy and literacy practices have changed. I no longer see literacy as a synonym of reading and writing in a traditional, school-based sense. I now think of literacy as the process of interpreting and creating text using multiple means and media, including technology, multiple languages, and diverse aesthetic forms of expression, in addition to the written and spoken word. My research and reflections have enabled me to trace the most influential readings, people, and work experiences within this evolution. I can tell what has remained constant and what has changed as the result of readings and conversations.

I also believe that my history of changes and inquiries about literacy beliefs and practices cannot be unique. I believe that as there are multiple paradigms to understand literacy and ways to teach English, there are multiple stories about how teachers and teacher educators have evolved and lived the different changes in views of both literacy beliefs and practices and English education. However, as I reviewed the literature during my research
work, I never saw those stories. I found a few studies (e.g. Agee, 2006; Apol et al., 2003; Draper, 2002; Rowsell et al., 2008; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007) that would hint how faculty thought about literacy or English, but I never got a feel for how these instructors arrived at that perception and whether they have their current perceptions of literacy practices for an extended period of time. I also realized that, just like reviews I read suggested (e.g. Clift & Brady, 2005; Floden & Meniketti, 2005), the discussion about contents and practices usually explored what faculty in either the methods courses or the Arts and Sciences did in isolation. There was not enough cross-case analysis. I was not able to learn how connected or disconnected these instructors were from each other. I did not learn what could be done, whether from the stories or the researchers themselves, what one could do to improve this apparent isolation.

As I kept reading further, I started interrogating why a large number of studies usually took a first-person perspective, where either one or a group of instructors studied their own practice and classrooms. Although I deem this kind of research as very useful, the chance for deeper reflection and interrogation that an external researcher may provide was still absent from some of these studies. Another question kept arising as I reflected on my own teaching experience over these years: How I saw my preservice teacher experience changed as my teaching career evolved. Yet the literature did not offer me much evidence of how graduates at different intervals of their careers are receiving the messages from English education faculty who have worked with them, whether messages coming from English and Education sides of the preservice programs are congruent or contradictory, and how the
messages really help graduates implement their own practice in light of the demands of the current context.

These inquiries, whether they came from my own life experience or my interrogations to the present literature, were the basis and motivation to conduct the following study. This study, framed within the context of the Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of the Midwest (pseudonym), will discuss and answer the following research questions:

1. How have the literacy beliefs and practices of instructors and graduates from a Secondary English Teacher Education program evolved in the past 15 years?

2. How have the messages about literacy beliefs and practices changed within the context of a Secondary English Education program over the last 15 years?

To answer these questions, I worked with a group of 12 participants (methods course instructors, instructors in the English Department, teachers\(^1\) who graduated from the program in 2009, and teachers who graduated from the program before 2002), all affiliated with the University of the Midwest (pseudonym). I conducted three in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2006) with each participant between September and December, 2009. In addition to the interviews, I collected a series of written documents. Documents included syllabi from the faculty, assignments that the graduates carried out during their time as preservice teachers, online information from selected, participant-created blogs and websites, and lesson plans, among others.

\(^1\) From now on, I will refer to participants as either Methods Course Instructors, English Instructors, Novice/First Year Teachers, or Veteran/Experienced Teachers. The first two groups are the university faculty, the last two are the program graduates.
The main theoretical and analytical lenses for this study stem from five of the most influential views on literacy in the past 20 years: Basic Literacy (Bloom, 1994; Hirsch, 1987, 2006) Functional Literacy (UNESCO, 1970; ICAE, 1979), New Literacy Studies (Street, 1984, 1995, 2005b; Schultz, 2002; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006), the pedagogy of Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2007, 2009; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008), and Critical Literacy (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987, Short, 1999; Morrell, 2008; Willis et al., 2008). I chose a multivocal, multifaceted approach to this study to respond to calls for different vantage points in the analysis of literacy practices for which literacy scholars (e.g. Street, 1984, 1995) have advocated.

I expect my theoretical approaches to literacy beliefs and practices, my data analysis and interpretation procedures, and the findings stemming from the 12 stories that I have intertwined in this dissertation to inform varied constituencies. I expect English teacher educators to learn more about the influence of their messages, areas of conflict, and overall congruence with their graduates’ practice, as a means to inform curricular decisions within these programs. I expect preservice and practicing teachers to gather some insights about how other practitioners reflect on the evolution of their teaching. I believe this study will be beneficial for administrators, as they can also find better ways to connect the work in their districts with the efforts in English departments and colleges of education. Finally, I have proposed future areas of research, both by offering more directions for additional research and by providing clear guidelines in data collection and analysis so that this study can be replicated (Clift & Brady, 2005), either in the local context of the U.S. or in other countries.
Definition of Terms

In addition to literacy, whose definition I provided in the introduction to this chapter, I will be using a series of terms that relate to different features and areas of teaching. For the sake of clarity, I will provide my own definition to some of those terms, whether personal or based on a particular source.

**English education.** For this study I will rely on the Position Statement by the Conference on English Education (Conference on English Education, 2005) and the three dimensions the CEE agreed comprised English education, “(1) the teaching and learning of English, broadly and inclusively defined; (2) the preparation and continuing professional support of teachers of English at all levels of education; and (3) systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning of English.”

**English.** I use a definition where English includes the teaching of literature, grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as well as the development of critical thinking skills. I also believe that English instruction may include different forms of written and visual text as a media to receive and produce knowledge. My vision of English is global. The definition I use also encompasses (with some additional information) the teaching of English as an international language.

**Literature.** I define literature as any form of narrative, regardless of the layout, that represents a cultural view of the world. I do not make a distinction between fiction and non-fiction. They are all genres that fit within literature.

**Secondary English Teacher Education.** This is the umbrella term I use to refer to the combination of courses in English, literature, cinema/media studies, writing studies,
which belong to the *English* strand of the program, plus the teaching methods courses, which belong to the *Education* strand of the program. Whenever I use this term, it should be assumed I am talking about both strands. Otherwise, I will make explicit references to either *English courses* or *methods courses*.

**Instructors.** I use this term to refer to the professionals who teach in the Secondary English Teacher Education program. In general, the instructors range between graduate assistants, untenured faculty, and tenure-track faculty. For the purpose of this study, however, that rank is irrelevant.

**Novice teachers.** I use the general consensus in teacher education that defines novice teachers as those who have been teaching for fewer than five years. Since all the novice teachers in this study are *first-year teachers* as well, I will use both terms interchangeably when referring to this group of participants.

**Veteran teachers.** This group comprises teachers who have taught more than five years. For the purpose of this study, I will use this term along with *experienced teachers* interchangeably.

**A Recent Historical Overview of Literacy Practices**

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 1999, p. 3)
This quote illustrates the reality that in the past 15 years, the literacy demands, practices, and expectations of students and workers worldwide have changed. Communications have expanded in what used to be inconceivable ways (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). E-mail, instant messaging, search engines, and social networks are expanding the limits of how we communicate with people, what kind of messages we produce, and how we share them with others. Teachers, students, and individuals at home and work are reviewing Freire and Macedo’s (1987) definition of literacy, “reading the word and the world,” on a daily basis. If the world has become more accessible, the words and actions we use to describe it need to change accordingly.

As several scholars (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2007; Kist, 2000; Luke, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 1984, 1995) have argued, literacy and literacy teaching need to adapt and change in order to respond to what will be expected in the near future. The following section will describe some historical perspectives that have predicted and discussed that ongoing change, what that change looks like in the face of the transition between millennia, and some possible questions for our classroom instruction.

**Historical perspectives about the study of literacy practices.** Literacy has been linked to the evolution and growth of people and societies throughout history. However, as Kaestle (1985) explained, research on literacy development has really been the object of more empirical work since the 1960s (p. 11). It was around this decade when literacy started to become a global concern. Programs for literacy improvement started to surface across all 5 continents, mostly spearheaded by UNESCO (ICAE, 1979) and their definitions of functional literacy as a means to improve economic mobility.
Around the 1970s, and up to this date, a growing group of literacy researchers have become more critical about how a narrower, print-based view of literacy limits human agency and access to power and resources. The critiques of scholars such as Freire (1970/1999), Luke (1988), Street (1984), McLaren (1994), Gutiérrez (2000), or Giroux (2006), to name a few, have focused on the presence of a pedagogy of literacy that limits the possibilities of individual expression and agency, reduces it to reading and writing within a classroom setting, and disregards power dynamics vis-à-vis access to resources and contents.

In addition, media scholars such as Marshall McLuhan (M. McLuhan & Powers, 1989; E. McLuhan & Zingrone, 1995) predicted a shift towards multi-linear forms of literacy expression, “In other words, instead of being captured by point-to-point linear attitudes […], most Americans will be able to tolerate many different thought systems at once…” (McLuhan & Powers, 1989, p. 86). Kaestle (1985) also posited that the renewed interest (at the time) in literacy was also a response to “the possible consequences of a communication revolution featuring television and computers” (p. 11). In the past 15 years, literacy researchers have responded to these concerns about shifts on literacy practices with notions such as the ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984), multimodality (Kress, 1997), multiple literacies (Street, 1995), Critical Literacy (Beck, 2005; Macedo, 1994; Shor, 1999; Morrell, 2008), or Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

Literacy research has also questioned how literacy is practiced in the classroom and how different those literacy practices (and even the students themselves) look outside of the classrooms (e.g. Hull & Katz, 2006; Wason-Ellam et al., 2004; Weinstein, 2002), while questioning how we are preparing teachers to respond to these new demands. There is still,
however, a need to learn more about how teachers and teacher educators modify their literacy beliefs and practices as they respond to historical, societal, and technological changes.

**The present context: Changing times, changing literacy practices.** Particularly during this decade, the context of literacy practices has brought the convergence of three issues. The first issue corresponds to the aforementioned new demands that keep arising when younger generations connect literacy with “technologies, friends, and pop culture” (Hinchman, Alvermann, Boyd, Brozo, & Vacca, 2004, p. 304). Traditional forms of reading and writing are contested every day. As Withrow (2004) explained,

> Reading and writing are no longer the simple mode of literacy. Anyone who lives with teenagers has observed them studying while they listen to a CD, search the ’Net, and dial a friend on their cell phone. This ocean of information flows in, around and through them while they snatch the bits of information they want to use from it. (p. 29)

Nowadays, words, images, and sound comprise what we call a text. Text is no longer linear. Text and communication at large has evolved to become multidirectional, which as Kress (1997, 2000) argued, is closer to the actual way children communicate, when they rely on “the things they use, they objects they make, and in their engagement of their bodies” (Kress, 1997, p. 97) to convey messages to multiple audiences. In addition, public and private lives are becoming more intertwined. Power dynamics and social interactions are also changing. The access to and use of technology to produce texts have become a new form of capital, as has the ability to shift how we address different kinds of audiences at rapid rates. These new times are also modifying the skills we need to be better workers (Anstey,
2002; Gee, 2000), better citizens, and ultimately, better human beings (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

The second issue at hand is a call for a vision of literacy with a stronger multicultural frame of reference (Banks, 2003; García & Willis, 2001; Willis & Harris, 2000). In this position, issues of social justice (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004), gender (Anderson, 2002; Blackburn, 2003), space, and geography (Comber & Nixon, 2006; Larson, Gatto, & Perhamus, 2006) affect individual literacy practices. This position stresses clearly that these changes in literacy practices in our current context cannot fall prey to that trap of turning access to technology and multiple forms of expression into another instrument for social inequality. Instead, the call is to understand the new opportunities for literacy practices within the curriculum as instruments of student empowerment (García & Willis, 2001) and as an opportunity to denounce social inequalities. As Banks (2003) explained, this new context for literacy practices, “should help students attain the skills, attitudes, and commitments needed to become citizens who will work for social justice in their nation-states and the world” (p. 18).

The final issue affecting literacy practices today is located directly in our schools. Recent policies, particularly the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) have emphasized reading instruction and accountability based on students’ performance in standardized tests (Barrett, 2009; Dooley & Assaf, 2009; McCarthey, 2008; Suskind, 2007). As a consequence of the push towards testing spearheaded by NCLB, there is a section of literacy researchers who are advocating a return to more traditional forms of reading and writing. This side argues that a more formal reading and writing instruction is
what schools really need to help all children (Hirsch, 2006). At the same time, schools are also asking that teachers adopt and incorporate new media and new technologies into the classrooms. However, this incorporation process is sometimes devoid of the necessary reflection to see how to maximize the resources. All that changes is how we present the traditional reading and writing activities, not what we really do in the classroom (Cope & Kalantzis, 2007). Also, teachers sometimes believe that they need to ignore everything they had done before to embrace the new media and technologies (Knobel, 2001).

The convergence of these realities – the advances in technology and their effect on text production, a call for literacy as another vehicle for social justice, and policies that enforce a more traditional view of literacy as mere reading and writing for test-taking while asking teachers to also incorporate new media and technologies – has placed teachers and their educators in a conundrum. Teachers in schools have to navigate this context to find a middle ground between their own ideas about literacy practices and what the districts expect. Teacher educators are also questioning what they should do and how to help their students navigate these converging thoughts. This is the context and background in which I situate this study.

**Conceptualizing Literacy Practices: Issues of Language, Pedagogy, and Power**

One thing that has not changed since literacy became a concern of research and policy around the latter half of the 20th century is that there are as many positions about literacy as agents with a stake on it. Scribner (1988) argued, “The enterprise of defining literacy, therefore, becomes one of assessing what counts as literacy in the modern epoch in
some given social context” (p. 72). A number of scholars have attempted over the years to define literacy, its practices, and its implications for instruction. Talking about every existing school of thought or paradigm regarding literacy would be too daunting a task for the scope of this study. That is why I narrowed down my discussion to the five schools of thought regarding literacy and literacy practices I introduced earlier in this chapter. Those five have become very influential on their own ground and are still affecting policies and curricula today. This section will discuss each of them, explaining how scholars in each camp have defined literacy and what implications they have proposed for practice and instruction. Although much of the literature has used them in isolation, as “polarities” (Street, 1999, p. 34), or as mutual critique, that is not the intent of this discussion. If, as Luke (2004) argued,

[T]he challenge facing teacher education, curriculum, and school reform is not to find, standardize, and implement one true method, but for teachers to develop flexible repertoires of field-, discourse-, and text-specific pedagogies, suited to particular textual artifacts, technologies, social and linguistic/interactional outcomes, and adaptable for students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, (p. 90)

Then we need to move past these binaries and think of how theories may collaborate for knowledge creation. After all, research has shown evidence of the pitfalls of framing literacy issues and paradigms as oppositions (Stone, 2003).

The following section will first describe each line of thought, their main theoretical underpinnings, and their applications to literacy teaching and learning. Then, I will discuss their differences and similarities and how these perspectives will inform my own research.

**Basic literacy.** Perhaps the oldest and most traditional literacy paradigm, basic literacy, define as the “skills required to survive in a literate society” (Garsett, 1983, p. 235), has been historically linked to ideas such as nation and society. Conceptually, basic literacy
has one very specific function, as Hirsch (1987) argued, “The chief function of literacy is to make us masters of this standard instrument of knowledge and communication, thereby enabling us to give and receive complex information orally and in writing over time and space.” (p. 3, emphasis added). Solomon (1983) related literacy to the “mastery of specific mental skills […] in response to the specific demands of coded messages” (p. 68). I have emphasized the word standard because that is a term that lies at the core of any ideas stemming from a notion of basic literacy. From a basic literacy perspective, the mastery (using Solomon’s words) of standard (we could go as far as using “sanctioned” or “official” as other appropriate terms here) forms of reading and writing are fundamental for the overall sustenance of our societies, or as Hirsch (1987, 2006) would also frame it, our nations.

**Defining literacy practices.** Within a framework for basic literacy, therefore, it is important to help citizens develop a certain amount of knowledge that enables them to participate in their societies. Hirsch (1987) explained that

> Putting aside for the moment the practical arguments about the economic uses of literacy, we can contemplate the even more basic principle that underlies our national system of education in the first place – that people in a democracy can be entrusted to decide all important matters for themselves because they can deliberate and communicate with one another. Universal literacy is inseparable from democracy… (p. 12)

In order for this democracy to work, proponents of basic literacy would posit that there need to be a series of minimal concepts that individuals need to know. Hirsch has defined these concepts as “cultural literacy” (Hirsch, 1987). In fact, he has made explicit references as to what these references should be, at least in the context of the United States. Another key element of basic literacy lies on what people and students in schools should read.
Defendants of the basic literacy paradigm have consistently called for the teaching of the “literary canon” (Bloom, 1994). The “Canon,” as it is also mentioned (some studies I read actually capitalized the word), as Bloom and others argued, consists of literary works that have passed the test of time and are universally considered as having high literary value and historical significance. Bloom has also written lists of what works constitute the canon. Classical authors from the Greek and British traditions have been placed at the top of these lists, yet multicultural literature (a staple of some forms of Critical Literacy) is usually deemed as irrelevant in curricula that follow the canon.

Proponents of basic literacy also stress a need for explicit reading instruction (Hirsch, 2006), an emphasis on explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction as a support for reading comprehension (Nunes & Bryant, 2006), and formal writing not only as the way to improve performance in school tests, but also as the main procedure to combat illiteracy. Illiteracy is, in fact, a concern which drives a great number of decisions regarding instruction and policy within advocates of basic literacy. Proponents of the emphasis on skills and fundamentals as the pillars of literacy instruction, or what others in schools and the media have called the ‘back to basics’ movement (Routman, 1996, p. 77), argue that this is the best (if not the only) way to really provide children with the sufficient knowledge in reading and writing to succeed in school and beyond (Carsetti, 1983; Nunes & Bryant, 2006). These proponents are also overly vocal in their calls to community members to remain vigilant to what schools are doing to undermine this kind of instruction (Hirsch, 2006).

**Functional literacy.** The genesis of functional literacy lies in the definitions, ideas, policies, and goals for literacy that UNESCO began to endorse at the end of the 1960s
In fact, a number of proposals for literacy around the world were spearheaded by governments and agencies in the 1970s under the umbrella of functional literacy. Some ideas about functional literacy have also become the basis of some forms of adult literacy education (Papen, 2005). To explain functional literacy, Wragg and colleagues (Wragg, Wragg, Haynes, & Chamberlin, 1998) cited the actual statement by UNESCO, as follows,

A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community’s development (p. 26)

Papen (2005) also claimed that functional literacy “becomes linked to work-related skills and emphasizes society’s demands on the individual” (p. 18). It is notable in the overall discourse surrounding functional literacy that literacy becomes a vehicle for individuals to participate more productively as members of the economy and society at large. Robinson (1988) argued that this form of literacy, “is essential for all students and for all citizens, and insofar as we are able to and insofar as social circumstances will allow, we must help provide it” (p. 247).

**Defining literacy practices.** Functional literacy, just like basic literacy does, frames practices mostly in terms of reading and writing (UNESCO also incorporated arithmetic), usually situated within productivity standards. Reading and writing are the processes of understanding texts and making statements. Resnick and Resnick (1988) also added to the idea of reading, “a criterion that requires, at a minimum, the reading of new material and the gleaning of new information from that material” (p. 191). Literacy practices are
particularly located in two contexts: School and work. Schools are given the main (if not sole) responsibility to prepare individuals to apply the skills of reading and writing, again as preparation to be more effective workers and productive members of society.

The goal of literacy and literacy practices in this view, as Papen (2005) and others have argued, is that “literacy in itself is valued for its assumed benefits. These are believed to enable learning and access to information and thereby to support knowledge acquisition, to develop thinking and to improve the individual’s chances of finding employment and income” (Papen, 2005, p. 10). In spite of the more pragmatic goals for functional literacy, this paradigm should not be assumed as completely static. As Wragg and colleagues (1998) explained, “The reference to personal development shows that UNESCO’s definition is not purely utilitarian” (p. 26). In fact, these authors also argued that the concept of functional literacy can be adaptive. After all, what constitutes functionality and competence is linked to the social conditions and contextual circumstances. We can argue, therefore, that despite the narrow scope of some implementations of functional literacy, there is potential within this paradigm to question the access to the literate and technological resources that individuals need to find ways to be more productive while finding more personal realization.

Critical literacy. There is a consensus about the main source of inspiration for the work of most critical literacy scholars: The thoughts, actions, and ideas of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970/1990; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire’s notion of “banking education” (Freire, 1970) has been instrumental for the construction of most ideas surrounding critical literacy. Although I agree with Kincheloe (2008), Morrell (2008), Shor (1999), Willis (García & Willis, 2001; Willis, et al., 2008), and others that ideas from the Frankfurt School and Critical
Theory have also permeated how critical literacy is understood today, for the purpose of this study I will frame critical literacy stemming primarily from this post-Freirean perspective. I acknowledge, however, that critical literacy as a paradigm is much broader than the ideas espoused and inspired by Freire. Macedo (1994) explained that “Paulo Freire’s concept of banking refers to this treatment of students as empty vessels to be filled with predetermined bodies of knowledge, which are often disconnected from students’ social realities” (p. 18).

Critical literacy denounces a model of literacy that is only concerned about skills or knowledge transmission. Morgan (1997) argued that, “Critical literacy critics and teachers focus on the cultural and ideological assumptions that undermine texts, they investigate the politics of reproduction, and they interrogate the inequitable, cultural positions of speakers and readers within discourses” (pp 1-2). The goal of critical literacy, as both McLaren and Lankshear (1993) and Beck (2005) have explained, is to create citizens who can face and question social inequality and become advocates against any forms of injustice, whether in classrooms or outside of them.

*Defining literacy practices.* Critical literacy actually aligns with many of the ideas that other traditional and alternative forms of literacy offer regarding activities and events. However, there are two areas where critical literacy takes a different stance. First, critical literacy is more concerned about the actual intent of school-sanctioned practices and whether or not they really promote agency. Morgan (1997) emphasizes that questioning school practices is at the forefront of critical literacy because “Education […] is one means among many by which the dominant groups in society almost invisibly, almost unconsciously, maintain their hegemony and those who are socioeconomically
disadvantaged are persuaded to consent to their inequality” (p. 7). Beck (2005) also added that “the critical literacy classroom is characterized by an emphasis on students’ voices and dialogue as tools with which students reflect on and construct meanings from texts and discourses” (p. 394). Critical literacy questions, for instance, why students write or why they only read literature from a certain tradition. Critical literacy scholars also question what the actual benefits of school reading and writing practices are for students. Shor (1999) explained that in a critical literacy approach to writing, “teachers invite students to move into deepening interrogations and knowledge in its global contexts.” Morrell (2008) expanded this idea of writing within critical literacy by claiming that the act of writing should include moments for “the expression of feelings of immense joy” (p. 169). Writing, Morrell said, should not only include writing formal pieces or essays. Journals, logs, poetry, personal letters, etc. should also find a space within the curriculum. Morrell justified the use of more informal and personal writing (and by extension, I would argue, literacy) practices because these practices are empowering and will enable students to “cope with fear, alienation, and other negative outcomes associated with being a member of a marginalized group in society...” (p. 170).

In terms of the act of reading, McLaren (1994) has called for literacy practices “not linked to learning to read advertisements and becoming better consumers, or escaping into the pages of romance novels or spy thrillers; critical literacy links language competency to acquiring analytical skills which empower individuals to challenge the status quo” (p. 21). Morrell (2008) argued that reading should be an activity that allows students to open spaces for personal and collective inspiration. He explained that critical literacy “gives students
permission to read through texts, to read in ways that allow them to repeatedly discover and rediscover themselves through the texts that they read” (p. 172). This implies that what students read and write needs to encompass issues of race, culture, sexual orientation, creed, etc. as they are elements that may become a source of marginalization, both outside of the classroom and within. The choice of readings, therefore, must also reflect the realities of the communities that are being served in the classroom. This reality must also include a respect for the different languages present in the classroom. A critical literacy classroom will allow for opportunities to use the different languages and discourses present without denying the chance to learn about the dominant discourses of society. Freire and Macedo (1987) argued that, “It is through the full appropriation of the dominant standard language that students find themselves linguistically empowered to engage in dialogue with the various sectors of the wider society” (p. 152).

Finally, it is important to think of the larger implications of the kind of individual that a critical literacy framework intends to promote. Morrell (2008) explained how critical literacy practices can be inspirational,

Many adult citizens with very little formal education [have overcome] their apprehension and ultimately became empowered users of the word in the context of struggling for social justice and human rights. What a powerful example to send to students: that the development of literacies of power can play a role in the transformations of their schools and communities! (p. 190)

**New Literacy Studies.** New Literacy Studies has been around for over twenty years. The work of Brian Street (1984, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005a, b) has been instrumental for the development of the views on literacy espoused by literacy researchers over the years. Inspired both by Freire’s (1970) banking model of education and his own
research in Iran in the 1970s (Street, 1984), Street started to question why there was such a
ingredient that actually reduced the definition to school-sanctioned forms of
reading and writing (Schultz, 2002). As Street (1995) explained,

The question that concerned us was: if, as we argue, there are multiple literacies, how
is it that the one particular variety has come to be taken as the only literacy? Among
all of the different literacies practised in the community, the home, and the
workplace, how is it that the variety associated with schooling has come to be the
defining type [...] Non-school literacies have come to be seen as inferior attempts at
the real thing, to be compensated for by enhanced schooling. (p. 106)

The emphasis on the social elements of literacy is the basis for Street’s largest
collections to New Literacy Studies: his ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984, 1995;
Gee, 2008) and his definition of literacy practices (Street, 1984, 1995). I will describe both of
them in the remainder of this section.

**Who dictates what constitutes literacy? Autonomous vs. Ideological models.**
Street’s work has been recognized for the distinction between the Autonomous and the
Ideological models of literacy. Street (2005b) describes the autonomous model of literacy as
one that

[W]orks from the assumption that literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects
on other social and cognitive practices... literacy is seen as having such effects
“autonomously,” irrespective of the social conditions and cultural interpretations of
literacy associated with programmes and educational sites for its dissemination. (p. 417)

Street further argues that the autonomous model of literacy places the weight of what
constitutes literacy back in the field of schools. Street refers to this as the “pedagogization”
(1995, p. 113) of literacy, giving the school the final word about what literacy looks like. This
form of literacy is usually framed within the confines of traditional forms of reading and
writing instruction and expression (Kaestle, 1985; Kress, 1997; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987;
Street, 1984) and an established hierarchy wherein oral forms of expression are seen as either inferior or mere precursors to more elaborate written forms of expression (Gee, 2008; Street, 1984). This model of literacy, Street (1995) also argues, has social and cultural implications about how people are defined in terms of literacy. The assumptions made from an autonomous model of literacy are, after all, the basis for framing people in certain communities as “illiterate,” for instance, a distinction Street describes as not only “meaningless intellectually,” but also “socially and culturally damaging.” (Street, 1995, p. 19).

Street’s response to this narrowed and, to some (such as Freire and Gramsci [1971]), oppressive, view of literacy is the alternative model known as the “Ideological model” (Street, 1984, 1995; Gee, 2008) of literacy. After all, as Resnick (2000) discussed, “school is one of the many social forces, institutionalized or not, that determine the nature and extent of […] literacy. To understand […] literacy[…] it is essential to examine the nature of literacy practices outside school as well as within”(p.27). In his explication of the ideological model, Street elaborates,

[The ideological] model stresses the significance of the socialisation process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants and is therefore concerned with the general social institutions through which this process takes place and not just the explicit ‘educational’ ones. It distinguishes claims for the consequences of literacy from its real significance for specific social groups […] It concentrates on the overlap and interaction of oral and literate modes rather than stressing a ‘great divide’. (Street, 1984, pp. 2-3)

The ideological model of literacy, then, brings a social component to literacy back to the foreground, wherein we should look at other fields outside the school,

Literacy is so embedded within these institutions in contemporary society that it is sometimes difficult for us to disengage and recognize that, for most of history and in
great sections of contemporary society, literacy practices remain embedded in other social institutions. (Street, 1995, p. 107)

Street (1995) explained that in the autonomous model of literacy, “reading and writing [were] given status \textit{vis-à-vis} oral discourse as though the medium were intrinsically superior and, therefore, those who acquired it were intrinsically superior…” (p. 114). In this new view, oral texts are important and necessary. They, in fact, complement written texts. In terms of writing, a multi-faceted view of literacy actually calls for a rethinking of what we understand by “written” text.

\textbf{Defining literacy practices.} Street (2001) has used the term literacy practices to refer to

[T]he events and the patterns of social activity around literacy but to \textit{link} them to something broader of a cultural and social kind. And part of that broadening is that it attends to the fact that we bring to a literacy event concepts, social models regarding what the nature of the event is, that make it work and give it meaning. (p. 11)

Street further argues that, under this view, it is not enough just to ask people what they think literacy is. We must, Street argues, “start talking to people, listening to them and linking their immediate experience out to other things that they do as well” (p. 11). Looking at literacy practices, therefore, needs to consider issues of time and place, of possible boundaries, and even issues of power. For instance, if observing the different teaching strategies for literacy, Street would argue that those actually “set the boundaries of literacy itself and assert its place within a culturally defined authority structure” (Street, 1995, pp. 121-122). For the purposes of this study, I will draw from Street’s idea of literacy practices to describe what participants talked about.
Pedagogy of Multiliteracies. In 1996, a group of literacy scholars met to discuss the state of affairs of literacy and literacy practices in regards to technological and societal changes. The result of this meeting was the creation of The New London Group and their “pedagogy of Multiliteracies” (The New London Group, 1996, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2007, 2009; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). Before I continue my description, I would like to point out that some studies (e.g. Powers, 2007) used terms such as “multiliteracies” (lower-case “m”) and “multi-literacies” (hyphenated) to describe various paradigms. To avoid conceptual misunderstandings, I will always use the terms “Pedagogy of Multiliteracies” or “Multiliteracies” with a capital “M” to signify my ideas are directly drawn from the work of Cope and Kalantzis and the New London Group.

Multiliteracies provide a broader scope for analysis of the multiple ways one has to create meaning. Instead of merely focusing on reading and writing in the more traditional sense, a pedagogy of Multiliteracies, by contrast, “focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5). For instance, Kress (2003) has argued that traditional forms of writing usually link written practices to the use of alphabetic codes placed on paper. However, Kress also recognized that technologies have caused a shift,

The newer form, as it appears in electronic forms of communication for instance, is moving in the direction of the structures of speech, in its basic syntactic and grammatical organizations: less complex, less hierarchical syntax; shorter units; simpler sentence structures; and so on. (Kress, 1997, p. 123)

One final element for consideration within this discussion of oral and written texts is the effect that a less hierarchical view of those kinds of texts would produce in the ways to convey meaning. This modified view, combined with the access to new technologies has
produced what Kress (1997, 2000, 2003) defines as multimodality. Kress explained, “[A]ll signs and messages are always multimodal. That is, no sign or message ever exists in one single mode (for instance in ‘language,’ ‘writing’)” (Kress, 1997, p. 10). He elaborated, for instance, that even the format one uses to write a paper (i.e. handwritten or word-processed), the attention to grammar, the layout, etc. all are part and parcel of the overall meaning and message the paper ultimately conveys.

**Defining literacy practices.** The pedagogy of Multiliteracies proposes five modes of meaning: (a) linguistic (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, reading, etc.); (b) audio (i.e. sound, music, sound effects, etc.); (c) spatial (i.e. architectural design, shapes within a building, etc.); (d) gestural (i.e. body language, posture, feelings, etc.); (e) visual (i.e. colors, pictures, perspective, etc.) (The New London Group, 2000, pp. 23-30; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, pp. 212-216). In addition, there are four complementary elements that enable teachers to translate the “view of the changing communications environment and its conception of the process of meaning translate” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 205) into the everyday classroom practice.

- **Situated Practice,** or the way one frames practices “within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences” (New London Group, 2000, p. 33). Situated practice involves learning more about the students’ lives as well as using plenty of contextual clues and ideas for them to be acquainted with less familiar ones.

- **Overt Instruction,** seen less as rote memorization and more as, “systematic, analytical, and conscious understanding” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 206). The teacher’s role implies then providing support via scaffolding and other learned-centered activities. The goal of instruction is for students to be more aware and in control of what they are learning, to “become active conceptualisers, making the tacit explicit and generalising from the particular” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).
Critical Framing, which situates what is being learned from a “historical, social, cultural, political, ideological” (New London Group, 2000, p. 34) perspective. Critical framing invites learners to “explore causes and effects, develop chains of reasoning and explain patterns in a text” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Transformed Practice, wherein students are able to reflect on what they have learned while they design and execute a new series of practices “embedded in their own goals and values” (New London Group, 2000, p. 35).

These four elements, then, place literacy instruction within a more engaging environment. The argument here is that teaching about reading and writing just because that is what appears in the curriculum is not enough. Those reading and writing activities, then, need to be framed within a broader perspective, questioned for motives and utility, taught within a more supportive environment, and recreated according to a more particular set of values. Kalantzis and Cope (2008) also explained that these four elements work in conjunction, “all four aspects are necessary to good teaching, albeit not in a rigid or sequential way. And when all four aspects are put together, each is at least softened, and at best transformed by the others” (p. 207).

Establishing a Permeable Literacy Continuum

The next task I was supposed to complete as part of my work with the theoretical framework was to add a section that explained how these five paradigms would look like in practice. I started searching the literature to see examples of what classrooms under these five paradigms would look like. What seemed like a clear-cut task, just a list of activities and skills that would be so evident based on the theories, became complicated once I read what teachers are doing.
The first challenge was separating the lines between basic and functional literacy. The easier part was finding the conceptual differences between the former and the latter. After all, the main concern of basic literacy was the idea of nation-building and how the readings and contents all led in that direction. Functional literacy, on the other hand, was more concerned about “an acceptable grasp of the skills of reading and writing for functioning in society as a young adult” (Blake & Blake, 2002, p. 13). As I kept reading about these two paradigms, I realized that the difference is much easier to discern when one is talking about adult education. However, it becomes a more daunting task to tell them apart once one moves into the context of schools. Both paradigms emphasize literature, particularly texts of canonical nature (Bloom, 1994; Hirsch, 2006), and literary analysis (Blake & Blake, 2002) as staples of reading comprehension. Both paradigms call for instruction about vocabulary building and grammar, which Hirsch (2006) even frames as an issue of equity and access (p. 55). Finally, both paradigms focus on the differentiation between formal and informal speech as necessary instructional practices.

The lines are more clearly drawn once one moves into the other three paradigms, in terms of distinguishing between the more traditional and the alternative paradigms. But, once I started analyzing what literacy practices in classrooms guided by Critical Literacy, New Literacy Studies, or Multiliteracies would look like, the descriptions were as nebulous, if not more, than the first two paradigms. The first issue was the selection of resources and reading activities. All three paradigms call for the use of resources that approximate the students’ lives and realities, which are not necessarily reflected by the choices of canonical texts. The use of alternative texts, such as comics (Jacobs, 2007), Anime (Chandler-Olcott
2007; Mahar, 2003), digital texts (Damico & Riddler, 2006; Webb, 2007), with an emphasis on visual elements (Hassett & Schieble, 2000) are important features of the alternative paradigms. There are some differences among them as well. For instance, critical literacy proponents call for choices of topics for reading and writing that are always deeply rooted in discussions of social justice (Beck, 2005; Mitchell, 2006). Choices of texts within a New Literacy Studies framework have traditionally leaned toward the selection of texts that reflect what students would read and write outside of classrooms and practitioners ascribed to this paradigm have pushed for more alternative genres and the inclusion of popular culture as part of the classroom discourse (Alvermann, Huddleston, & Hagood, 2004). Multiliteracies has pushed for a change of not only what kinds of texts we read, but also the need for a different approach to reading comprehension as the result of the infusion of online technologies (Kitson, Fletcher, & Kearney, 2007). Earlier readings of New Literacy Studies made it easier for practitioners to distinguish between that and Multiliteracies. However, more recent work, particularly the work that Pahl and Rowsell have either authored (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) or edited (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006) has blurred the lines even further. Initially it was easier to say that NLS was all about out-of-school literacies and Multiliteracies was more concerned about the use of technologies and multiple forms of design in the classroom. However, now that NLS scholars also have joined the discussion of multimodality, as Street and Kress (2006) did in the introduction to Pahl and Rowsell’s edited book, those lines are, as I said, blurrier. I also noticed this phenomenon is not unique to the United States. I recently wrote a critique of how some literacy scholars in Colombia were mixing ideas from these three paradigms in what, to me as a literacy researcher, was a
rather careless approach (Mora, 2009). But, again, that is my position as a literacy researcher. In my mind, I can distinguish them. However, some work by teacher educators (Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008) proves that even if one can distinguish the paradigms, there is the likelihood to use them in concert. In fact, as Powers (2006) explained, to practitioners, the terms could be all synonyms:

How are "multiliteracies" defined? The terms "multiliteracies", "multi-modal literacies", "new literacy studies" and "new literacies" can be found in much of the current literature on the subject to denote the concept of expanding literacy beyond the realm of print text. (p. 13)

This is the context that we are facing when it comes to literacy, then: We have five very distinct paradigms that both overlap and contradict each other. This is an indication of the evolution of the field of literacy and how it keeps responding to society and technology. However, it also is an indictment on the lack of agreement across different sides of the literacy debate and the potentially problematic nature of such divergent views (García & Willis, 2001). My introduction to this section described things I discovered in practice. I will now step back and will first discuss the main distinctions across all five paradigms. Then, I will introduce some ideas where I think we can find some convergence across all five paradigms. Finally, I will revisit the idea of defying the binaries that have been traditionally used to propose the notion of a permeable (Dyson, 1993) continuum as a stronger analytical tool.

**Conceptual differences.** A discussion of literacy paradigms cannot ignore the conceptual differences across all five theories. In fact, we need to disclose them first to recognize where each of them stands. It is no secret that the three more alternative positions have situated themselves as counter-proposals to the reductionist models of
reading and writing that Basic Literacy in particular and Functional to a lesser extent had traditionally offered. The origin of some of Freire’s (1970) ideas of literacy, for instance, stem from his own work with adults in Brazil and his recognition that agency was disregarded in the very resources that the schools provided to these students. Street’s (1984) ideas on literacy also stem from his own ethnographical work when he realized that community forms of literacy were not recognized as “official” since they did not take place in schools (Street, 1995). The pedagogy of Multiliteracies responds to ideas that viewed reading and writing as static and unresponsive to the changes in media and text that were surrounding the school. We also need to recognize the differences among Critical Literacy, New Literacy Studies, and Multiliteracies. New Literacy Studies, for instance, has been more concerned about socio-cultural uses of literacy (Rowsell et al., 2008). Their research has mostly focused on literacy practices in groups far beyond schools and researchers using this paradigm have engaged in very insightful studies of after-school programs, community centers, and the like. However, I still question the opposition that some scholars in NLS continue setting against the schools. That has been one of the major points of divergence between NLS and the other two paradigms. The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies, while sharing a similar concern for media and new forms of text that NLS has gradually shown, has been more concerned about how to create a strong pedagogical framework that can also influence schooling. Critical Literacy scholars, although with a much lower emphasis on media, have also concerned about what happens in and out of school, attempting to provide pedagogical proposals that can benefit teachers and students.
Overlaps. It is important, however, to recognize that there are areas of possible convergence. Even though some pundits of the more traditional forms of literacy have posited that the more alternative forms are alienating to reading and writing, which has been a staples of the ‘back to basics’ movement (Routman, 1996), a closer look may tell a different story. In fact, as Cope and Kalantzis (1997) argued in their discussion of the debates about the Western Canon, there are ideas from that side of the argument that warrant out attention. For instance, Delpit (2000) argued that providing students of color with traditional literacy instruction, “provide[s] a way to turn the sorting system on its head and to make available one more voice for resisting and reshaping an oppressive system” (p. 251). Kellner (2000) also argued that the use of technologies “requires cultivating more sophisticated abilities in traditional reading and writing, as well as the capacity to critically dissect cultural forms taught as part of critical media literacy and multimedia pedagogy” (p. 254). Finally, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) explained that alternative forms of literacy “are [not] intended to displace existing practices of literacy teaching, or to imply that what teachers have already been doing is somehow wrong or ill-conceived. Rather, they aim to provide ideas and angles with which to supplement what teachers do” (p. 239).

Another fundamental point of convergence that comes as one ‘reads between the lines’ of all five paradigms is that they, in their very particular (and true, sometimes contradictory or convoluted) ways, have a common thread in regards to literacy practices: there is possibility for human growth by using literacy practices as a tool (as a participant in one study I reviewed believed when she posited that literacy was a way for her students to make choices that would keep them out of trouble with the law [Smagorinsky et al, 2006]),
an improvement in literacy practices may open their potential as individuals, and more literate (as per their different definitions) people are key for better, more equitable, more humane societies. Their other common thread is an agreement that schools need help in order to reach these goals and that there is a need for more systemic work and support in order to maximize what the schools and teachers can do for children. As Blake and Blake (2002) hinted, all literacy paradigms seem to agree that literacy is intricate and all paradigms are aware of the deep social implications of literacy within communities and societies.

**Defying binaries.** A very common practice in literacy research is to place concepts as binary oppositions (Stone, 2003). There has been a traditional assumption that paradigms are just contradictory and a complete shift from one another. This just creates a bridge between the conceptual underpinnings these paradigms espouse and the realities the practitioners face, one that sometimes places teachers in a conundrum because they cannot seem to negotiate their beliefs with those of the districts and schools.

This literacy framework I am proposing stems neither from binary oppositions nor from ironclad allegiances to any one paradigm. As Dilworth and McCracken (1997) found in their study, very few scholars ascribe to only one literacy paradigm. I believe, as Many and colleagues (2002) argued, that these paradigms are concurrent in our classrooms and instructional practices. Therefore, we need to move beyond oppositions and realize that the present contexts features five major paradigms that are overlapping, struggling for relevance, coexisting, and being used and interpreted in teacher education and middle and high school classrooms today. What I propose, then, is to revisit Dyson’s (1993) notion of “permeable curriculum” and adapt it to talk about a “permeable literacy continuum” as an
analytical tool to better describe literacy beliefs and practices. Dyson’s explained that

enacting a “permeable” curriculum

Allows for interplay between teachers’ and children’s language and experiences. Such a shared world is essential for the growth of both oral and written language, and it is essential as well if teachers and children are to feel connected to, not alienated from, each other. (p. 1)

My idea of a permeable literacy continuum draws from Dyson’s idea of interplay as I will use all five paradigms to analyze what participants said and believed about the best ways to teach literacy and how they work with their students. I talk about a continuum not necessarily in a traditional chronological sense. I do believe there is a sort of chronology since there is a historical sequence when every paradigm appeared and when researchers started using each of them for analysis. But this is not a seamless continuum. There is no such thing as a linear evolution, since Basic Literacy is anything but extinct. I am constructing this continuum inspired by the overlaps, very well aware of the contradictions, and conscious that once practitioners talk about literacy, they are redefining the boundaries that the conceptual underpinnings once set.

I also believe that the best way to prepare teachers and to teach students does not lie in the binary oppositions. These binaries have sometimes caused more harm than good to teachers (Stone, 2003), so it is time to create a different paradigm. One where we are not forcing teachers to choose one over the other but one where we help them navigate this continuum to ultimately make the best decisions that will benefit their students as learners of, in this case, the language we call English, as citizens of the world, and ultimately, as good human beings. If we are to believe that, once we move past the conceptual layers, all paradigms do share (albeit using very distinct language) this common agenda of human
realization through the word, we need to also believe that these paradigms can theoretically coexist and learn to agree to disagree.

**Implications for the Study of Teaching and Literacy Practices**

The past 15 years have produced some of the largest changes in literacy practices in recent history. Conceptual, philosophical, pedagogical, and even technological shifts have influenced the kinds of literacy practices that we carry out in our personal and professional lives. They have also affected our understanding of literacy and its practices. More perspectives and definitions beyond the act of reading and writing are now converging, sometimes in complementary ways, sometimes contradictory. Our graduates and the faculty who are preparing them are in the middle of these perspectives, taking sides and creating their own definitions. Before I approached this study, I believed there was still much to learn about how faculty frame their own ideas about literacy practices, how they have evolved over time, and how they have impacted students at different intervals in time. Although the research has already established that “prospective teachers frequently received differing messages about teaching, learning, and content from university departments and courses” (Clift & Brady, 2005, p. 314), I think this study was useful to learn more about how the messages align and differ from the two sides of English Education (i.e. English faculty and methods courses faculty) and what teachers are finding useful or irrelevant. This study also gave me a chance to inquire into how those former preservice teachers who are now teachers assimilate and negotiate these messages and incorporate them into their practice. I have provided a start to learn more about the efforts that education and arts and sciences
instructors engage in and how they are contributing or affecting the common cause of preparing the next generations of English teachers.

These were some of the considerations that guided my study. I wanted to inquire if, as Clift and Brady (2005) wondered, the location of courses in colleges of education or colleges of arts and sciences (or, as happens in some cases, in both) makes a significant difference in impact. In fact, the structure of the University of the Midwest (pseudonym), whose English Education program is equally split between both colleges, was a good place to start settling this debate. I also wanted to learn, as Clift and Brady also recommended, if “academic or demographic characteristics of those who teach the courses have demonstrable impact on prospective teachers’ learning, beliefs, or actions” (p. 330), as well as how this impact was observed and reported across different groups of graduates. My interest in the voices of English faculty, methods courses instructors, and graduates at different stages in their careers provided a multivocal setting that responded to a large need in our body of research. This research project was unique in that nature. I included participants who taught English and methods courses. I interviewed first-year teachers and teachers who graduated in 1998 and 2002, covering a good range of time spans and experiences. I believe this study provides data-driven evidence that can help “teacher educators and their Arts and Sciences colleagues” be better informed about “the impact of their practices on preservice teachers and the subsequent impact of these teachers on their P-12 pupils” (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 149). I think reading the stories that English and methods course instructors shared with me is a first step in breaching some of the gaps that are still present

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3 A more detailed description of the English Education program at University of the Midwest follows in Chapter Three.
among faculty on both sides of English education. My position as an external agent to the courses in English education provided a counter-narrative to the trends of studies where the research is through the eyes of the instructor (Clift & Brady, 2005; Floden & Meniketti, 2005). My study gave these six instructors the chance (maybe for the first time in some cases) tell their stories, confront their practices, and even offer valuable suggestions that I believe deserve an audience. In that respect, I believe this study actually addressed this recommendation by Clift and Brady (2005): “in addition to self-studies, researchers work with others, external to the course or even the institution to interrogate findings and challenge the possibility of self-fulfilling findings” (p. 333).
Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature: A Case for a Multivocal Study of Literacy Beliefs and Practices

This chapter positions my study within the larger body of literature in the field of English Teacher Education. I will describe what researchers in English education, teacher education, and literacy have learned regarding the preparation of English teachers. I will also talk about the shortcomings and potential areas for expansion that my study addressed. This review kept in mind my call for multivocal studies where we take a closer look at how instructors and graduates’ literacy beliefs and practices evolve over time and how that evolution informs their everyday teaching.

There are four parts to my review of the literature. First, I want to explore how (if at all) the studies define ideas such as literacy, literacy beliefs and practices, English, literature, among others, from the perspectives of college instructors and English teacher education graduates. Second, I want to find references to impact of the coursework, as stated by instructors and graduates, and what each group of participants says and believes about said impact. Third, I will explore what the research has said about the evolution of teachers’ literacy practices over time. Finally, I will look at what lines of future research the authors have recommended.
Finding the Literature: A Description of Search Strategies

I will describe the process of choosing the articles for this review, including an explanation of the criteria and resources I used to select and discard studies.

Locating the sources. I limited my search to peer-reviewed journals and did not include book chapters or dissertations. I am aware that not including both of these might be consider a limitation of this search. However, the different reviews of the research that I read and used as information sources (Clift & Brady, 2005; Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002) based their searches on peer-reviewed journals. All authors agreed that the process of review that journals undergo to select articles gave the published studies a larger degree of reliability. I started my review of the literature by surveying the main journals in the fields of teacher education, English education, and literacy research (e.g. Teaching and Teacher Education, Research in the Teaching of English, English Education, and Journal of Literacy Research), I also included major journals in education (e.g. Journal of Curriculum Studies, Harvard Educational Review, and Teachers College Record) given their overall relevance in the field. I also relied on the annotated bibliographies from Research in the Teaching of English between 1996 and 2009.

With a few exceptions, I only reviewed articles between January 1995 and January 2010. As I explained in Chapter One, this time period has brought a very large number of changes in literacy research. It also includes the transition period when the University of the Midwest redesigned the teacher education program. Finally, considering that some of the major works within my theoretical framework were published in or after 1995, including Street’s Social Literacies (1995) and the first written article on the Pedagogy of

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3 A longer, more detailed description of this transition will be found in Chapter Three.
Multiliteracies by the New London Group (1996), reviewing the literature prior to 1995, albeit important and useful, was a lower priority.

To find my articles, I looked at the tables of contents (both in hard copy formats and online) of every issue of the major journals in the field and other journals I considered relevant. I also included articles in press whenever they were available. I made sure to update them prior to finishing this chapter. I used my own knowledge of what journals are highlighted in the different fields comprising this study, as well as suggested articles in the different reviews of literature I also read (I particularly found the list of articles that Clift & Brady [2005] featured in their review to be very thorough and a major source of inspiration). I used titles and abstracts as the first criterion for inclusion and made a preliminary list of references. In addition to the individual search by journal, I conducted electronic searches using some of the major databases available at the University of Illinois Library. I searched for articles in ERIC, Web of Science, Wilson Full Text, and JSTOR. I used the following keywords, both alone and in different combinations: Literacy, literacies, critical literacy, Multiliteracies, English, English education, methods courses, secondary education, beliefs, and practices. I located the electronic versions (in PDF format) of the different articles I had located and retrieved them for easier accessibility. I made copies of articles that were not available online for further reading.

Criteria for inclusion. As I stated above, the research on literacy practices and teacher education is rather broad. Not every article, even if they were very compelling and well-referenced, would serve the purpose of this literature review. This section explains the
criteria to include articles, as well as a brief reason why other articles were not deemed relevant.

**Literacy practices.** This review only included articles where schools were the main site of research. I am aware of the contributions of the fields of adolescent literacy and out-of-school literacies to learn all what adolescents and adults are doing regarding literacy practices and I have read articles and reviews in that field to inform my theoretical framework. However, the narratives in most of these articles speak very little about what teachers believe and practice when it comes to literacy. Also, their recommendations for research are rarely linked to English teacher education.

**English and teacher education.** I only reviewed articles that related to secondary English education, from the perspectives of preservice teachers, program graduates, and university instructors. I used articles that talked about middle and high school English or literacy methods courses. Whether the programs were at an undergraduate or graduate level was not a factor. I excluded articles about the preparation of elementary school teachers given that the course demands and characteristics of elementary education are different from secondary education. I excluded articles where the researchers did not make it explicit they were studying a Secondary English Teacher Education program. I also excluded articles that referred to other content areas, unless the studies related to how content area instructors were trained for literacy instruction (e.g. Moje, 1996). I made this decision in part inspired by the work of Stodolsky and Grossman (1995, 2000) and their analyses of the differences in content area preparation. Following Stodolsky and Grossman’s assertion, “Teachers of different subjects not only teach different content but also operate under
different curricular constraints and conditions” (2000, pp. 245-246), I believe that focusing on English education only was the best decision to inform my research questions and this study in general.

**Context.** I circumscribed most of my articles to studies within the United States. Given that I have an interest in what has happened in the context of the educational system in this country in the past 15 years, international studies may not necessarily offer a detailed frame of reference.

**Special cases.** Although I remained faithful to my exclusion criteria, these criteria were not inflexible altogether. I have included studies framed overseas (e.g. Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Hanauer, 1997; Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008) or studies in elementary schools settings, (e.g. Dooley & Assaf, 2009) when there were elements of the research design or the findings that were particularly compelling and relevant for my research project. In order to avoid a potential conflict, I did not review any studies that I had previously reviewed for my master’s thesis (Mora Vélez, 2004). The added value that those studies may have brought to this review did not outweigh the potential risks of self-plagiarizing or contradicting my own work that surrounded choosing these articles.

**What has (and has not) the Literature Said About Literacy Practices?**

I divided this review around three research areas: (a) research on literacy practices within school settings; (b) research on English education from a university faculty (whether English or methods courses) perspective; and (c) research on English education from the perspective of the program graduates (whether they were preservice teachers or recent
graduates at the time of the study). Subheadings in each section correspond to the guiding questions I used to organize this review. I will attempt to introduce the articles in every section in alphabetical order. However, I may choose to break that sequence in some cases if making that change makes for a better flow of the narrative and the presentation of my findings.

**Learning about literacy within school settings.** Articles in this section focused on research that took place in middle and high school classrooms, as opposed to methods courses. Most data sources included observations and interviews. All but one (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2008) were conducted in the U.S. I centered my analysis and discussion of the articles around four issues:

- the ideas expressed about literacy and literacy practices (this included any statements the authors made about how they themselves framed literacy),
- any references to the participants' English or methods courses at college,
- any references to teachers' actual definitions of literacy and literacy practices; and
- any suggestions for future research.

**Framing literacy beliefs and practices.** The articles in this section offered a very broad picture of tendencies to frame literacy and literacy practices. Articles ranged from discussions where literacy was reduced to reading (e.g. Cole, 2002/2003) or writing (e.g. Scherff & Piazza, 2005) to frameworks that combined multiple ideas about literacy and literacy practices (e.g. Jewitt, 2008; Mahiri & Godley, 1998; Mallette, Henk, Waggoner, & DeLaney, 2005). For instance, Cole (2002/2003) centered her study about teachers' literacy practices on the notion of reading. Cole created “literacy profiles” for her participants, yet she only talked about reading. Cunningham and colleagues (Cunningham, Zibulsky,
Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009) studied the potential discrepancies between what teachers report and what they do, as they claimed, in terms of literacy practices. However, once they described the findings, they also reduced the discussion to reading. Yandell (2007) also framed his discussion about literacy practices in school around the act of reading and how reading was constructed within one English classroom. Both McCarthey (2008) and Scherff and Piazza (2005) only used writing as the focus for their studies about the effect of current legislation in the classrooms. Neither study addressed literacy as a phenomenon or as a conceptual tool to drive the discussion. Although McKinney and Giorgis (2009) worked with “literacy specialists” as their participant pool, they also reduced their discussion to how these participants constructed their writing identities. Literacy in this case was only tied to the participants’ position at their schools. Hanauer (1997) conducted a study about student teachers and their overall knowledge of literacy practices. What I found interesting about this study was how in most of the study the author actually used “reading/writing” as a synonym for literacy practices⁴.

In some of the studies, ideas about one particular view of literacy seemed to guide the analysis and discussion. In their study about literacy practices of Greek literature teachers, Frydaki and Mamoura (2008) talked about the notion of “critical consciousness” (p. 1492), yet the authors never discussed what that term meant in their discussion. Hamel (2008) did not use the term “basic literacy” per se in his discussion of the differences between teachers’ and students’ understanding of reading and literature. However, he did make concrete references to the use of the literary canon and any references to multicultural

⁴ I intend to expand this issue in more detail in the discussion of what I learned from the articles at the end of the chapter. However, this is a very important issue, upon which I will drive some of my decisions for this study.
texts were absent from the discussion, two elements that I have discussed as part and parcel of most frameworks for basic literacy. Moje (1996) defined literacy from a social perspective, heavily drawing from the work by Scriber and Cole (1981) for her study of a high school teacher engaged in literacy practices with her students. Smagorinsky and colleagues (Smagorinsky, Sanford, & Konopak, 2006) used the concept of “functional literacy” in their study of how a former police officer turned teacher framed her literacy practices in her classroom. The participant’s view of functional literacy stemmed from her experiences in law enforcement and her belief that their lack of literacy skills had had an impact in their choice to break the law. For the participant, literacy was about helping her students develop “life and literacy skills through which they could become capable citizens who lead satisfying lives” (p. 94).

There was a group of studies whose conceptual framework covered multiple perspectives on literacy practices, many of which aligned with elements of the framework I proposed in Chapter One. Ares and Peercy (2003) designed a literacy framework around the notion of “use and production of texts” (p. 651) for their study about how a teacher’s understanding of literacy affected how her students got involved in and reacted to the different literacy activities proposed in class. The authors made references to personal elements of literacy as an influential factor in decision-making. They also talked about both traditional practices and non-traditional practices regarding literature, choice of texts, and other classroom activities. Jewitt (2008) used a multi-faceted view of literacy practices for a review of recent literature about multiple literacies in schools. The author framed the discussion about three theoretical foundations: New Literacy Studies, Multiliteracies, and
Multimodality as a separate concept from the previous two (as opposed to my framework, where multimodality is a complementary concept to both schools of thought). The author made some brief references to ideas of critical literacy, but they were not as significant as the previous three. Ideas about basic or functional literacy, on the other hand, were absent from the review. Mahiri and Godley (1998) presented a framework for their study about how Carpal Tunnel Syndrome radically changed the literacy identity of a school teacher while she was in graduate school. Their discussion centered on the notion that literacy practices are closely linked to identity and questioned what happened when one aspect of literacy (in this case, writing) was compromised. Mahiri and Godley argued that literacy is linked to personal and professional aspects of our lives. Their framework covered ideas about the different elements I have also discussed in my framework (perhaps one of the most comprehensive I found in the entire review), although I still question the absence of some references, especially Street’s *Social Literacies* (1995), since there is a heavy social component to literacy in this article. Mallette and colleagues (Mallette et al., 2005) also approached literacy practices from a multi-faceted perspective, although with a very different goal from what Mahiri and Godley had in mind. Mallette and colleagues were interested in how middle school teachers framed, understood, and valued literacies in their classroom. Their framework used Gee’s notion of multiple literacies, but they also talked about “New Literacies” and “Multiliteracies” within their discussions. However, a look at their references showed the omission of some key references for these terms, such as New London Group (1996), some of Street’s work, and even some of the work that made part of Cope and Kalantzis’ *Multiliteracies* (2000). In spite of these omissions, I still found their framework,
with its strong social component, to be (along with Mahiri and Godley’s) one of the closest to what I have proposed for my analysis.

**References to methods courses and English major.** Since my study is interested in finding connections between the English Education program and the current practices, I thought it would be pertinent to survey the articles for references to the participants’ preservice experiences. From all the articles surveyed for this section, only three made references to what the participants may have learned in their methods courses. Hamel (2003) hinted that the two participants in his study actually incorporated ideas from the English courses in her own understanding of reading. Participants talked about how reading and literature were two separate issues and how teaching reading was not a goal for the literature classes (p. 66). Muchmore (1998), in his study about the literacy history of a middle school teacher, hinted the historical evolution of her beliefs. Muchmore argued that “Anna” (quotation marks used in the original article) felt influenced by some theories earlier in her career during the 1960s (when ideas about “mastery of skills” linked to basic and functional literacies were predominant), but that she rejected them for her own as she continued teaching. Smagorinsky and colleagues (2006) discussed how some of the approaches in the methods courses, which were described as “constructivist,” actually clashed with ideas that the school practiced and the deeply ingrained goals for literacy that the participant had already internalized from her own experience as a police officer. What both studies, in my opinion, failed to do was to inquire more deeply about more specific elements that participants rejected and look for reasons why they did it. Both studies simply hint at the rejection of ideas but there is no analysis of why.
References to teachers’ understanding of literacy beliefs and practices. A third consideration for this section was to find evidence of what the teachers actually said about literacy practices. Whereas the first section (Framing literacy practices) focused on the researchers’ claims regarding literacy definitions and analytical frameworks, this section focuses on the participants’ voices and their definitions. Of all the studies reviewed, eleven studies discussed in higher or lesser detail what their participants said. Ares and Peercy (2003) made some references about what the participant did, but they never went deep into what she said about why she made those choices. There was not enough evidence from the data to find any insights about the decisions the participant made. Cole (2002/2003), in her dual role of teacher and researcher, thought it would be pertinent to describe her own philosophy of education (p. 330). However, she never introduced anything that resembled a philosophy of literacy. She described her literacy curriculum, but there is no evidence in the data that shows what influenced her decisions for classroom literacy practices. Cunningham and colleagues (2009) explored what teachers discussed as best practices and how that reflected in practice. The researchers found that in some cases, even if participants believed in the idea of balanced literacy, which I assumed based on the categories for analysis implied allotting equal amounts of instructional time to literature instruction and phonics-based instruction (including grammar and spelling, letter recognition, etc.), the results of the measures administered actually showed a discrepancy in the activities instructors preferred. Dooley and Assaf (2009) looked at how two teachers responded to the testing mandates in their districts. The authors explained that both participants described “reading and writing instruction” (p.370; the authors never used the term “literacy” and there was no definition
of what reading and writing instruction entailed for them) from a social perspective that favored the use of authentic texts. Both participants agreed that test-driven instruction was not the best way to teach either reading or writing. However, most of their classroom practices did not align with their initial understandings of reading and writing instruction. Hamel (2003) used the participants’ statements to create a taxonomy of theories of reading. Participants talked about various concepts for reading, from how reading is closely associated with decoding, to how reading is conceived as a problem-solving activity, to what needs to be done in order to bridge the gap between decoding and understanding a text, among others. Hanauer (1997) argued that the student responses in the questionnaires he handed in and the focus groups he conducted with the participants showed that these teachers had a tendency to situate their reading and writing practices within literature, which also guided their overall choices of classroom texts. McKinney and Giorgis (2009) studies how their participants built their identity as writers. Participants built this identity from two perspectives: writers or teachers of writing. The participants seemed to have an imbalance in the way they saw themselves as writers and the way they taught writing. Their own practices, in many instances, did not necessarily inform their teaching. Participants had conflicting thoughts about what they should do to support students and support teachers. In the interviews that Mallette and colleagues (2005) conducted with their participants, teachers actually had a chance to rank aspects of basic and new literacies that they found to be most important for their work with students (p. 38). Teacher responses also had discussions of the “social” value of literacy (p. 39) and the findings indicate that teachers may in fact have their own hierarchy of literacy practices that see the different aspects of
literacy not as mutually exclusive, but as a continuum within the classrooms. Moje’s (1996) study, which dealt with literacy practices in the context of a chemistry class. The participant’s beliefs aligned with Moje’s idea about literacy as socially situated. The teacher showed throughout the study a shift in practice that moved from using strategies simply to gather information to a more empowering view of literacy where students would use strategies in order to improve their learning and their overall relationships in their communities. In Muchmore’s (2001) study, there was one of the most extended discussions about the participant’s understanding of literacy and how it had changed over time. Participant’s statements described how she framed very specific, lofty goals for reading and writing, how she challenged narrower views of literacy as skill-oriented, and how literacy was “a tool for self-reflection” (p. 104). Smagorinsky and colleagues (2006) actually provided large insights from their participant. Most of her statements indicated a close interest in functional literacy. The participant herself talked about literacy in terms of “skills,” actual applicability, and “real meaning” to the practices (p. 94), elements that are akin to definitions of this form of literacy.

**Suggested future lines of research.** Eight studies proposed specific lines of future research. Ares and Peercy (2003) called for more information about the definitions of literacy that preservice teachers are actually learning in their methods courses, how wide (or narrow) those definitions are in terms of what constitutes literacy, text, etc., and how those views they are learning actually affect instruction. Cole (2002/2003) asked for more research on how to promote student motivation, but she never talked about implications for English Education. Dooley and Assaf (2009) centered their findings around how to negotiate
teachers' beliefs with the testing demands of the context. They recommended schools to take teachers' beliefs into consideration to help them navigate the conflicted feelings that the emphasis on testing seems to trigger. However, the authors did not extrapolate their recommendations or findings to preservice education. They only focused on professional development. Frydaki and Mamoura (2008) suggested that preparation at the preservice level has to go beyond “academic content and methods” (p. 1498), and include discussions about how personal values have a larger influence in instructional decisions such as the choice of reading and writing activities. Jewitt (2008) suggested that there is more information about how Multiliteracies in teacher education that is still emerging. I actually questioned if there was an issue of timing in this review, since Jewitt did not review some of the work already in place with multifaceted literacy practices in preservice teaching (e.g. Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck. 2008; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). However, their call for more research on how teachers are incorporating these ideas beyond preservice is still very relevant and aligns with some of the actual findings of this chapter. Mallette and colleagues (2005) called for more research that forces teachers to “examine their own values and teaching practices...” and research that frames “the value of literacy in the broadest and most authentic sense” (p. 41). McCarthey’s (2008) study about the effects of NCLB on writing instruction suggested more research on how professional organizations can get involved in advocacy. The author also suggested encouraging more practices of a bottom-up nature to better help students. However, a section about the possible contributions of these findings for English teacher education was absent. McKinney and Giorgis (2009) called for more studies about how English teacher education programs are preparing literacy
specialists. They argued that there is a need for more research linking teachers’ identities as writers and the impact on teaching. Finally, Moje (1996) linked some of her recommendations to the field of literacy teacher education. Moje called for more courses that provide more experiences in classroom situations that really push preservice teachers to question and refine their own literacy beliefs. Moje also suggested that, “Secondary pre- and inservice teachers should also be encouraged to examine their beliefs about students’ needs and what it means for students to be successful…” (p. 192).

There were three studies whose final remarks, albeit not a call for further research, could very well be interpreted as a possible line of research worth pursuing. Hamel’s (2003) discussion asked for teacher educators to reconsider whether preservice teachers “would benefit from subject-specific professional development […] that emphasizes ways of gaining access to students’ ways of thinking with texts” (p. 78). Hamel also asked teacher educators to “model and support habits of revising our notions of teaching, our conceptions of curriculum, and our beliefs about how students interact with texts” (p. 79). Muchmore (2001), along the same lines of Mallette and colleagues (2005) suggested that “the responsibility of teacher educators […] is to figure ways to highlight any acknowledged shortcomings and inconsistencies of preservice teachers’ existing beliefs…” (p. 106). However, I question these authors’ tone of certainty that these practices are not happening already. They do not open the door to the possibility of inquiring for their existence, which I believe could be an avenue for more research. Finally, Smagorinsky and colleagues’ (2006) discussion of the participant’s framing of literacy within a functional perspective opened a space (which the authors never acknowledged) to question what would have happened if the
participant had been exposed to ideas of critical literacy as opposed to the constructivist view that the program in which she was enrolled offered. I would argue that, given her loftier goals for literacy and the underlying assumption of literacy as a source of agency, exposure to critical literacy would have in fact aligned even more closely to her own views. It is unfortunate that the authors did not envision how a different conceptual lens would have produced different results.

**Learning about literacy practices from the perspective of English Education faculty.** This section reviewed studies where faculty in both English and methods courses talked about how they defined or understood literacy practices and how that impacted their instruction. Articles included in this section focused on the faculty as participants of the study, whether by completing surveys or being interviewed. Even though the studies reviewed in the next section also include the voices and opinions of the instructors, this group makes those voices, not their students’ (as is the case in the last group of studies in this chapter) the guiding point of the research.

It is interesting to note that for this section of the review, I found far fewer articles to collect and include than for the other sections. After the process of reading and eliminating articles, I only included four, three of which were surveys. The fourth article (Toll, Nierstheimer, Lenski, & Kolloff, 2004) was a first-person reflection by each author.

**Framing literacy beliefs and practices.** All the studies in this section inquired about different features of instruction, including ideologies, stances on reading and writing, practices, etc. Two studies had a broader vision for their research. Dilworth and McCracken (1997) conducted their surveys with faculty in English and methods courses across different
institutions in the U.S. Their analysis of answers found that there is no such thing as “a
global bipolar split” across faculty in different programs. Their findings indicated the
existence of five different groups placed within a continuum ranging from the notion that
texts are self-contained and both personal and social factors are isolated from the text
(“Group 1,” as the authors named it) to the view that “a text is a sociopolitical construct
whose significance emerges as each reader transacts with the text” (p. 12; authors labeled
this as “Group 2”). The other views of literacy within the study placed faculty in different
positions leaning toward Group 1 or 2. Very few faculty were described as completely skewed
towards either end of this continuum.

Hochstetler (2007) reviewed and analyzed methods course syllabi from three higher
education institutions in California. This study only focused on writing instruction and
wanted to discovered what syllabi discussed about teaching writing. Findings indicated that
there were ideas about writing scattered in all syllabi, including ideas about multicultural
perspectives on writing. However, the author argued that some of the ideas were rather
scarce and that there was a need for stronger definitions of writing within the syllabi.

Unlike the previous two studies, the other two studies just looked at the views from
one side of the English Education faculty. Both studies were situated in large universities in
the Midwest. Marshall and Smith (1997), as method course instructors, studied the practices
espoused by faculty in one university’s English department. Their data included course
syllabi and interviews. Their findings regarding literacy indicated that most instructors in
English focused on more traditional features of literature. Most of the faculty they surveyed
talked about reading choices that closely aligned with the traditional literary canon. Only
one faculty member discussed issues of literacy and oral communication as part of the course, mainly citing Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy*. Most writing in these classes was in the form of academic papers. Findings about literacy here hinted that faculty in English have not moved past the traditional notions of literacy practices that, for instance, I have framed as staples of basic literacy. Authors also argued that these instructors in English may not see a reason why to go beyond that, a finding that aligned with the surveys by Dilworth and McCracken (1997), which posited that “the larger percentage of literature professors” (p. 12) believed in these traditional models of literacy.

Toll and colleagues (Toll, Nierstheimer, Lenski, & Kolloff, 2000) moved the discussion toward the methods course instructors, looking at their own work at their home university. Using a first-person narrative, where each author presented their own accounts within a collective analysis of their writing and how that may affect their students. All participants identified themselves as “engaged in teaching undergraduate literacy courses…” (p. 166). From the data, however, we cannot hint at their positions on literacy. The findings made brief references to their work with reading or writing strategies, but there was not enough information there to make a clear picture of their thoughts about literacy.

**Impact of instruction.** Most studies raised questions about the impact of the instructors’ contents and activities and how that affected their students. Dilworth and McCracken (1997) explained that surveying faculty members stemmed from the feelings of frustration of faculty when “they observe[d] their student teachers befuddled within the mélange of competing and contradictory values surrounding them” (p. 8). Marshall and Smith (1997) questioned the overall impact of instruction across the structure of English
Education. They wondered how much of the burden English faculty should carry. However, the authors did not provide enough information about the overall structure of the English Education program for anyone to conclude who has the higher stake in the literacy instruction of the preservice teachers. Their findings, however, are useful as a source of expansion when inquiring about other English Education programs. Toll and colleagues (2004) also worried about their impact as instructors. They, however, questioned their impact contends against the schools. Their research raised possibilities to make their instruction more effective for future courses, including opening more spaces for critique of the literacy practices they witnessed in their field experiences.

**Evolution of literacy beliefs and practices over time.** I explored all studies in this section interested in learning what the research said about how faculty have modified (or not) their views on literacy over time (since that is one of the central questions to this research). The studies that finally made it to this review had potential within their data collection to find out about this. However, the researchers never asked those questions. I will review these four articles, therefore, from the perspective of what I would have done in each case. Dilworth and McCracken (1997) surveyed faculty from English and methods courses, but did not include questions about things that had changed in terms of instruction, for instance. The findings, therefore, seemed to operate under the assumption that all faculty surveyed had stagnant views about literacy. Both Hochstetler (2007) and Marshall and Smith (1997) reviewed syllabi as their main data source, but they only looked at syllabi for one semester. They never inquired for previous versions of the syllabi as a means to learn about messages over time and how they changed or remained alike year in
and year out. Finally, Toll and colleagues (2004) used first-person narrative, but the findings never provided a larger historical perspective of how their practice or their views on literacy had changed. Nevertheless, the authors placed the caveat that their paper only featured data from the first of five writing sets (yet they never hinted what the other four might have been about). Therefore, one can argue that space limitations within their journal choice may have left out historical elements of their narratives.

Learning about English Education from the perspective of program graduates.

This group of studies, like the studies I reviewed above, contains studies that are linked to preservice English Education programs. However, the majority of studies here include students while or after they left the program as participants and the origin of the data sources for the studies (most of which included interviews, analysis of written documents, and some observations). The researchers in the majority of these studies were the instructors of one of the methods courses in which these students were enrolled. To review these studies, I used four criteria: Ideas about literacy beliefs and practices, whether direct or implied references (some studies did not necessarily talk about literacy, but there were related concepts and ideas that can be traced to principles of literacy as per my theoretical framework); ideas about the faculty’s literacy orientations; issues of evolution or tension within the methods courses; and future lines of research. There were a few studies that talked about elementary education settings, but their findings and information were still

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5 During my latest search for articles for this review, in February 2010, I did not find any more studies using the other four data sets and there was no contact information in the papers to actually ask the authors for input.
deemed relevant for the purposes of this review and this study at large and therefore were included.

**Framing literacy beliefs and practices.** Whether the articles directly stated they would discuss literacy (either in the title or abstract) or did not make any direct reference to it, all articles presented a very particular vision of literacy that was conveyed in the methods courses and through the interpretations of the data. The views covered a wide range of views, from merely reducing literacy to reading (e.g. Bainbridge & Macy, 2008) or writing (Norman & Spencer, 2005) to incorporating theories such as critical literacy (Jones & Enriquez, 2009) or Multiliteracies (Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). I will introduce the views in a similar way to how I framed my theoretical framework in Chapter One (i.e. from Basic Literacy to Multiliteracies).

The majority of studies used reading as the main feature to talk about literacy. To review these studies, I will first introduce a cluster of studies that did not really talk about literacy per se and then another cluster that actually advertised (via title and abstract) their study as literacy-based. The use of the word “advertised” here is not deliberate. I intend to explain in detail how this use of “literacy” has implications for research in my discussion at the end of the chapter.

Four studies belong to the first group I mentioned above. Two of them are studies by Agee (1998, 2006). In her first study (Agee, 1998), the author discussed how a group of students (not hers) used their prior experiences to create their own notions of teaching literature and how they contrasted with the ideas their instructor espoused in class. The definitions of literature were rather varied, with most concepts linked to traditional ideas of
teaching (and introducing the concept of) the literary canon. A few ideas were more aligned
with principles I have found in the critical literacy tradition, such as questioning the choice
of texts and a need for more multicultural resources as part of readings and syllabi content.
For the second study (Agee, 2006), Agee looked at her own class and how they incorporated
concepts about literature. Reading through the findings, the author implied that students
had a mostly unified view of literature that would closely resemble ideas drawn from Basic
Literacy. Most students, the author discovered, valued traditional texts and written forms.

Looking at other literature-related issues, Apol and colleagues (Apol, Sakuma,
Reynolds, & Rop, 2003) studied how a group of preservice teachers reacted to picture books
about the American-Japanese conflict during World War II (p. 429). They explored the
different book choices students made, the possible reasons behind those choices, and the
implications for the students’ notions of critical reading. One important detail worth
mentioning is that most interpretations are implied out of written responses and
summaries. There is no actual way to confront the students’ actual words and the data they
introduced. The authors implied that the fact that students were more akin to using reader
response model and resistant against critical literacy models was the result of personal and
educational backgrounds, yet they never mentioned having participant data that supported
their interpretations. Holt-Reynolds (1999) conducted a study about the connections
between knowledge of major literary theories and concepts and the actual ways in which
participants shared these concepts with students. The author focused on one teacher as the
case for this paper. Findings indicated that the participant was rather knowledgeable about
her positions vis-à-vis literary theories. However, the findings also indicated that the actual
knowledge she expressed so articulately did not reflect on the strategies she used to convey meaning to her students. Finally, Newell and colleagues (Newell, Tallman, & Letcher, 2009) conducted a longitudinal study about the way a secondary school teacher constructed her beliefs and practices about teaching literature. The authors followed this teacher for five years. Although the authors never explained how either they or the participant defined “literature,” the authors showed how the process of negotiating and refining beliefs and practices, in this case of literature instruction, requires time and some effects cannot be seen early in a teacher’s career.

The next group of studies described the study to be about literacy, yet their actual discussion was skewed toward either reading or, as was the case of one study (Norman & Spencer, 2005), writing. Bainbridge and Macy (2008) studied how a group of Canadian student teachers from two different universities viewed themselves as teachers of literacy. The study pointed out that teachers had mixed perceptions about their own notions of literacy, mostly in the form of reading practices. The authors also pointed out that the data showed elements about reading that the participants had learned in the program, even if the participants were not able to trace said concepts back to a specific methods course. Linek and colleagues (Linek, Sampson, Raine, Klakamp, & Smith, 2006) zeroed in on their students to also explore ideas about literacy. They also discussed how those ideas about literacy changed while in the course. Although their initial questions were supposed to be about literacy, the data sources and findings only made references to issues of reading and the discussion was always focused on more traditional features of reading instruction (e.g. phonics, decoding, etc.).
Mallette and colleagues (Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000) also discussed how students constructed their ideas about literacy within the context of a methods course. However, the questions and data also were guided toward a discussion of reading, in this case reading difficulties. The authors started their discussion talking about “literacy” but soon after they shifted entirely toward “reading.” Massey (2002) took on the dual role of studying the changes the methods course triggered in her students and herself as she attempted to introduce the concept of balanced literacy. Like some other studies in this review, Massey shifted from literacy to reading as she analyzed her data and presented her findings. Nierstheimer and colleagues (Nierstheimer, Hopkins, Dillon, & Schmidt, 2000) conducted a study in an elementary teacher education setting to explore how prospective teachers changed their perceptions about “struggling literacy learners,” as stated in the title. Like some of the studies above, the authors also moved from a discussion of literacy learners to talking about struggling readers. In fact, their findings talked about difficulties in reading stemming from home practices and the bad use of reading strategies in school.

The next two studies moved from direct work with students and used more widespread data sources. Nathanson and colleagues (Nathanson, Proslow, & Levitt, 2008) conducted surveys with preservice and inservice teachers in a graduate program to learn about their literacy habits and the possible effects of those habits in their overall instruction. Although the authors stated their intention to shed light on literacy, the questionnaires and their interpretation of the findings only provided information about the act of reading. Shaw and colleagues (Shaw, Dvorak, & Bates, 2007) relied on a series of assessments to find out the different concepts about literacy that a group of students in a
practicum course described at the beginning and at the end of the course. As other studies, Shaw and her colleagues expressed their intent to talk about literacy but shifted the discussion of their findings to reading altogether.

As a reaction to this trend of relating literacy to only reading, Norman and Spencer (2005) actually focused their study on writing. The authors claimed that their focus responded to the fact that “the emphasis in literacy instruction is on reading, with knowledge of writing pedagogy embedded within reading competency requirements for teachers” (pp. 25-26). Their study explored how a group of students in their literacy methods course viewed themselves as writers, as well as how said views shaped their writing instruction. Through the autobiographies, the authors learned that most students expressed preference for more personal forms of writing. The authors also stated that former instructors in particular (for better or for worse) had a significant impact on their students’ personal perceptions as writers.

Three studies attempted to frame the discussion about literacy in terms of both reading and writing. Mary Draper and colleagues (Draper, Barksdale-Ladd, & Radencich, 2000) conducted surveys with students in two methods courses in elementary education to learn about their reading and writing habits and the potential effect in instruction. The authors described two categories of reading and writing: personal and academic. The surveys and some follow-up interviews they also used as data sources showed an inclination for academic forms of reading and writing in the participants. Findings also showed that schooling had significantly influenced the participants and their choice of academic over personal reading and writing. Roni Draper (Draper, 2002) did not use students for data
collection. Instead, she looked at the textbooks that instructors used in their methods courses, looking for evidence of the messages about literacy within each textbook. Findings showed that most of the discussions about literacy included similar amounts of information about reading and writing strategies. The author also pointed out that some textbooks contained information that depicted traditional teaching methods in a more negative light. Many and colleagues (Many, Howard, & Hoge, 2002) also framed literacy from reading and writing perspectives in their study about how personal expressions of literacy practices actually affected what their students did as teachers.

Five studies leaned closer to ideas related to the more alternative literacy paradigms (as described in Chapter One). Boling (2008) discussed her experiences in a methods course that integrated literacy and technology through the use of blogs and instant messaging programs. The author explained that using a multimodal view of literacy was not her first choice, but one that came as the result of reflecting on her practice. Her understanding of multimodality in reading and writing stems from the work of Cope and Kalantzis (2000). Jones and Enriquez (2009) conducted their study about the shifts in beliefs and practices of two teachers. The authors explored instructional and moral shifts and the conflicts their participants faced as they adapted their teaching practices to incorporate issues of critical literacy and social justice. The authors’ view of critical literacy draws heavily from Freirean and post-Freirean (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987) perspective, with a particular emphasis on political and social justice issues. Sanny (2007) discussed how the use of video cases was a useful technique to learn how teachers conceptualized literacies. Even though the author claimed to use the idea of “New Literacies,” meaning the use of multiple
perspectives to frame literacy research, the discussion of what these literacies would look like and the implications for practice were rather vague. The author never really explicated what was meant by New Literacies. Findings only talked about influence of the case methodology, yet they never offered hints about what the teachers meant when they talked about literacy. The next study presented the results of the implementation of a Multiliteracies framework to work with preservice teachers in a Canadian university. Rowsell and colleagues (Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008) framed their discussion about what implementing Multiliteracies in preservice education implies, the conceptual shifts that it requires from faculty and students, as well as some suggestions for future work. Their discussion of their theoretical framework discussed the main characteristics of Multiliteracies and contrasted it against New Literacy Studies. Finally, Sheridan-Thomas (2007), using a slightly narrower framework than the one in the previous study, inquired about how students in her class understood multiple literacies and how that affected their curricular decisions. Findings showed that these students in the methods course had a broader understanding of the idea of literacy, which entailed going beyond traditional notions of reading and writing, and that they believed that they also had to inquire about what constituted literacy practices for their future students.

**Faculty’s views of literacy beliefs and practices.** Not all studies were clear about the orientations vis-à-vis literacy that guided the instructors. Others, however, gave the reader very clear insights about such stances. Agee (1998), in her study of another literature professor, claimed that this instructor had a critical stance toward literature. She noted how the professor had a “negative view of traditional strategies” (p. 96) and even made
references to his experiences in inner-city schools as the main source of his “transformation.” In the study of her own methods class, Agee (2006) introduced her “epistemological stance” (p. 200), citing Louise Rosenblatt as one of the most influential theorists in her work. It is worth noting that Agee also stated that both face-to-face and electronic spaces are equally important arenas for transaction (an area where more recent approaches to literacy research have made important strides). Apol and colleagues (2003) were straightforward about their views on literacy, which were framed within a critical view of reading. They in fact questioned in their discussion of the findings if the way they discussed their beliefs could be seen as a superimposition on the students. Their vision of critical reading was influenced by post-Freirean views of literacy. In the case of the study by Bainbridge and Macy (2008), they talked about how there were two main approaches to literacy in teacher education (pp. 66-67) and how most educators actually oppose “a transmission approach to teaching” (p. 67). They, however, never made their position explicit and it can only be implied from the tone of their interpretations that they also believe in a more critical approach to teaching. Boling (2008) introduced a multimodal view of literacy vis-à-vis technology in her work with her preservice students. The author acknowledged that even though she introduced concepts such as new literacies in her course, “I realized that I had not been very critical of the term [new literacies]. I also did not have my set definition for it...” (p. 89). Boling recognized that being critical of these terms was not her intent from the outset, but the result of the interaction with her students. Both Linek and colleagues (2006) and Mallette and colleagues (2000) introduced a detailed portrait of the researchers’ overall experience, yet they never made it clear where they stood in regards
to literacy. In Massey's (2002) study, the author expressed her belief that “literacy instruction is too complex” to reduce it to ideas such as phonics (p. 106) and expressed her belief in balanced literacy. However, the direction of her study showed a heavier influence of reading as the main (if not only) form of literacy. Even though Norman and Spencer (2005) were open about their reactionary stance for choosing writing over reading, they never hinted at more than a few statements about the lack of value of writing instruction as their main reasons for this study. They did not offer an extended view of what literacy entailed for them. Finally, Rowsell and colleagues (2008) were very explicit about their own orientations. At the beginning of their paper, the authors posited, “We are teacher education instructors and researchers who identify broadly with the Multiliteracies position,” pointing out that the promotion of this pedagogy “should be a central goal of teacher education” (p. 109).

**Evolution and tensions.** A number of the articles introduced two related issues. Some showed that there were changes in the students' views as the result of being in the methods course or the program at large. Others illustrated the tensions that students faced as they confronted their ideas with those of their instructors. Both of Agee's studies (1998, 2006), for instance, explored the tensions between the instructor's ideas and his/her students. The first study (Agee, 1998) illustrated the tensions between what students bring before the program and what the instructor believed about literacy (or, in this case, literature). Agee pointed out that some students actually clashed at first with some ideas proposed in class. The article, however, also showed that some students had conceptual shifts as they were exposed to different school experiences and issues of inequality throughout the course. The second study (Agee, 2006) also talked about tensions between
the author and her students. Neither the data nor the interpretation, nevertheless, hinted that there were serious clashes of ideology. There was no evidence of mixed messages from students or teachers. Apol and colleagues (2003) hinted at the possibilities of tension, which may have affected the actual choice of the books. However, these conclusions are closer to speculations than data-driven interpretations.

In her discussion of the integration between literacy and technology, Boling (2008) shared that there were a number of contentious issues during her course. She admitted that her own expectations about technology, where she believed that a hands-on approach would show the students the usefulness of the technologies for literacy practices, did not necessarily align with her students’ concerns. Boling also admitted, “I realized that my own enthusiasm might have gotten the best of me” (p. 88) and may have prevented her from seeing things from her students’ perspective. Linek and colleagues (2006) showed that their students incorporated ideas about reading from the courses to their existing beliefs and practices. However, the data did not present any evidence of tensions or conflicting views throughout the course sequence. Many and colleagues (2002), on the other hand, argued that some of their students held “conflicting epistemological perspectives” (p. 307). The authors found that some participants did not revise their existing ideas. Instead, they tried to “fit new knowledge into existing schema” (p. 308). Massey (2002), as stated above, tackled this study looking at her students and her own practice concurrently, which also included the different conceptual tensions she and her students faced. She acknowledged that both she and the students changed in various ways throughout the semester. Rowsell and colleagues (2008) discussed their current successes and some challenges as they
continued implemented Multiliteracies. Some of their milestones included a shift in what students believed constituted literacy practices, including areas like technology, non-fiction reading and writing, or a new view of the classroom community. Challenges included a lack of clarity from some faculty about what a pedagogy of Multiliteracies really entailed, lack of attention to students’ lives, and a need for more attention to critique. Shaw and colleagues (2007) reported that their findings in pre- and post-tests to the students they surveyed showed significant changes in ideas and practices. They posited that “formal knowledge may actually affect pre-service teachers’ beliefs” (p. 236). Finally, Sheridan-Thomas argued that the discussions about multiple literacies helped the students broaden their notions of literacy.

**Suggested future lines of research.** There were a few studies that openly suggested future research. Others, as I did with the first group of studies, have lines of research that may be implied from their discussions. Apol and colleagues (2003) wondered “whether additional practice in developing their own critical perspectives might make our students better able to imagine how critical reading might influence their own classroom choices and pedagogies” (p. 458). Even though the authors never hinted much beyond this question, I still believe this is a line of research worth thinking about. Although Bainbridge and Macy (2008) called for the recognition of “the relevant prior knowledge student teachers possess when they enter the program” (p. 81), they did not make a clear link to a possible line of research. However, I also think that future research must acknowledge this reality even further. Boling (2008), after her experience in the technology and literacy methods course, cautioned teacher educators to carefully reflect on how they define terms such as literacy or
technology and how that affects their instruction. Boling called for a more critical discussion and analysis of how issues of literacy instruction are constructed in teacher education programs and not to take elements such as technology for granted, as teachers’ and students’ expectations might be more conflicted than initially thought. Roni Draper (2002) argued that future research in teacher education “must be willing to take a critical look at their methods and messages to determine how they are contributing to the current practices of secondary teachers” (p. 381). Along similar critical lines, Mallette and colleagues (2000) called for research that allows preservice teachers to interrogate whether the knowledge they acquired while in teacher education “is only temporary and related to specific methods courses” (p. 611). After the discussion of their surveys, Nathanson and colleagues (2008) raised questions about the literacy habits they intended to learn about. Their questions extended to what happened once teachers joined the school system and how we can better support their personal literacies. Newell and colleagues (2009) suggested a closer examination of how teacher education programs can better provide prospective teachers with tools to integrate elements of teaching usually left out to field experiences. However, the data sources did not really include a discussion from the perspective of the instructors, so this implication is still more of an afterthought than a data-driven point. Norman and Spencer (2005) also called for more research that confronts what they learned in the methods courses with the possible ways to implement those ideas in the classrooms. Finally, Shaw and colleagues (2008) made it clear that they intended “to follow this group of preservice teachers longitudinally during student teaching and then again after initial teaching experiences” (p. 239). However, this review has not found any subsequent studies that stem
from this work in any journal as of yet and I am at the present time awaiting for a reply from
the authors about the existence of subsequent publications.

Discussion: How This Review Informed My Research

The past 15 years have provided an extensive picture of literacy practices within the
English Education context. This section will summarize the lessons we have learned
regarding literacy practices. I will also summarize the main issues that we need to learn and
will address those that this study responded to. I will also include some ideas about
methodological considerations, what ideas I have drawn from the previous studies and
where this study will distance itself from the others.

One thing we have learned is that there is an expanded view on literacy beliefs and
practices. Even though some practices in the present context may be constraining, there are
more systemic attempts to explore alternative views of literacy that reflect some of the
changes in technology and lifestyle that we have experienced over the past 15 years. English
Educators in preservice programs are pushing boundaries in some schools and helping their
students adapt to the new times. However, there is still a tendency to reduce literacy to
“reading,” as Norman and Spencer (2005) posited. There are a number of studies that
advertised being literacy studies in their titles. They introduce the idea of literacy at the
beginning of their articles, but their discussion centered on reading practices. Even though
reading is an integral part of literacy practices, the conceptual proposition that literacy is
just reading is too simplistic and misleading. In one case (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009), I also
found that authors chose to study literacy specialists, but reduced their discussion to the
participants’ engagement with writing. This is just as misleading as the articles that shift from literacy to reading. These reductionist views, especially when they focus on reading and ignore writing or oral communication, may also provide the illusion that there is such a thing as a hierarchy of practices. This reductionist view is one that some literacy researchers have challenged in these past 15 years but remains unrecognized in some of the literature.

One major shortcoming I found in several studies was the lack of a conceptual framework that incorporates the major theories that have influenced literacy in recent times. Statements of literacy such as Moje’s (1996) definition of literacy from a social perspective are noticeably absent. Even when the studies are not constructed around the concept of “literacy” I found that the authors never discussed their own positions. Newell and colleagues (2009), for instance, talked about literature, but there was never a statement where the authors clarified what ideas of literature either they or the teacher education program favored. Efforts to position and question the theories, such as Boling’s (2008) reflection on how instructors use ideas like “new literacies” in their regular instruction are still missing in the literature. Conceptual efforts like those in the studies by Roni Draper (2002), who offered a very clear definition of terms and a solid rationale for her reduction of literacy to reading and writing within textbooks, Rowsell and colleagues (2008), who offered a very extended and informative view of Multiliteracies, Sheridan-Thomas (2007), and how she constructed the notion of multiple literacies within a preservice teacher education context, or Smagorinsky and colleagues (2006), who centered their analysis on a very elaborate construction of what functional literacy meant, seemed to be the exception, rather than the rule in most studies.
Most studies talked about literacy but never elaborated on the term. Literacy in the majority of the studies would fit what Dressman (2007) described as "theory as a foundational platform" (p. 345). In these studies, I argue, literacy was not a broad concept nor was it "the central consideration in the design, analysis, or report of findings and implications of the article" (p. 345). I still think that this remains a major shortcoming in literacy and English teacher education studies. The notion of a permeable literacy continuum, which defied binary oppositions, provides a move in what I believe to be the right direction. By using all the theories in concert, while being aware of their major conceptual differences as pointed out in Chapter One, I was able to consider the participants' statements with a broader frame. I was able to recognize what ideas about literacy really drive their theoretical and practical stances regarding literacy practices.

One element of research where I believe more inquiry is still required is on the side of English courses. Flodden and Meniketti (2005) had already questioned in their review of the research for the AERA Panel that studies based on the side of Arts & Sciences were scarce. This review reaffirms with those assertions. Very few studies looked at what faculty do and say regarding literacy practices. Those few that did so (Dilworth & McCracken, 1997; Marshall & Smith, 1997) resorted to surveys and analysis of syllabi as their only data source. There were no interviews with these instructors or any kind of more personal contact with them to learn about their practices. I did not find any courses where English instructors observed their own classes where preservice teachers were enrolled. Although I will acknowledge that my review may have missed this possibility, I still believe that my search of
articles in peer-reviewed journals tried to be as thorough as possible and included major journals in the field.

I still leave it as a challenge for the subsequent stages of this dissertation to conduct another search to verify these initial assertions. However, at the present time, I stand by my belief that there is a dearth of studies where English or literature instructors working with preservice teachers are actively involved as participants. The fact that I intend to include instructors from the English department at the University of the Midwest (pseudonym) as participants is a starting point for more personalized approaches to use research to learn more about what they are doing and how they approach their mentoring of future English teachers.

Regarding the messages that instructors are sending to their students, there were some findings that several studies seemed to agree on. First of all, there is such a thing as instructional impact. Even though some longitudinal studies with English teachers\(^6\) (Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008; Grossman, et al, 2000; Newell, Gingrich, & Johnson, 2001) have already noticed impact of concepts learned while preservice teachers, some of the studies in this review actually showed evidence that ideas about literacy are effecting change in the preservice teachers. I question, however, how only two studies I reviewed for this chapter (Pomerantz & Pierce, 2004; Shaw, et al, 2007) stated the intention to follow their participants beyond student teaching. It is important that studies acknowledge this need for more follow-up beyond the college years to see what happens to that impact that some

\(^6\) I believe that those three studies are important in the larger body of research as salient examples of much-needed longitudinal work (Clift & Brady, 2005). I refrained from including the studies by Grossman et al (2000) and Newell et al (2001) based on the inclusion on my MA Thesis, as I stated earlier in the chapter. In the case of the Clift et al (2008) study, although I recognize the tremendous influence in how I articulated the methodology for this project, I feel I cannot detach myself enough from the data or the authors to write a fair review and therefore I have chosen instead not to add it to this chapter.
authors reported as successes once students enter schools and have to face the realities of their classrooms. I believe that my choice to interview participants who left the program with a considerable time difference between them provided valuable insights to see what happens to those ideas both short- and long-term.

In the previous chapter I argued that we needed more multivocal studies, as some recent reviews of the research have also requested (e.g. Clift & Brady, 2005). This review only confirms that initial assertion. There was no study that actually used as many groups of participants as I intend to use. I have a firm belief that in order to learn about what we can do better for our students, we need to listen to the stories of all parties involved in the process of educating and becoming English teachers. Bringing these stories together will provide a broader narrative of impact and ideas on literacy. My findings also discovered that very few studies, and none that made it to this review, have looked at what instructors have lived and done as they develop their careers as literacy educators. We need to learn more about how the changes in life and technology have morphed their literacy practices, how personal and professional (or academic) literacy practices are morphing or becoming one and the same. Some studies explored personal issues, but again through large surveys and without tangible evidence of what those practices look like in reality. I expect my study to provide more insights as I collect examples of their writing and reading and as I learn about their stories through my interviews.

**Methodological considerations.** All of these studies provided valuable insights about the decisions for data collection and analysis that will guide my study. Although that is the subject of the next chapter, I will make a few references about what I learned here. First,
the studies reaffirmed the need to collect as much written information from the participants as possible. The collection of documents provided written evidence that can be contrasted with interviews. Collecting textbooks, syllabi, lesson plans, old methods course assignments, etc. was one of the priority of data collection for my study. However, I had a few limitations in that regard (see Chapter Five for a detailed account). I also drew plenty of inspiration from the studies (as well as corresponding with some of the authors) for the interview protocols I crafted for all my interviews. Unlike some of the studies that included syllabi, as I stated earlier in the chapter, I intend to collect both old and recent syllabi as more evidence of evolution of the courses and changes in ideas about literacy.
Chapter Three

A Qualitative Study of Literacy Beliefs and Practices: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the research paradigm that guided my work, the data sources I collected, and the different procedures I have used for the organization and analysis of these data. I also will introduce the participants and the sites that made part of this study.

In order to offer a chance for generalizability and replicability (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) of this study, whether by other researchers or in other contexts (including outside of the United States), I will present detailed information about the decisions and procedures that guided every stage of this project, including all information about the safeguards for human subjects protection.

Situating the Study: Research Questions and Research Paradigm

In Chapter One, I introduced the two main research questions that guided my study. Although the next chapter will describe my findings as they pertain to these two questions, the process of answering the questions required the design of a framework for analysis. Part of creating the framework included writing a series of subquestions. To create the subquestions I drew inspiration from the study that Boyd and colleagues (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Michelli, and Wyckoff, 2006) conducted about New York City schools. The process of streamlining these questions was essential during the different stages of data collection and analysis. The first set of subquestions (introduced in June 2009, as part of my Preliminary Examination proposal) served as a tool to refine the first interview protocol. As I
prepared the second and third interview protocols, I refined the research questions and the subquestions I had initially proposed. The questions that I introduce in this chapter are the result of the final revision and refinement once I had finished my data collection. The revision of these questions took place at the beginning of January 2010, while I transcribed the interviews. This ultimate set of questions was then the basis of the data analysis and interpretation that I conducted for this study. These questions also were helpful in the presentation of the narratives in Chapter Four. What follows below are the research questions and the subquestions I used to support them.

Research question 1. How have the literacy beliefs and practices of instructors and graduates from a Secondary English Teacher Education program evolved in the past 15 years?

- What are the core beliefs and practices that these instructors and teachers share?
- How do these beliefs and practices reflect the changes instructors and teachers have recently experienced?

Research question 2. How have the messages about literacy beliefs and practices changed within the context of a Secondary English Education program within the last 15 years?

- What do instructors in English and Methods Courses say in terms of literacy beliefs and practices?
- How have instructors in English and Methods Courses responded to the changes in literacy beliefs, practices, and policy?
- How have the graduating students received the messages about literacy beliefs and practices coming from English and Methods Course classes and instructors?
• What is the role of the program in terms of the literacy beliefs and practices that instructors and graduating teachers have discussed and exchanged in English and Methods courses?

• What are some issues regarding literacy beliefs and practices that the Secondary English Teacher education program needs to address to improve teacher preparation?

Research paradigm. I have designed this study and its findings within a qualitative research paradigm (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Merriam, 1998). I believe choosing qualitative research as the paradigm was the proper choice. Issues of literacy beliefs and practices are complex in nature and relying on surveys or evaluations does not provide room for depth. Since I am interested in the participants’ stories to learn as much as I can from them, focusing on each story and the lessons was essential. Only qualitative research, which aims to pick up the depth of what every participant shares with the researcher, would help me achieve that goal. In addition, I did not arrive at this stage with a preconceived expectation of possible answers nor was I trying to prove a hypothesis. Again, I was interested in the lessons I could learn from twelve very interesting individuals. The attention to the participants and the value one gives to their stories and their answers was another factor that helped me choose a qualitative paradigm over any other possible option.

How this study responded to the characteristics of qualitative research. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) explained that in a qualitative research paradigm,

The qualitative researcher’s goal is to better understand human behavior and experience. They seek to grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are. They use empirical observation because it is with concrete incidents of human behavior that investigators can think more clearly and deeply about the human condition. (p. 43)
I believe that my procedures for data collection and analysis align with principles that the literature has characterized as those of a qualitative study. I relied on descriptive data, including participants’ quotations and reports on narrative form (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I was completely in charge of every stage of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). Even though I used software for the purposes of data analysis and interpretation, I made all the final decisions informing the findings (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I was sensitive to my participants’ input, concerns, and thoughts (Creswell, 2003), both in terms of schedule and the use of data sources. In terms of the schedule, I negotiated my interview schedules with all participants in order to fit their time constraints (Merriam, 1998). I interviewed the teachers after hours or weekends in order not to inconvenience them with meetings during school hours. In the case of the instructors, I always ensured that I would keep the interviews within the time allotted. I also negotiated with participants about the places to meet. I met the participants who were not near the University of the Midwest campus either at their homes or in venues located near their residences. Finally, this study is both interpretive in nature (Creswell, 2003) and concerned about meaning. The interviews and documents offered the chance to learn how “different people make sense of their lives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.7), in this case, multi-faceted literacy practices from a historical perspective in the context of preservice English teacher education.

The Participants

I selected a sample of 12 participants for this study. Selection was not random (Creswell, 2003), but followed four initial criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1984; Maykut &
Morehouse, 1994): (a) Instructors who had taught methods courses at the College of Education at any time within the past 15 years; (b) Instructors who had taught any of the required English courses for Secondary English Education majors within the last 15 years; (c) Practicing teachers who had graduated from the University of the Midwest by 2002; and (d) Practicing teachers who had graduated from the University of the Midwest after 2002. Due to issues of access to participants, I decided during the recruitment process to refine these search criteria. In the case of teachers, I focused first on participants who graduated either in 2002 or 2009. In the case of instructors, I narrowed my search to instructors who were still affiliated with the University of the Midwest in some capacity and, in one case, a former instructor who was still residing near the University. Due to a conflict of interest, I did not contact two instructors, although their input and knowledge has been instrumental to the completion of my research.

**Recruitment procedures.** Although I established direct contact (Seidman, 2006) with all participants but one, the approach to contacting them was very different for each group of participants. I contacted the novice teachers directly, based on contact information I still had about them from the time they were my students at the University (I was the instructor in the course MCR05, Content Area Literacy\(^7\) in the academic year 2007-2008, when they were in their junior year). I contacted some of the experienced teachers with whom I had already worked on a previous study (Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008). Within the first month of the study, another experienced teacher contacted me regarding participation.

\(^7\) To maintain anonymity, I have assigned all courses an alphanumeric code for a pseudonym. Later in the chapter, I will explain in more detail what the code stands for.
In the case of the instructors at the University of the Midwest, I contacted instructors who had taught any of the four core methods courses\(^8\) directly, based on information I possessed about their past and previous experiences teaching methods courses. In order to find English instructors, on the other hand, I had to rely on a thorough search using the English department website and course information available on the University of the Midwest website. I first contacted instructors that had taught any of the required courses for English majors pursuing the Secondary Education minor within the last two academic years (2009-2010 and 2008-2009). After the lack of responses, I expanded the search to cover the time span between 2005 and 2008. The expanded search actually produced more results and I had enough positive responses to begin my study. In fact, one English instructor sent a positive response, but it arrived several weeks after my data collection had already started and I already had my three English instructors.

Once I had begun data collection, I had to make changes to the initial pool of participants. One participant withdrew and I chose not to interview three more due to conflicts in schedule or job situation. The table below describes the total number of participants I contacted, along with the response I received, or lack thereof in some cases.

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\(^8\) See section, "Components of teacher education minor" for a detailed description of said courses.
Table 1

*Contacted Participants and Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Contacted</th>
<th>Positive Response</th>
<th>Negative Response</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods Course Instructors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Instructors</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year Teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of one experienced teacher, who responded to a call for participants forwarded through the University of the Midwest’s IRB office, I sent e-mail messages to every participant for initial contact. All messages had as subject, “First Contact as Possible Research Participant,” with a scripted, IRB-approved message. Scripts had slight variations according to each group of participants. Once I received positive replies, I followed up with another message to schedule the first interview. In the case of the instructors, I delivered copies of the consent letters personally to their departmental mailboxes. In the case of the teachers, I sent them an electronic copy of the consent letter via e-mail. However, I took hard copies of the letter to the first interview meeting, to make sure I had their signatures before interviewing.

**Protecting their identities: Assigning pseudonyms and masking information.**

Protecting participants’ identities must be a priority of any researcher (Seidman, 2006), whether or not they are classified as “high risk”. In order to protect my participants, I first

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9 See Appendix B for samples of the e-mail message scripts.
10 See Appendix C for samples of the consent letters.
assigned all of them a pseudonym. To minimize gender bias, all pseudonyms were gender-neutral. I conducted a Google™ search for “gender neutral names.” I picked all names from three different websites (http://bit.ly/bbMQpa, http://bit.ly/amgKf9, and http://bit.ly/9zzB7Q). I chose the pseudonyms in alphabetical order and I assigned each of them to every participant in order of response. I assigned a pseudonym beginning with the letter “A” (Armani) to the first participant who agreed to participate, the “B” pseudonym (Bailey) to the second participant who responded affirmatively, and so forth. In those cases where I had to change participants, I gave the new participant a pseudonym with the same letter. So, when I replaced two of the teachers, the pseudonyms went from “Devin” to “Dylan” (experienced teacher) and from “Lee” to “Logan” (first-year teachers). I had to make an exception in the case of one participant whose real first name initial coincided with the assigned letter pseudonym. In this case, I gave that participant a pseudonym beginning with “M.” I believe that this systematic procedure for assigning names helped minimize any possible sense of hierarchy in the assignation of names. Regardless of age, rank, gender, etc., I consider all opinions as equally important, necessary, and useful to construct my arguments within the findings.

I also codified the university courses, I used an alphanumeric code to name each course composed of the letters En (for English courses) or MC (for methods courses) the initial letter of each participants’ pseudonym, and 01 or 02 for each of the two courses for which the participants shared syllabi. So, for instance, I labeled Armani’s two methods courses as MCA01 and MCA02 respectively, Guadalupe’s English courses as EnG01 and EnG02, and so forth.
In the case of names of schools, cities, universities, or people, I only assigned pseudonyms to the three main cities where the research took place, as well as The University of the Midwest. In all other cases, I replaced the names with generic words (e.g. “[School]” or “[Instructor]” while transcribing. To protect the participants, I deleted any information that might compromise their identity from syllabi, lesson plans, etc. In addition, during the descriptions and the presentation of my findings, I did not make references to gender and ethnicity. In the case of the instructors, and since this became irrelevant for data collection, I did not disclose rank within the university.

Introducing the participants. Six participants have been or are still instructors at the University of the Midwest. The other six graduated from the University’s Secondary English Education program. In this section, I will present some background highlights from both the instructors and the teachers. I based these summaries on ideas drawn from the interviews. In addition, I asked a “Question Zero” to all instructors and the most experienced teacher to learn about their professional experiences. In the case of all teachers, they filled out a “Background Information Sheet” I sent them via e-mail.

The instructors. I worked with six instructors during the course of this research project. These instructors were exposed to a wide variety of backgrounds and educational experiences prior to becoming instructors at the University of the Midwest. All but two participants (Guadalupe and Kennedy) reported prior teaching experiences in middle or high schools across the country. These teaching experiences were all before they started their graduate studies. Four participants (Armani, Bailey, Harley, and Morgan) are still involved with school teachers as researchers, mentors, or trainers. Three instructors (Bailey,
Guadalupe, and Kennedy) reported teaching experience abroad at some point in their careers, which in all cases included involvement with second language learners. All participants reported having advanced degrees in either Education or English. The majority of participants pursued their degrees at large public research universities across the United States. Overall teaching experience ranges between 10 and 30 years for all participants.

In their descriptions of background, most participants described themselves in terms of professional status, geographical location, and experiences working with students. One participant’s responses made direct references to gender and ethnicity. Another participant made references to being a parent and how that influenced some views about teaching and education. All participants, however, were very explicit about recognizing the different forms of diversity that teachers have to face in their classrooms on a daily basis. Within this recognition, special references included race (Morgan) and language (Armani, Bailey, and Kennedy).

**The teachers.** Six teachers who graduated from the University of the Midwest between 1998 and 2009 made part of the participant pool for this study. Three participants are first-year teachers, two graduated in the same cohort in 2002, and one more graduated in 1998. Two participants (Dylan and Logan) only reported high school experience, whereas another (Indigo) only reported middle school experience. The other three reported experiences at middle and high schools, including student teaching. None of the participants taught at the same school where they did their student teaching. Only one of the experienced teachers (Indigo) has remained at the same school since graduation. One of the experienced teachers (Dylan) reported leaving teaching to work at an education-related
company for a few years. Two teachers (Francis and Jaden) are currently involved in extracurricular activities within their schools. All three experienced teachers reported leadership and mentoring duties as part of their past and present work descriptions. Two experienced teachers already hold a master’s degree and a third is pursuing one. The first-year teachers did not make any explicit references about returning to graduate school in the foreseeable future.

The participants’ descriptions of background do not differ substantially from those of the instructors. None of the participants framed ideas in terms of their own gender or ethnicity. Age was a non-factor, with one exception. Unlike the instructors, geographical location was not relevant. Only one participant described coming from a small town. Some participants did, however, make reference to their educational experiences as part of said background. Most participants reported having taken honors or Advanced Placement classes in high school.

The charts below summarize some of the basic background information for each participant.
Table 2

*The Instructors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Time at the University of the Midwest</th>
<th>Prior Teaching Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armani</td>
<td>Methods Courses</td>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Methods Courses</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>Middle School, Abroad, University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>College, University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harley</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>High School, University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>Abroad, College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>Methods Courses</td>
<td>5 – 10 years</td>
<td>Middle School, High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

**The Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Advanced Degree(s) (whether in progress or obtained)</th>
<th>Current Placement and Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dylan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High School, Literacy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emery</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle School, Literacy Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaden</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Two Contexts: University and Schools**

Although I did not observe the participants in the workplaces, the process of data collection took into account that the literacy beliefs and practices that they all discussed do not happen in a vacuum. They are all part of an academic system comprised of the university where they either served as instructors or attended as prospective teachers and the different school placements where the teachers have constructed their practice. Disregarding the existence of these contexts would ignore the realities that all these participants shared through their interviews and the documents I collected. I will first describe the characteristics of the Secondary English Teacher Education program and then I will
introduce some information about the different schools where the teachers have worked throughout their careers.

**The Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of the Midwest.** As a space of convergence, the University of the Midwest, a large public university, is the place where our participants shared their experiences from their vantage points of instructors or prospective teachers. The structure of the teacher education program at this University is rather different from those at other institutions. Instead of centralizing all of their programs within the college of education, the University of the Midwest has one central teacher education office. This office oversees nine colleges that prepare preservice teacher candidates from a wide range of programs, including agricultural education, music, and physical education, among others (Council of Teacher Education Website, 2008). In the case of the preparation of English teachers, both the College of Education and the English Department share the duties of teacher preparation and certification. The current structure of the program, including course requirements, clinical experience, and the like, is the result of a restructuring process that took place in 1998 (Clift, Brady, & Mora, 2008; Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008; Stegemoller et al., 2004; Willis, 2000).

**Components of English major.** Although the English major emphasizes American, British, and Western literature (Clift, Brady, & Mora, 2008), students also need to take courses on multi-cultural literature, critical approaches to literature, film studies, or feminist literature as options to complement their preparation (Department of English, 2008). In order to obtain the degree in English with the Secondary Teaching option, prospective teachers need to choose four out of seven possible introductory-level courses
(i.e. courses for students in sophomore year) on either English or American literature. They also are supposed to take a compulsory writing class prior to application to the Education minor. In addition to the entry requirements, students need to take at least 8 courses as a graduation requirement, including:

- Another English literature course beyond the entry-level course
- Another American literature course beyond the entry-level course
- A course about Shakespeare
- A course on a major author other than Shakespeare
- A course on interdisciplinary approaches to literature
- An advanced (i.e. upper-class/graduate level) grammar course
- An advanced writing course
- One course specializing in some form of ethnic or women’s literature

Students have options of courses ranging from regular, fixed-content topics to courses that vary according to semester or instructors. Upon review of the check-list of requirements for the program, students have about 28 introductory-level courses and 21 advanced courses to choose from. The choices of introductory-level courses remain fairly constant from semester to semester. A review of offerings for the last four years showed about 20 courses remained available every semester. The choices of advanced courses seem to have a larger variation, with about half of the possible courses available on a semester basis.

**Components of Teacher Education minor.** In addition to the content area requirements, prospective teachers also have to enroll in the Teacher Education Minor as
part of their preparation. Students apply during their sophomore year. Once accepted, they will begin their Education coursework in their junior year, as part of one cohort (Willis, 2000). Entry to the program is highly competitive (Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008). In addition to a high Grade Point Average (for the year 2000, for instance, Clift, Mora, & Brady [2008] reported that the average GPA for the English Education program was slightly above 3.5), students are asked to pass a basic skills test prior to admission (Teacher Education Minor in Secondary Teaching, 2008). The program includes courses in professionalism, psychology, assessment, working with special-needs students, technology, and content area literacy (Teacher Education Minor in Secondary Teaching, 2008). Moreover, students have intensive field experiences during the four semesters (Willis, 2000), ending with their student teaching experience. Students can choose either two seven-week placements in middle and high school or a 14-week high school placement (Stegemoller, et al. 2004; Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008).

Besides the coursework requirements, students enroll in four core methods courses. These four courses place a heavy emphasis on the idea of diversity as an important element to teaching (Willis, 2000, Teacher Education Minor in Secondary Teaching, 2008). The first course, MCX01 introduces the notion of working with diverse students. The second course, MCX02, emphasizes instruction in middle school. The third course, MCX03, emphasizes instruction in high school. The final course, MCX04 is a seminar that students take concurrently with their student teaching placements. These four methods courses require students to “write and reflect on their state of mind” (Willis, 2000, p. 268) as they progress
toward certification. Autobiographical drafts, response papers, and reflecting journals (Willis, 2000) are some of the main assignments that comprise the methods courses.

**Past and Current Teaching Placements**

Learning about the participants’ placements is important because some of their interview answers reflect situations that their schools and districts are going through. Many of these decisions are driven by policies and other factors. Therefore, this background information becomes helpful. What follows is a description of the basic information I gathered about these schools.

**Procedures for collecting information.** The first source of information about the schools was the "Background Information Sheet" I requested all teachers to fill out. Once I had the school information, I performed a search for the Report Cards at the State Board of Education website (website not disclosed to protect participants). I downloaded the report cards for schools and districts as PDF files. I read through all report cards, selecting the information that would be relevant for this description. After reviewing the report cards, I performed a Google™ search for each school’s website. I zeroed in on the information about the English departments, particularly information about the English curricula, the kinds of courses the schools offered, and the emphases of said courses. Then I summarized this information in the narrative that follows below.

**The schools.** The six teachers I worked with have worked in a total of ten schools, comprising six districts. Four of these schools belong to the same district in the same town where the University of the Midwest is located, one district is in a rural area near a mid-size
city, and the other five are in suburban areas around a large metropolitan area. Three schools are middle schools, one is a junior high school, and the other six are high schools. Although two middle schools and two high schools belong to the same district, I do not have information to ascertain whether the middle schools are feeder schools to the high schools.

**Demographics.** In all but one school the majority of the students are White. Three schools reported that about half of the students are White, five schools range between 64 and 70%, and one more school reported that 98% of the students are White. Four schools reported that the second largest student population is African-American students, ranging between 38 and 46%. Three schools reported that Asian students were the second largest student population, between 16 and 21%. Finally, two schools reported that Latina/o students range between 17 and 23% of the total student population. In terms of school size, one school holds fewer than 300 students, four hold between 550 and 700 students, two hold between 1000 and 1500, and the other three hold between 1800 and 2600 students. Class sizes are about 23 students for the middle schools and between 18 and 25 students for the high schools.

**Academic Yearly Progress (AYP).** I have included a brief description of AYP since I have made references to No Child Left Behind in different parts of this study, including specific questions about its impact on instruction. Only the three middle schools reporting making AYP for the year 2009. The junior high school, as well as all of the high schools reported not making AYP. Schools are in varied ranges of AYP; some are in the Early

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11 The Report Card uses the term "Hispanic" instead of "Latina/o." But, for personal and cultural reasons, I only use the latter.
12 See Interview 3 on Appendix A.
Warning stage, whereas others are already on Academic Watch and some have been already for two or three years.

**Teachers and student ratios.** The Report Cards do not offer a demographic breakdown per each school, only for the districts. The six districts report very similar demographics for their teaching staff. Between 80 and, in one district, 100% of the teachers are White, thus the number of minority teachers are small in most districts. Two districts reported that between 50 and 60% of their teachers were female, whereas the other four districts reported between 70 and 90% of teachers are female. Teacher-to-student ratios range between 1:12 (for the smallest district) and 1:18 (for the largest ones).

**The English curricula at the schools.** My search only found nine schools with available websites. In the case of one school, there were reviews of the school and the district, but no actual school-created site for me to review. Two of the high schools, the junior high school, and two middle schools had no actual information about English curricula posted on their websites. One of the middle schools had links to teachers’ websites. However, I chose not to review those teachers' websites to avoid potential privacy issues stemming from IRB.

The remaining four schools offer a fairly large amount of courses from which students can choose. All the high schools have minimal requirements for graduation, but students can choose from several courses each year. Two schools in the same district offer similar courses. The websites listed 25 English courses to choose from, 3 of which were Advanced Placement. Four courses are introductory-level courses, mostly skill-based and emphasizing both reading and writing. Two courses emphasized Rhetoric, there were two
specialized courses in grammar and reading, and two courses emphasized writing. The other courses were devoted mostly to American literature.

One of the suburban high schools had the courses broken down by academic year. The English curriculum offered four freshman and four sophomore courses, which emphasized reading and writing skills. There were three junior courses, two of which emphasized literature; the other was Advanced Placement. Out of the five senior courses, three were literature-based, one emphasized writing, and one was Advanced Placement.

Another suburban school offered 12 English courses and five Reading courses. The English courses featured college preparation reading and writing, literature, speech, drama, and journalism. All the Reading courses, on the other hand, were support courses for students who may not be up to par in their academic courses.

One of the middle schools did offer information about its English curriculum on its website. However, I was unable to read it because the PDF files that were linked did not open. I also found some information about the basic curricular foci on this website. The middle school provides reading and writing instruction in isolation. Writing courses are mostly based on the state standards. The reading courses combine the emphasis on the state standards with “Balanced Literacy,” which they said was what the district endorsed. However, neither this website nor the district’s offers a statement of what they understand by that notion. The lack of statements about what districts and schools mean by “literacy” or “English” as a subject was common to all the schools and district websites I reviewed for this description.
Data Collection

I collected two data sources for this study, in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Mertens, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2006) and a series of written documents from all participants. I used the documents as a source of additional information and triangulation. The following section both justifies my choice of data sources and explains how I proceeded with the overall collection process.

**In-depth interviews.** One of the main concerns in this study is the participants’ history of literacy practices. This information includes “very personal matters, such as an individual’s self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge, or perspective” (Johnson, 2002, p. 104). I also am interested in learning how their practices in multiple contexts affect one another. Therefore, hearing what they have to say becomes the key element for this research. The main source of data for this study will be a series of in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Johnson, 2002; Kvale, 2007; Mertens, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) with all participants. Interviews, as Reinharz (1992) explained, “Offer researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (p. 19).

**Interview procedures.** I conducted three interviews with each participant, for a total of 36 interviews. I conducted the interviews at designated locations in three cities. I interviewed all six instructors in their offices at the University of the Midwest campus and the three local teachers in an isolated study area at the local public library. I met two of the participants at a coffee shop in a metropolitan area a few hours away from the University of
the Midwest. I met one more participant at her residence in a mid-size city located two hours away from the University of the Midwest campus. Given the diversity in locations and schedules, I made specific arrangements according to participants. In the case of the six instructors and one of the teachers, we conducted one interview at a time. Time between each interview ranged between one week and a month, depending on the participants’ academic and personal schedules. I met four of the teachers twice. In one of the meetings, we agreed to conduct two interviews in one single session. In one of the cases, we conducted all three interviews in one single day. I met the local teachers during afternoons or evenings and the teachers working away from campus on Saturdays or Sundays. Since this study did not involve observations, I believed that meeting after hours was much less of an inconvenience for these teachers.

For all three interview protocols13, I included main questions (Kvale, 2007), follow-up questions, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The first round of interviews followed a predetermined protocol. I initially created one draft of a first interview, which I submitted as part of my IRB review process and for my Preliminary Examination. I revised that protocol using feedback from my dissertation committee. I submitted the second draft to my dissertation director for more feedback. I consolidated those comments to create the final version of the first interview protocol. I reviewed the second and third interview protocols after conducting each round of interviews. I used the transcripts and my written and recorded notes to avoid repeating questions and to hone in on the follow-up questions and probes.

13 See Appendix A for samples of all interview protocols.
Although I had initially thought that all interviews would not last over one hour, in the case of two participants, the interviews went past that amount of time. However, the participants never requested stopping the interviews when they went past 60 minutes. I conducted all interviews between September and December 2009\textsuperscript{14}.

**Documents.** In order to get a larger glimpse of the participants’ literacy practices, I also collected a series of documents. Mertens (1992) explained, “documents and records give the researcher access to information that would otherwise be unattainable” (p. 324). I used the documents “in connection with, or in support of, the interviews...” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133). However, due to the constraints of the data collection process, the documents became more helpful for data analysis. The following lines describe the documents I ultimately collected.

**Teaching documents.** The first group of documents comprised information about all participants’ coursework. I asked the University of the Midwest faculty to share syllabi from two courses. In the case of the methods courses, I collected syllabi from the first two courses in the Education sequence. In the case of English faculty, I asked two of them to share syllabi with me via e-mail. The third participant gave me access to information available online. I chose the two courses said instructor had taught most often while at the University. I also collected descriptions of assignments for the courses each participant chose. These documents were particularly useful to complement questions from the second interview protocol.

I also asked the program graduates to share different lesson plans they had designed over the years.

\textsuperscript{14} See Appendix D for the detailed timetable of all 36 interviews
**Coursework documents.** I asked the graduates to share selected assignments from the preservice program and the English major. I chose the autobiographical drafts they wrote during their first methods course and the reading response papers they had to write in their third semester in the program. I also reviewed journal entries that these participants wrote while student teaching.

**Online documents.** One of the questions from my interview protocols inquired about personal literacy practices. To complement those interviews, I also asked participants to share, when available, personal writing available online. Some participants had writings posted on their personal blogs. Participants provided me with the URL for every website. For confidentiality purposes, I will not make any reference to the actual URL. I also want to point out that I did not read any information on those websites that was not the participants’ authorship. That included reader comments, other postings on the same blog, or co-authored entries.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The process of data analysis and interpretation for this study was not a process that took a few days of my time as a precursor of writing the findings. It was an ongoing and iterative process. It began right at the moment when I started collecting data (Mahiri & Godley, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 206). Collecting the data, writing interpretive notes, and recording preliminary thoughts that would become findings were concurrent processes. This section describes how I went about analyzing all my data. I will explain how I
transcribed my data\textsuperscript{15}, how I took notes and how I used them throughout the process, and how I analyzed my data after the collection process.

**Transcribing the interviews.** I used software to transcribe my interviews. After reviewing different programs, I finally chose Express Scribe\textsuperscript{TM} (http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/), a freeware software application, as my choice for transcription. Even though the program claimed to have speech-to-text capabilities, the initial attempts to use it were rather unsuccessful. Therefore, I transcribed the interviews myself. This allowed me to minimize bias (Kvale, 2007), as well as to use the transcription process as part of the interpretation process. I transcribed the interviews verbatim (Hamel, 2003; Poland, 2002). Although I first hesitated whether or not to include pauses and “stalling words” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), Finally, I did not transcribe them, but I made sure throughout the transcription not to misquote the participants. I listened to the excerpts multiple times and I made notes on the printed transcripts during my analysis of segments that I should listen to again for accuracy.

During some of the interviews, I also took brief notes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I used those notes to complement the transcription process. After the interviews, I recorded my thoughts about the interview (Hamel, 2003). In some cases, I voice-recorded my thoughts right after the interview, in others, I took notes on a notepad or in a working Google\textsuperscript{TM} document I kept throughout the interviews. I saved all the recordings in a folder I called “Post-Interview Musings.” In addition to interpretive notes after the interview, I also took interpretive notes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) during the transcription. I used these notes in the process of refining my interview protocols and the first notes about preliminary findings.

\textsuperscript{15} See Appendix E for a description of how I organized and stored all my data.
**Defining categories for analysis.** The process of profiling the categories for analysis actually preceded the data analysis. I created a first set of categories in May 2009, which I included in the research proposal for my Preliminary Examination. I revised the categories four times while working this study. I did the first revision in the summer of 2009, while I refined the interview protocols. The second revision took place in October 2009, when I had reached the mid-point of data collection. I refine the categories once again in December 2009, after I had completed the data collection process. I revised the categories for the last time in January 2010. At that point, I had most of my interviews transcribed and had all the other data in place for analysis. I triangulated the categories with my theoretical framework, the data sources themselves, and the research questions. The process of refining the categories also helped refine the research questions. Below I introduce the final categories that I used for my analysis.

**Literacy beliefs.** This category includes any participant statements, whether in the interviews or the documents, that discussed what literacy is for them, how it should be taught, its importance or relevance, etc. I also included here statements about how participants define ideas such as English as a subject, English education, or literature, since they all have implications for what participants think constitute effective ways to teach literacy. Ideas about the goals and agendas for literacy, issues of policy, and the role of teachers also are part of this category.

**Literacy practices.** This category includes participant statements, whether in interviews, lesson plans, syllabi, or blogs, about what they do as part of literacy instruction in their classrooms. In the case of teachers, I also made references to statements about what
their schools and districts suggest or enforce as required policies. Statements included ideas about what participants consider “best” practices. I focused on the following elements as part of this category:

- Reading practices
- Writing practices
- Oral communication
- Use of technology to support literacy practices
- Kinds of literature used in classrooms

**Evolution of beliefs and practices.** This category includes all participant statements that reflect changes they have noticed in any of the following (a) their own views about literacy, (b) their own practices and instructional approaches to literacy, (c) practices endorsed by schools and districts, (d) changes within the structure of the Secondary English Teacher Education program, (e) students’ literacy practices, (f) factors that have influenced these changes, and (g) elements that have remained unchanged or stagnant.

**Messages about literacy.** This category includes participant statements and ideas stated in the Instructors’ syllabi that describe the ideas about literacy practices stemming from both English and Methods courses. I also looked for ideas from the Teachers that showed what they heard and learned from the courses they took while in the program. Three particular issues make this category:

*Nature of messages.* I described what instructors are saying in their statements, assignments, and syllabi.
Issues of congruence. I described the congruence (or lack thereof) across different programs, departments, and faculty. Analysis included what instructors said and what teachers said they picked up from their courses.

Issues of relevance. I explored how convergent the messages from the instructors and their courses are with the present context of literacy teaching within the school system. I included participant statements about the feasibility of implementing ideas teachers learned in the program, the conflicting demands of schools, and issues of testing and current legislation among others.

Critiques and recommendations. I took note of any participant statements that critiqued or highlighted shortcomings in the structure of the program or how the University of the Midwest approached the Secondary English Teacher Education program. I also asked for recommendations and hypothetical scenarios for the courses. Other comments included teachers’ concerns about what the English Education program has done; participants’ questions and concerns about the role of the schools and districts regarding literacy; and comments about limitations and shortcomings in preparation and implementation.

Analyzing the data. The process of analysis was in some cases concurrent with the data collection. Although most of the analysis did take place after I collected all the data, this final analysis relied upon the previous steps. I will now describe steps I used in the analysis and interpretation processes.

Mapping out the data. While I was collecting my data, I returned to the research questions and subquestions to check whether I was collecting data that would really reflect my questions. I created charts (Miles & Huberman, 1994) where I mapped the interviews
and documents to see how they helped answer select questions. Once I finished the chart, I revised the research questions and refined the wording where necessary. I mapped out the questions twice during the data collection process: once after I had completed the first two rounds of interviews and again after I had collected all my data. This process was the basis for the next step of data analysis, where I reduced the data to charts.

**Reducing the data to charts.** The next step of data analysis consisted of creating interview protocol charts for individual and cross-case analysis. Relying on related data analysis procedures I had used in previous research (Clift, Mora, & Brady, 2008), I created charts for each of the interview questions. I included the answers every participant gave to every interview question verbatim. I charted the questions grouping participants as methods course instructors, English instructors, experienced teachers, and novice teachers. I also had the participants separated as Instructors and Teachers. Although I charted every question from the interview protocols, I did not use all the questions to write my findings for this study (I will revisit this issue in Chapter Five).

**Reading the data.** While I completed the charts, I also went back to reviewing the raw data for each participant. I either read the transcripts or listened to the interviews for every participant. I went over all three interviews for each participant first. Then I read the documents for each participant. Throughout this process I took notes. Some were marginal notes on the transcripts; I wrote other notes in my data analysis journal. Once I read the raw data sets, I read the data on the charts. I looked at every interview question first across the four participant groups, then across instructors and teachers, and finally across all 12 participants. I continued taking notes for themes and ideas that I could use for the
narratives. I also highlighted compelling quotes I could use for the narratives. Once I had completed all the readings, I used these data to write the first set of narratives. I also revisited all the interpretive notes that I had recorded during data collection. I chose which were most relevant and incorporated them into the analysis process.

**Writing the narratives.** Once I had selected the quotes and completed reading the charts, I used all my notes and blurbs from my journals and the different Word documents I wrote while analyzing the data to write the narratives. The narratives rely on the data, but in some cases I did not make direct quotes from those data. In particular, I made references to syllabi but I did not quote directly from them. Some of my participants had concerns about copyright issues regarding how much of the syllabi I would use. Even though I also covered that through member-checks, I kept it in mind as I wrote. I wrote the narratives using the main research questions as the basis, since the mapping out I described before showed that many of the data sources overlapped with the subquestions. I also revisited the theoretical framework as I wrote the narratives. The review of the theoretical framework for these narratives also was useful as I was drafting ideas for the discussion in Chapter Five.

**Accuracy and credibility.** Part of the research process includes ensuring one’s findings really reflect what the participants meant to say when they were interviewed. However, I had to be wary of not letting my own biases affect how I was representing my participants. Here are some of the steps I took in order to check for accuracy and credibility within this study.

**Revising the quotes.** Before I wrote the final version of the narratives, I always returned to the original data sources. I listened to the interviews one more time to check
whether I had transcribed the statements correctly. I made corrections when necessary. In the few occasions when there were unintelligible statements, I did not include a verbatim quote but a paraphrase. This way, I am still using the participants’ comments but I avoid misquoting their actual words. I also re-read the syllabi and blog entries for accuracy. Although I did not make direct quotes to syllabi, it is important to ensure I did not misread any of the ideas the instructors expressed in these documents.

**Member-checking.** I conducted my member-checking process (Merriam, 2008) after the data collection process. I did not send transcripts back to the participants. However, I shared the narratives with them. I disclosed what their pseudonyms were for this study and I took note of any concerns they had. I also took note of any concerns that they may have shared with me during data collection. In no case did any participant ask me to omit a section of a previous interview when I came back to interview them. I reassured participants that all their comments would be respected and if they objected at any point that I not quote a section of the interviews, their requests would be honored. I did this during data collection and when I sent narratives for member-checking.

**Triangulation.** Although the concept of “triangulation” can be rather tricky and some researchers caution against its use, I still believe in the process of qualitative inquiry, its discussion is useful. I used the documents as a source of triangulation against the interviews. In some cases, I used them to corroborate the participants’ statements. In the case of the instructors, this was very important since some of them made direct replies along the lines of, “as you can see in the syllabi…” That statement alone, for instance, was an invitation to triangulate the data. The documents, especially the syllabi and some of the
teacher education assignments I managed to collect, provided a deeper historical perspective
to the stories than the participants shared in their interviews. In some cases, participants
had forgotten about those statements, so having them at hand was a very useful tool. I also
relied on the Report Cards and school websites as a source of triangulation. Going over the
information helped either confirm, disconfirm, or expand on the ideas my participants
shared in the interviews.

**Role of the Researcher**

In the process of qualitative inquiry, researchers operate under the assumption that
participants are not blank slates. They bring their background and experiences to the studies
and those shape what they tell and share as one collects the data. It is also true that as a
researcher, “personal experiences, roles, and interests” (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009, p. 115)
permeate how one approaches the study. This section describes those elements that shape
my views and situatedness as researcher.

In addition to eight years of graduate experience, I was a school teacher for ten years
in my hometown of Medellín, Colombia. In my time as a teacher, I saw how the emergence of
the Internet changed classroom practices. I was involved in curriculum design and multiple
conversations about literacy beliefs and practices. In my time in Colombia, I also had my
first experiences working with preservice teachers, as an adjunct instructor in an English as a
Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teacher education program.

In regards to the Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of
the Midwest, I am both an insider and outsider. I have taught a course on Content Area
Literacy for three years. I have had the chance to learn about the course and modify it accordingly. Some of my data collection and interpretation, in fact, informed some of the decisions I made for the most recent version of the course that I taught. I am also part of an ongoing research team that has looked at issues within teacher education. Although this study is my entirely my own, I cannot disregard the influence of my other work in some of my decisions. However, I still hold an outsider’s perspective in relation to the English Department. I did not know any of those participants, nor did I have extensive knowledge of that portion of the program until I started this study.

In terms of my own literacy practices, I am an active writer and user of multimodal forms of expression. I firmly believe in the use of technology as a tool to support literacy practices and I am a strong believer in the importance of a deep reflection about multicultural literacy practices. As the speaker of five languages (at different levels of fluency and proficiency), I know that my position as a speaker of English as a Second Language and the other languages I speak affects my views and my interpretations about what my participants say and think about their own literacies. I, however, have taken measures to prevent my biases from affecting those interpretations. I have built a strong framework where every element of that permeable continuum contributes to the analysis. I did not favor one literacy paradigm over another, even though I am aware that my own views of literacy align closer to the less traditional paradigms I described in my theoretical framework.
Chapter Four

Learning About Literacy Beliefs and Practices:
Lessons From Twelve Instructors and Teachers

The narratives that comprise this chapter feature a collective description. I relied on the stories and statements of all twelve participants to construct my argument. Instead of creating individual case studies for this chapter, I wrote the narratives in the form of cross-case analyses. Creating the narrative in this style, I would argue, provides a more comprehensive picture of the multiple views that are in constant flux within the Secondary English Teacher Education program. I will, however, let the participants’ voices tell the stories and illustrate the findings. I included throughout the chapter quotes and vignettes from all participants. All statements are equally important and valuable for my analysis. Although there were some participants whose personalities and experiences opened for longer interviews, that did not necessarily mean that their responses were the driving force behind my findings. In presenting a picture composed by twelve amazing individuals and their successes, their frustrations, and hopes for literacy and education, I want to be respectful of their contributions while answering the questions I posed for this study.

Structure. In the same spirit that guides the permeable literacy continuum, I have woven the main research questions, the subquestions, and the categories to structure the narrative. Both the research questions and the categories serve as guidelines. The majority of the narrative will be in the form of composite group summaries, including quotes when necessary. In some cases, I had to deviate from this structure and create narratives that included participants from all groups. To discuss the first research question, I will introduce the groups in the following sequence: novice teachers, veteran teachers, English instructors,
methods course instructors. For the second question, I will first discuss the responses from both English and methods course instructors and then I will talk about the responses from novice and veteran teachers. In order to help the readers follow the narrative, I introduce this summary table where I organized the participants by groups:

Table 4

*Participant Summary Chart*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novice Teachers</th>
<th>Veteran Teachers</th>
<th>English Instructors</th>
<th>Methods Course Instructors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>Dylan</td>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>Armani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaden</td>
<td>Emery</td>
<td>Harley</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan</td>
<td>Indigo</td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Evolution of Literacy Beliefs and Practices From the Participants’ Life Experiences

A discussion about literacy is, as one of the participants explained, “A tough thing to ask, or a tough thing to answer” (Harley, Interview 1, 9/21/09). Life, schooling, and their own backgrounds play different roles in how these four groups of participants described what shaped their literacy beliefs and practices. This section of my findings illustrates this evolution. The statements in this section also attempt to answer my first research question.

**Participants’ descriptions of literacy beliefs and practices.** Each of the participant groups presented their own views of literacy. The novice teachers featured the simplest answers in describing how they viewed literacy. The veteran teachers attributed the changes in their views of literacy to teaching experience and other schooling after graduation. The English instructors expressed their positions on literacy ranging from simplistic views to
more alternative perspectives, particularly in the act of writing. The methods course instructors’ discussions about literacy moved far beyond ideas from basic literacy paradigms. There were four salient ideas that participants shared as they discussed what they thought literacy was and how it was operationalized: (a) literacy is not just reading or writing; (b) literacy is a social activity; (c) we can talk about either literacy or literacies but we must reflect on why we choose either way; and (d) literacy is critical by nature.

*Literacy is more than reading or writing, but it starts at print text.* When the participants talked about literacy, they referred to both its range of skills and some of its limits. The novice teachers, for instance, talked about the process of reading and writing as part of literacy. To them, literacy also meant “being able of using technologies like the computer, the internet, television, all sorts of things that include technology” (Francis, Interview 1, 11/8/09). These teachers also talked about how literacy also included skills related to the acts of reading and writing. Logan explained,

> Literacy is the ability to read and write, the capacity to express your thoughts into words, the ability to understand the information that comes towards you, to analyze and interpret it and to respond to it in a matter that is according to your own beliefs. (Interview 1, 11/7/09)

The veteran teachers defined literacy in a similar way to the novice teachers. Their discussions of literacy talked about reading and writing, engaging with text, and connecting the information to one’s life as a means to question issues in the world (Indigo, Interview 1, 9/22/09). Unlike the novice teachers, they also pointed out that educational experiences, such as graduate coursework, may have a large influence in how one defines what constitutes a valid form of literacy (Dylan, Interview 1, 10/22/09; Emery, Interview 1, 10/24/09). In the case of Dylan and Emery, they both pointed out how their choices of
graduate programs and courses aided in complicating the definition of literacy. They also talked how these graduate programs are influencing both their current considerations of what literacy means and the instructional effects from their dual positions as teachers and literacy coaches.

Two of the English instructors talked about literacy primarily in terms of “competence” (Harley, Interview 1, 9/21/09). They specifically discussed one’s ability (or inability) to read (Guadalupe, Interview 1, 9/28/09; Kennedy, Interview 1, 9/29/09) as an element of literacy. One of the instructors also talked about “illiteracy” as one of many layers of comprehension of texts and the written word.

The methods course instructors talked about how “the written word” (Armani, Interview 1, 9/21/09) is an important element in any discussions about literacy. Bailey, another instructor, also discussed that literacy “excludes things like photographs, it excludes drawings, it excludes the gestures that I’m making as I’m speaking to you right now” (Interview 1, 9/18/09). One of the instructors, as the veteran teachers did, also talked about how education forced individuals to rethink and sometimes complicate their understandings of literacy (Morgan, Interview 1, 12/2/09). The instructors, just like some of the teachers, also talked about the range of processes and skills that comprise literacy, such as critiquing or interpreting, which was also linked to the notion of written word, (Armani, Interview 1, 9/23/09).

**Literacy is a social activity by nature.** There was an overarching consensus among participants that any discussion of literacy also needs to consider the larger social context to which they and their students belong. Novice and veteran teachers alike talked about how,
even if literacy in its simplest form was about decoding words or reading fluency, it also meant “putting [those decoded words] in the context of their own life” (Jaden, Interview 1, 11/22/09). Logan, another novice teacher, also believed literacy required “[being] critical of what you’re presented with and [using] that information to either improve yourself or to improve the site around you or just to impact something” (Interview 1, 11/7/09).

The English instructors first posited that a discussion of literacy is tangential to their own practices (one instructor argued that a discussion of literacy was more likely to happen in education courses than it would in English courses). However, they recognized that literacy practices were socially situated. They argued that the reading and writing demands of the college setting were far different from any others, as well as the expectations for what one can or cannot do with the written word.

In their discussions of literacy, the methods courses defined literacy within that larger social context, aligning with ideas from the teachers and English instructors. Bailey defined literacy as “being able to encode and decode print text within a broader social and cultural context” (Interview 1, 9/18/09). Morgan expanded on Bailey’s idea of “broader social and cultural context, arguing that any discussions about literacy need

To begin to acknowledge the impact of socio-economic status and class and race and culture on the capacity of one to express one’s thoughts... so that you’re not simply teaching students to decode and teacher’s expectations are not that students simply be able to cite and recite literature but one is able to become more critical of the world... (Interview 1, 12/2/09)

We can define literacy as one or several, but we must think carefully why.

Although most of the participants talked about literacy as a singular term, there were at least three participants who questioned whether or not there is (or should be) such a thing
as multiple forms of literacy. None of these three were novice teachers, though. Dylan, one of the veteran teachers, talked about the evolution of this discussion and how technology and other societal factors influenced the pluralization of literacy,

[Literacy] means once again from the basic phonemic awareness and decoding to kind of critical and analytical literacy. Then we throw things like digital in front of it, critical in front of it, as a way of kind of reading the text, reading the world. (Interview 1, 10/22/09)

Guadalupe, one of the English teachers, also discussed that “there’s probably different kinds of social literacies. There’s probably emotional literacy, there’s probably emotional literacy, there’s probably a hundred different kinds of literacies.” However, Guadalupe’s “default” definition of literacy did not really address this issue of pluralization, simply returning to the initial discussion of “can people read, can they not read?” (Interview 1, 9/28/09).

Bailey, one of the methods course instructors, first explained that pluralizing terms had become a more common practice today, adding, “literacy is one of them. So people talk about literacies without really thinking about what that means or why there might be such a thing as multiple literacies. I completely disagree with that point of view” (Interview 1, 9/18/09).

**Literacy must lead to critical thinking.** One of the goals of literacy instruction, all participants agreed, had to be critical thinking. Guadalupe’s retort, “As opposed to what?” (Interview 3, 12/7/09) may very well summarize the positions all participant groups held about literacy and critical thinking. Every participant group, however, approached the discussion from different perspectives.
The novice teachers had a progressive approach to incorporating elements of critical thinking. They explained how they usually began their work on comprehension at a more literal level and they would gradually incorporate higher-order thinking skills to their different activities. The veteran teachers, on the other hand, did not talk about critical thinking within a layered approach like that of the novice teachers. They all talked about how elements of significance and “metacognition” (Dylan, Interview 3, 12/4/09) were staples of their classroom practice and how everything they did went beyond literal comprehension.

The English instructors described how the ultimate goal of all their activities was to be critical, whether their field was literary analysis (Guadalupe), writing studies (Harley), or media (Kennedy). All instructors argued everything they did in English was conducive to critical thinking. They particularly emphasized contrasting voices in their choices of texts.

The methods course instructors also agreed that “using literacy for anything but critical thinking” (Bailey, Interview 3, 12/15/09) was something they could not fathom. Methods courses included ideas like questioning readings and authors and thinking about larger issues in society reflected in the readings as examples of activities aimed at critical thinking. Bailey explained,

The whole purpose of whatever I have students do in the classroom and whatever I advocate for them to do with their students is about interpreting and making sense of a text within a full context, which would include understanding the political and the social and the cultural significance of whatever it is they’re reading. (Interview 3, 12/15/09)

Some participants, however, pointed out some of the limitations in implementing critical thinking as part of their instructional practices. Some of the novice teachers were
concerned about how the culture of standards heavily favored "literacy as a means of decoding and comprehension" (Jaden, Interview 3, 11/22/09). They argued that this emphasis left them with fewer moments to incorporate critical thinking. The veteran teachers echoed this sentiment. They explained that even though there was institutional interest to integrate critical thinking within reading comprehension, teachers did not know how to teach that. Emery, for instance, described how teachers felt “overwhelmed” by contents and how they could not “give up half a class to teach a skill when they have to cover a content” (Interview 3, 11/21/09).

From a conceptual standpoint, some of the instructors also brought up how they understood (or did not) what the notion of “critical” entailed. Armani mentioned when discussing this issue, “That’s a hard question for me, I think because I’m not sure if I know the definition in my own head of what critical literacy is” (Interview 3, 11/30/09).

**Discussion: Findings vis-à-vis the conceptual framework.** As I pointed out, there were four particular elements that comprised their understandings of literacy. This section will explain how I would locate those comments within the permeable continuum.

**What socially situated implies.** Even though the participants talked about literacy as socially situated, most participants are still far what paradigms such as critical literacy or New Literacy Studies understand as “socially situated.” The description of definitions and practices would lean closer to some principles that the basic or functional literacy paradigms talked about. This distinction becomes clear, for instance, when Kennedy talked about the condition of being “illiterate.” New Literacy Studies scholars have called for the elimination of the dichotomy “literate/illiterate” from literacy discourse over the years. However, in
these discussions about the social situatedness of literacy, the participants did not equate society to “nation.” The lack of references to nation-building becomes then an opposition to the larger goals for literacy that proponents of basic and functional literacy paradigms advocate.

The discussion about the plurality of literacies. Only three participants really elaborated on the implications of talking about literacy as one or several. The issue of why we should pluralize literacy, however, is a very important one within alternative forms of literacy. The fact that very few participants talked about this is much closer to traditional discussions of literacy, where it is placed as singular. However, as a follow up to the previous point, there is an important change: the discussion of literacy may remain in the singular, but it has moved on from just using the school as the only site where literacy practices take place. This is a change that approximates most of Street’s (1984, 1995) calls against the “pedagogization” of literacy. The participants are, therefore, in a middle ground between being aware of how schools are one context of literacy and a more in-depth discussion of what speaking of literacy or literacies really implies.

An expanded spectrum. The conceptual scope of how participants defined “social” leaned closer to traditional literacy paradigms. Nevertheless, the inclusion of technologies (especially in the case of the novice teachers) as part of what constitutes literacy practices becomes a significant move towards the alternative paradigms, where the discussion about multiple forms of expression is more prevalent. The participants recognized that as society keeps changing, we need to modify the nature of literacy practices and what individuals can truly do with text.
Participants’ conversations about the act of writing. All participants had the chance to reflect on how they and society have modified their views about the act of writing. There were three salient changes they have noticed in the past 15 years: (a) writing means more than just producing essays; (b) composing is a more encompassing form of how individuals produce texts; and (c) writers of all ages have a different sense of audience.

We need to look past the essay as the only valid form of expression. One important change in the participants’ instructional practices was making the essay one genre among many available to them and their students. Participants explained that essays should be neither the main nor the only genre students learn in schools today. Teachers and instructors alike discussed the different ways in which integrate writing genres beyond the essay in their courses.

Novice teachers reflected on how to provide more variety to their writing instruction. In Francis’ case, writing assignments include “deeper-thinking conversations about a text and what it means and making connections about the book and the real world” (Interview 3, 12/20/09). Logan also mentioned that variety of writing forms was beneficial to students, “I have them do a lot of creative writing, like writing their own endings to the stories [...] because I think it interacts with their brain a little bit better, sometimes because they actually enjoy doing those things” (Interview 3, 12/5/09). Jaden is always looking for a middle ground between offering options to write and meeting the current demands of standards and policies to teach essay writing. Describing this compromise as a “sacrifice,” Jaden added,

I say it’s a sacrifice of time because we are so time-crunched with the skills, the reading skills that we’re supposed to teach that sometimes we don’t get as far as the
district would like us. But it’s important for students to gain a sense of writing purpose and their own personal writing voice by writing in their journals. [However,] we’re so focused on a specific type of writing, on the specific five-paragraph essay, that students think they’re doing something wrong when they want to add that extra paragraph. They all ask, ‘Ms. Jaden, am I going to get points marked off if I get seven paragraphs instead of five?’ They find no liberation in writing… (Interview 3, 11/22/09)

The veteran teachers’ beliefs about writing closely relate to those from the novice teachers. They also believe in the notion of multiple genres and variety in forms of practice. Indigo, for example, said that despite the pressures by the district, “probably my main thrust as a writing teacher is not to stick to the traditional essays […] writing is a note, it’s texting, it’s short stories, fiction, poems, songs, these Wordles\textsuperscript{TM} that we worked on…” (Interview 3, 12/14/09). Nevertheless, the veteran teachers also feel the pressure of negotiating their ideas and time with the expectation to write essays. Dylan discussed,

I think that is a real tension in public education because there’s certainly an understanding that kids need to read things that are diverse, but we are so concerned that they’re able to produce a coherent multi-paragraph essay that that always wins. (Interview 3, 12/4/09)

Adding to this idea of tension and pressure, Emery shared a situation taking place at her school: Despite having two specialized courses whose focus is alternative forms of writing, the school where Emery teachers emphasizes traditional essay writing in the Freshman and Sophomore courses. The outcome, Emery explained, was that students usually reverted to the traditional essays when they were in Junior or Senior year out of sheer overemphasis in previous years (Interview 3, 11/21/09).

\textsuperscript{16} Wordle\textsuperscript{TM} is an online application to create “word clouds” based on any form of text. This application is available online at http://www.wordle.net.
In the case of English and methods course instructors, they all talked about their efforts to move beyond the essay format. Examples of genres introduced in the courses included autobiographies, poetry, fables, and manifestos. Two instructors (Armani and Kennedy) featured assignments that required thinking from the perspective of a minority student.

The English instructors emphasized exposure to multiple genres as important features of successful writing practices. Guadalupe expressed that, “The more [students] write, the better [their writing is] going to get, no matter what they’re writing […] so I do sometimes use creative writing assignments that are not research-based” (Interview 3, 12/7/09). A writing principle in Harley’s classes is, “If you can write well in multiple contexts, in multiple genres, and in multiple situations, you’re in pretty good shape” (Interview 3, 12/1/09).

Methods course instructors believe in the value of multiple, non-traditional forms of expression and have thus incorporated these forms in their courses. Bailey, for instance, expressed, “I really push the whole idea of writing in multiple contexts, multimodal writing…” (Interview 3, 12/15/09). Morgan has also expanded on including different writing genres and how teachers can exploit technology. Examples of Morgan’s work with school teachers include “experimenting in the usefulness and practicality of getting students comfortable with Twitter™, texting, and blogging” (Interview 3, 12/17/09).

**Moving from writing to composing.** A side effect of the experimentation with multiple contexts is a move toward a different understanding of writing. Some participants talked about the process of “composing” (Harley, Interview 1, 9/21/09) as one where words,
images, and sometimes media, specifically in web-based environments, come together to create a message. Teachers and instructors alike are beginning to experiment with websites and other examples I mentioned above in order to help students realize that writing may go beyond words and include other forms of visual expression.

**A new sense of writing for an audience.** The access to online forms of written expression, such as blogs, has created a different view of writing wherein the audience is much larger than the confines of the classroom. Dylan, one of the veteran teachers, talked in detail about this when discussing the use of blogs in class as a means to “help increase [students’] confidence as writers” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). Dylan’s argument is that this new sense of an increased audience that online technologies has provided allows students to be more aware “that the things that they’re writing on those blogs are things that are read by real people and are responded to” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). This new sense of audience is an issue that instructors are reflecting on in terms of how to help students become more efficient writers.

**Discussion: Rethinking writing in light of the conceptual framework.** The participants’ views on writing show a move toward the more alternative views of literacy. Discussions about multimodality, different forms of composing, and the integration of online technologies to the act of writing have been a topic of conversation by scholars in the New Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies paradigms for several years. Questions about how to integrate multimodality (Kress, 1997) to writing in classrooms have also been the object of research studies and reflective work. The participants have moved on from traditional positions that made the essay the prevalent, if not only, genre that was supposed to be
taught. Even though some of the changes in policy and standards keep pushing them back to
the essay, they have strong beliefs that a more holistic view of writing, one that
encompasses multiple genres and technologies, is what benefits their students.

Participants' conversations about the act of reading. In addition to writing, the
participants also shared ideas about what reading looks like and how it has changed over
time. There were three ideas that participants highlighted in regards to reading: (a)
literature has almost become synonymous with “fiction;” (b) there has been a shift toward
the inclusion of more multicultural works as part of what students read in classrooms; and
(c) there is more access to resources and more options for different audiences.

Profiling what one reads: Defining “literature”. Each group of participants talked
about what literature meant to them and what they considered literature, including possible
boundaries that would separate literature from other forms of expression. In general, there
was a consensus that books and fiction were two elements that defined literature as a genre.
Even though the novice teachers talked about “fiction” as literature, they still included other
genres as part of literature, including poetry. The veteran teachers first discussed the idea of
literature as fiction, questioning whether there should be such a divide between fiction and
non-fiction as boundaries for literature (Dylan, Interview 1, 10/22/09). Responses about
what constituted literature ranged from the idea that non-fiction was something that
aligned closer with other content areas than it did with English (Emery, Interview 1,
10/24/09) to the notion that any texts that relate to the kind of narrative favored by fiction,
including some forms of non-fiction, constitute literature.
The English instructors mostly related literature to fiction and to print words. One participant argued that “I just have trouble seeing predominantly a visual, audiovisual medium as literature” (Kennedy, Interview 1, 11/22/09). However, they also recognized that both the discussions about what constitutes literature and the process of reaching a level of consensus are still ongoing. The methods course instructors talked about how literature is an artistic form of expression through print text that is socially and historically constructed. One participant talked about how genres such as poetry have been included and excluded from that definition of literature at different intervals in history (Bailey, Interview 1, 9/18/09) and that equating literature to fiction is a rather recent phenomenon.

**Canonical and multicultural texts converging.** There is a growing understanding among teachers and instructors alike that these initial categories of books and fiction are not necessarily fixed and that literature is “clearly something whose boundaries are very much in flux” (Guadalupe, Interview 1, 9/28/09). Teachers keep pushing those boundaries beyond “the book and what we can find in the book and the big anthology” (Armani, Interview 1, 9/23/09). Recent concepts include the addition of children’s, youth, and multicultural literature to this repertoire. In addition, the question of whether or not film can fit within the boundaries of literature remains a constant reflection.

The novice teachers acknowledged the wider range of options beyond the canon. Francis initially said, “A lot of people would say, let’s stick to the canon, meaning your Shakespeare and your Moby Dick and your classic sort of American literature,” adding that teachers needed to have a wider range of text, “anywhere from the newspaper or magazines to your novels” (Interview 1, 11/18/09). Logan added that, “Literature is words that there
are not only well-known in classics but deal with issues that are universal all around the world” (Interview 1, 11/7/09). These teachers made references to their efforts to include minority authors within their lesson plans, sometimes despite the fact that “the literature that we are required to teach has very little multicultural background” (Jaden, Interview 3, 11/22/09).

The veteran teachers, just like their novice counterparts, expressed their commitment to including multicultural texts in their instruction. Dylan explained that “our [school’s] curricula are quite multicultural in the sense that I think we have a lot of different voices represented” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). Emery also mentioned that there was a balance between canonical texts and minority authors, adding that reading most of the books in the school list would make for a “very well-rounded person” (Interview 3, 11/21/09).

The English instructors approached multicultural texts from a rather broad approach. Guadalupe, for instance, explained that in the case of some literature courses, the discussion about multicultural texts is retroactive, “The term multiculturalism, as far as I know, was invented in the 1980s and so it’s hard to really apply it as concretely to earlier periods” (Interview 3, 12/7/09). Guadalupe also added that some time periods lent themselves more easily to a multicultural discussion, “If you’re going to teach a 20th Century class, in either British or American, multicultural issues are going to be more prominent” (Interview 3, 12/7/09). Harley’s contribution to multicultural texts stems from the discussion of “standard language ideology, which is all about multiculturalism and the way multiculturalism is a response to ideology in culture” (Interview 3, 12/1/09). Harley also felt that the focus on multiculturalism was “one of the really dynamically interesting things that
you can, as a feature of classrooms today” (Interview 3, 12/1/09). In Kennedy’s case, choices for readings and media included work by women and minorities, primarily as a response to cultural studies (Interview 3, 11/19/09). Other choices for media in Kennedy’s courses included international perspectives, even at the expense of failure. Kennedy discussed the case of a course about comedy and how students never got a grasp of the style of international comedy films (Interview 3, 11/19/09). Finally, Harley’s response summarizes how English instructors at large are engaging with multicultural texts,

And I should just say that my colleagues in English who teach literature, I’m getting the sense that they’re teaching a kind of multicultural literacy in some of their classes. In other courses, I think it’s still a pretty traditional canon, so it sort of depends on what they’re doing. (Interview 3, 12/1/09)

The methods course instructions described experiences using books from minority authors. Their main goal was to expose students to texts that reflected more of the existing racial diversity in schools. All of them talked about multicultural texts as an integral part of their own sets of beliefs, far beyond the University of the Midwest’s push for diversity and culture in teacher preparation. All syllabi I reviewed made references to reading and analysis of multicultural work. Armani explained, “In my class both semesters, so far MCA01 and MCA02, their teaching is related to the readings that they do, which are multicultural readings” (Interview 3, 11/30/09). Bailey added, “The books and the literature I select are all multicultural in orientation” (Interview 3, 12/15/09). Looking at five sets of syllabi for the two methods courses Bailey taught showed that there were samples of books from minority authors, with choices varying every year the course was taught (MCB 01 and MCB02 syllabi, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006).
**Changes in resources, changes in reading styles.** Some of the participants recognized that online technologies have changed how individuals access different reading resources. They posited that the advent of the Internet has provided more options to read and access to literary options that were not available 15 years ago (Dylan, Interview 1, 10/22/09; Guadalupe, Interview 1, 9/28/09). However, despite the access to what to read, the participants did not discuss whether this had significantly changed how to read. Perhaps Harley’s assessment provides a good summary of this situation, “I haven’t seen any changes. I mean, I see our current reading practices as thousands of years old, fairly stable” (Interview 1, 9/21/09).

**Discussion: Rethinking reading in light of the conceptual framework.** There are two important considerations to draw from the participants’ responses. First, the move toward more inclusive texts that go beyond the canon is a positive change. From the perspective of critical literacy, for instance, this has been considered a need for the curricula, so any scholars in that paradigm will welcome the emphasis on adding multicultural texts to the repertoire on which prospective and current teachers may rely. From a social perspective, this also reflects the position of the alternative paradigms to make reading and the choices of books a process that takes into consideration the individuals with whom teachers are working. This change also opposed more traditional views of literacy that demand the emphasis on the canon as the only, sanctioned way to create cultured members of a society.

The second issue, one that should raise questions, is the position that reading comprehension processes have remained mostly constant. This view would find different
levels of opposition from proponents of, for example, New Literacy Studies. There are positions within this paradigm that are calling for a revision in how we are preparing teachers to teach reading. They consider that online technologies do in fact require a different, fresh perspective on how we teach reading.

Participants’ conversations about literacy and technology: two sides to a debate?

When talking about technology and its links to literacy, all participants recognized that technology and literacy are inextricably linked. They also acknowledged that these connections have increasingly grown over the past 15 years. They all talked about how new technologies, such as text messages and instant messaging, and new options for expressions, such as blogs, have affected literacy practices. They also admitted that the advent of social networks is also modifying how people express themselves and, consequently, literacy practices today. They are well aware that the overlaps between literacy and technology are unavoidable and that teachers need to prepare themselves for them. I believe Bailey’s quote about technology can serve as both summary and compromise,

I think that technology is just dramatically changing things. Some ways for the better, some ways for, you know [...] the fact that the mechanics of it have gotten easier and easier doesn’t mean that people are necessarily freed now to write better and better things. I don’t think that’s necessarily true. (Interview 1, 9/18/09)

Nevertheless, once we move past this initial recognition, finding consensus about the effects of technology on literacy practices was a more difficult task. All participants have strong feelings about these effects. The range of comments was difficult to discriminate among participant groups. Every group had at least two participants whose comments antagonized one another. Thus, I divided the reactions in two distinct camps: (a) those who think literacy practices have suffered as the consequence of more widespread technology and
(b) those who think literacy practices have only changed, not worsened, as the result of technology.

One position: Technology is detrimental to quality of expression. Some of the participants said they had noticed lower quality in reading and writing practices in the last 15 years, as a consequence of technology. Francis was concerned that “there is a lot more writing on the computer and it tends to be a lot of the abbreviations used in text messages and instant messaging, things like that” (Interview 1, 11/8/09). Indigo also described the connection between writing and online forms of messaging,

There’s a very small percentage of students who write well, who write entertaining stories, who write with proper mechanics, proper grammar, just who write with detail. I think that goes back to society’s emphasis on Facebook and the texting. You only have a limited space, so you’re just trying to get things out very quickly. (Interview 1, 9/22/09)

Francis and Indigo shared their comments from the perspectives of a novice and a veteran teacher respectively. From their perspective of college instructors, Kennedy and Morgan have experienced similar changes. “I think the quality of writing has deteriorated over the last 15 years” was Kennedy’s statement. Kennedy supported this assertion by comparing samples of written assignments and papers, “I found a lot of papers that I had been given 12, 15 years ago. I glanced through them and I was amazed at the quality of writing on some of those compared to what I’ve seen more recently” (Interview 1, 9/29/09). Morgan talked about how the presence of multiple modalities and technologies had a reverse effect on literacy practices at large and reading in particular,

My current experiences are that there’s less and less reading taking place, so that reading comprehension has to be taught in tandem with something like reading appreciation because people are finding ways to be informed and to be entertained that are not limited to reading. (Interview 1, 12/2/09)
Morgan seemed to agree with Indigo’s assertion about social networks and their effect on literacy, “Communication 15, 30 years ago required, I think, complete sentences to actually communicate a complete idea” (Interview 1, 12/2/09). Morgan pointed out that “I think again how much one writes is also now impacted by the modalities with which we write. 15 years ago, students were asked to write book reports and thesis papers” (Interview 1, 12/2/09). Logan, a first-year teacher, also shared that there was a bigger influence in style than in frequency,

I’ve never seen any changes throughout time as a culture because we always write, but in today’s culture writing is a lot less formal as people do a lot of e-mails, and IM [Instant Messaging] and so, writing is a lot more casual today… a lot of students don’t see the value of formal English because they know they can communicate using their own style of English. (Interview 1, 11/7/09)

**Counter-position: Technology encourages expression.** Other participants were more optimistic and even excited about the possibilities for instruction available in the overlaps between technology and literacy practices. Harley, an English instructor, argued, “It’s a typical argument to make that because students are texting and using AIM and instant messenger they’re no longer proficient in writing essays and letters as they used to be” (Interview 1, 9/21/09) Dylan’s perspective as a veteran teacher is both an expansion of Harley’s statement and a contrast to Indigo’s indictment of technology. Dylan explained,

I know one of the popular notions is that kids write shorter amounts because they’re used to filling small screens. So, they only write a little bit when you ask them to write in school. I think that’s just applying a blame to technology that really isn’t appropriate. I don’t remember when I started in ’98 my kind of struggling students writing long papers. The kids who have trouble kind of have always had trouble… (Interview 1, 10/22/09)
In fact, Dylan believes that thanks to technology, students have “more reasons to write because there are more audiences for whom to write” (Interview 1, 10/22/09). Despite describing the lack of quality in reading and writing as a consequence of technology, Morgan pointed out positive effects in the mix of technology and instruction,

Students are finding more, and I think teachers are very open to this, finding more and more ways other than writing out the five-paragraph essay, or the thesis paper. Many, multiple ways of expressing and providing evidence of what they’ve come to know and understand and are able to do with the knowledge that they have than by writing you a summary or writing you an essay. (Interview 1, 12/2/09)

Guadalupe, an English instructor, also believes that technology has had a positive effect on literacy practices,

[Technology has] changed everything, it means that people read and write actually more than they used to and they also have different, I mean, obviously when people are writing e-mail... they use a different kind of writing that they rely on... I actually think that e-mail, blogging, Facebook, has all actually been fairly good... I think people actually write more than they used to. (Interview 1, 9/28/09)

In fact, the only worry for Guadalupe is about etiquette, “What I have seen is a lot of confusion about etiquette, actually having to do with not know[ing] how to write to a teacher... I think actually etiquette is a larger problem than literacy in my classes” (Interview 1, 9/28/09).

Discussion: Technology and literacy in light of the conceptual framework. The discussion about technology, specifically online technologies, moves us further from the basic and functional paradigms and much closer to the ideas surrounding the alternative paradigms. New Literacy Studies and Multiliteracies have consistently talked about how technology and literacy, just like most participants recognized, affect each other and how the teaching of literacy has to adapt to these shifts and advances beyond rhetoric and into real
practice. These participants are very reflective of the influence of technology and have made adapting to it, while questioning the adaptations, an important part of their literacy practices. They all have varying degrees of adaptation in their beliefs, but those degrees are not clear-cut. Positions in favor of and against technology cross age groups and fields of study.

The questions and concerns about quality that some participants posed are issues that these paradigms have also considered. As I pointed out in my discussion of the paradigms, there is a recognition that innovation and integration of technologies cannot come at the expense of sophistication and mastery of some fundamental skills that individuals must possess within their literacy practices. All participants align with this position and their teaching attempts to negotiate those overlaps between online technologies and literacy foundations.

**The Evolution of Literacy Beliefs and Practices From the Context of the Secondary English Teacher Education Program**

As part of a Secondary English Teacher Education program, both the teachers who graduated there and their instructors shared a series of experiences and ideas regarding literacy beliefs and practices. In this section, I will first describe how all participant groups defined what English and English Education meant for them. Then, I will discuss the nature of messages about literacy arising from both English and methods courses. I will share how instructors discuss their work in their responses and syllabi, seeking for instances of change over time. Finally, I will talk about how the teachers described the influence and effect of
taking such courses in their current constructions of literacy to work with their students.

The statements and comments in this section will help answer the second research question.

**Defining English as a subject.** I situated this study within the context of a Secondary English Teacher Education program. It is fitting, then, to find out what participants mean when they talk about English, specifically as a subject. This discussion is important because learning how participants define their content area will help make more sense of how they construct their literacy practices as professionals. The participants defined English from two separate perspectives: One defines English from the local perspective of the United States, specifically within the districts and schools; the other defines it from a more global perspective.

**English as a subject: A local perspective.** The first thing I noticed was how literature was the main element that participants linked to English. In the case of the novice teachers, English was an umbrella term that encompassed, in addition to literature, things such as, “Reading, writing, listening, speaking, [and] doing research...” (Logan, Interview 1, 11/7/2009). The veteran teachers, on the other hand, talked about English as literature. Indigo, for instance, defined English as “studying literature, discussing literature with others, reflecting upon literature...” (Interview 1, 9/22/09). Emery went a little further than Indigo, adding that the subject itself should be named “Literature” instead of English, “because I think in high school, that’s what they teach. English teachers teach literature” (Interview 1, 10/24/09). The methods course instructors’ definition of English encompassed ideas that both novice and veteran teachers talked about. They defined English both as that
umbrella term that Logan described, as well as that subject that mostly tackles the study of literature and the writing of different literary genres.

The English instructors had a very different definition for the term “English.” While the methods course instructors and all the teachers related the subject to the context of schools, The English instructors talked about it as a college subject. Guadalupe, for instance, defined the word from a historical perspective, “I've been through so many canon wars, discussing, attacking English as a field, defining English as a field, expanding English as a field, treating the history of English as a field” (Interview 1, 9/28/09). Guadalupe, rather than saying what English was, talked about the evolution of the subject called English, including issues of multiculturalism, media studies, and a move between theory and literature. Harley also talked about what encompassed English, explaining that, “English as a subject ranges from film studies to the study of gender theory, new media, poetry, rhetoric, cultural studies.” Harley also added that even though the study of literature is also part of English, “currently the study of English is everything from the study of our clothing and what it means to disability studies” (Interview 1, 9/21/09).

**English as a subject: A global perspective.** Some instructors talked about English as a subject from a more global perspective. Although these instructors agreed that the study of English in the U.S. mostly covers reading, writing, speaking, and literature, they recognized that a global perspective of English would have a different scope. In some cases, as Kennedy noticed from experiences in foreign countries, English might be “more narrowly construed” (Interview 1, 9/29/09) since it might focus more on the process of learning to communicate
in the English language. In Bailey’s case, the change of perspective also aligns with some new research interests,

I’ve gotten more interested in English thinking more about English these days as a global language and the implications of that and in how, in educating English teachers, we need to begin to educate them to think in broader terms. (Interview 1, 9/18/09)

**Discussion: similarities and differences.** All participants recognized the range of skills and contents that the subject English entails. Even though literature is still the main feature at the secondary level, participants also realized that the subject itself requires paying attention to other skills. There is a growing movement to define English as more than literature, even though some participants still link those two as synonyms. The responses from novice teachers in particular are very indicative of this move toward a more inclusive view of the subject.

It is telling how the English educators have such a divergent view from the other participant groups and how they, at least while giving a definition, do not necessarily connect the subject to the context of the schools. Some of the responses to other questions in the interviews, however, showed that ideas and practices expressed in course syllabi and assignments do reflect on what it means to teach in schools.

One interesting difference of the two perspectives of the subject I described above is that the global perspective takes people into deeper consideration than the local perspective, which mainly focused on skills and topics. Participants who viewed English as a global phenomenon reflected more deeply on how curricular decisions need to look closely at students and their differences as a crucial factor when planning lessons and activities.
Defining English Education. When the participants talked about English, there was a level of understanding that literature was the main component that distinguished English from other subjects. The discussion about English education, on the other hand, provided a broader range of responses. Among the responses, two strands were the most salient in defining English education: (a) working with children and (b) preparing teachers.

English Education is about teaching children. Some of the participants talked about English Education as the process of teaching individuals, namely children and adolescents, the subject English, as defined in the previous section. One of the novice teachers, for instance, mentioned that some of the tasks of English education featured, “teaching people how to read critically, analyze what they read, use it in some way, teaching them to express their thoughts through writing, [or] teaching how to conduct research” (Logan, Interview 1, 11/7/09). The perspective of one of the veteran teachers placed English education as the process of “engaging with students to make them more interested in writing and reading and also help them master the skills of writing and interpretation” (Indigo, Interview 1, 9/22/09). Finally, the methods course instructors talked about how two focal points of English education. One was working with “English Language Learners [and] our students who are maybe reading below grade level” (Armani, Interview 1, 9/23/09). The other was the focus on “the ‘proper use’ of the language across reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (Bailey, Interview 1, 9/18/09).

English Education as preparing teachers to teach children. Another group of participants talked about English Education within the context of teacher preparation. One of the veteran teachers, while discussing the term, also questioned how English education
was “probably well-meaning but behind the times by no fault of its own.” The veteran
teacher’s argument was that it was difficult for the field to be up-to-date with the changes in
technology and literacy. Thus, “by the time you educate teachers on how to educate those
kids that they think they’ll be working with, the world is different.” (Dylan, Interview 1,
10/22/09). Other instructors refrained from critiquing when defining English education,
instead just providing their own definitions. Definitions for English education ranged from,
“the training of English teachers according to different schools of thought about what
English is and what kids need to learn” (Bailey, Interview 1, 9/18/09) to “training people to
teach the subject called English, usually in high schools” (Kennedy, Interview 1, 9/29/09).

Discussion: How do participants see themselves as part of English education? In
the case of the teachers, they mostly ascribed to the idea of teaching children. Dylan’s
critique notwithstanding, the teachers did not really talk about the idea of preparing
teachers as part of their definition of English education. Equally important (and concerning
to a degree) was how the teachers and some of the English instructors do not consider
themselves at first part of the process of preparing teachers, whether by going through it or
by serving as instructors. In these initial definitions, being part of the process was absent.

However, providing a clear-cut definition about what English education entails is a
very difficult task. I believe that Morgan’s description serves as both a summary and an
explanation about how the wide range of ideas about English education makes coming up
with definitions a difficult enterprise,

That to me is a very complicated marriage, English education because they exist as
two separate disciplines. There’s English and then there’s Education… the earlier
experience as an English student was comprised of looking at literature and the high
literature... And then, to become an English educator, there was a circling back to
education courses... And so, the marriage between English and Education actually becomes a very huge bubble in which there are some overlaps between the two disciplines... English education becomes this hybrid of these two disciplines. (Interview 1, 12/2/09)

The teaching of literacy in Secondary English Teacher Education courses: conversations with English and Methods course instructors. In this section, I looked at what instructors said in the interviews and what they have written on the different iterations of their syllabi. I was interested in two particular issues regarding literacy messages in English and methods courses:

• The assumptions that instructors use as starting points of their work.

• The messages about literacy that all instructors discussed as features of their instruction.

Initial assumptions: the curriculum. Both English and methods courses assume that they have a stake in terms of preparing prospective teachers. In the case of English instructors, they approached their involvement from varied degrees. Some instructors felt that their courses provided conceptual elements about popular culture, critical thinking and writing, and other ideas about literature that prospective teachers could find useful. However, they did not feel they had as large an effect on teaching as some of they would like to have. In the case of the methods course teachers, I believe the following statement by Armani provides a clear summary of how these teachers see the potential distribution of tasks among instructors in the program,

I think that [my students are] getting their content base in their English classes... as far as the poetry and their Brit[ish] lit[erature] and things like that. What I want to do is teach them how to take that content knowledge and teach it, no matter if they’re teaching 7th grade reading or if they’re teaching AP English in high school. (Interview 2, 10/15/09)
**Initial assumptions: English instructors talk about their students.** English instructors assumed that students in their classes possessed some knowledge of literary theory and critical thinking by the time they enrolled in the courses (Guadalupe, Interview 3, 12/7/09). The instructors also assumed that students would need some help improving their formal writing skills. They also were aware that students at the University of the Midwest faced a myriad of external pressures and that their syllabi should factor that in when planning assignments. In terms of academic expectations, instructors said that one of the assumptions for the course was that instruction should help the students improve their ability to construct arguments, including the better use of sources (Kennedy, Interview 2, 10/27/09).

**Initial assumptions: methods course instructors talk about their students.** All instructors agreed that one of their instructional goals was teaching students how to work with students different from them. Most students at the University of the Midwest, as both Bailey and Morgan claimed, are from either the central part of the state or from the suburban area of Omni (pseudonym). They added that their educational experiences come from Advanced Placement English courses, and thus “they really seem to all love reading” (Armani, Interview 1, 9/23/09). Another assumption students hold, as Bailey explained, is the idea that “because it was true for them and it’s true for everybody they know, because they associate with kids who were in the upper 10% of their graduating class, they assume that everybody can read” (Interview 1, 9/18/09). As a consequence, one of the emphases of methods course instructors is to shift that “warped sense of what it means to be a teacher”
(Bailey, Interview 3, 12/15/09) and prepare teachers to work with students who may not necessarily experience the same passion about reading as they do.

**The nature of literacy practices: reading.** Two English instructors talked about how discussions of diversity, culture, and race comprise how they approach reading in their courses. Guadalupe emphasized that the different novels chosen provided students with broader historical perspectives than they would otherwise by reading other kinds of novels (Guadalupe, Interview 2, 10/19/09). Kennedy’s courses, besides the discussions of diversity and culture, relied heavily on critical media analysis. Kennedy described these discussions as “crucial for high school teachers,” adding, “citizens in our world need to read media” (Interview 2, 10/27/09).

All methods course instructors talked about reading instruction as a very important feature of their courses. Bailey, for instance, emphasized

> Reading as a process of comprehension, first and foremost. I talk about it as a process of making predictions, checking your predictions, making new predictions [... ] a recursive process of always using text to build meaning based on what you are and your prior knowledge. (Interview 1, 9/18/09)

The question, “How do you get a student to read or enjoy reading who’s never read a book in their entire lives and then they had gotten into middle school because they have done everything to resist it?” (Interview 1, 9/23/09) provides a summary of one of Armani’s instructional foci. Another concern for Armani was preparing students to support the reading development of English Language Learners. As was the case with Armani and Bailey, Morgan also was very interested in issues of difference and reaching out to minority students (Multiple syllabi, 1999 to 2004, 2006 to 2009). However, Morgan’s concerns leaned toward ideas of critical literacy more often than Armani or Bailey did. Discussions in
Morgan’s methods courses addressed ideas about text that considered “a sense of target audience both in whom it addresses and is about and whom it anticipates being shared and that we have to remove those lenses and talk about for whom was this an intended audience...” (Interview 1, 12/2/09).

**The nature of literacy practices: writing.** One important element about writing in the English courses was the connection between creativity in writing and students’ professional practices. Guadalupe explained, “I try to prepare my students for the terror I think awaits them, which is finding a job in the workplace by encouraging creativity. So, that’s something that in terms of that professional writing, I actually keep in mind” (Interview 2, 10/19/09). Harley, as a writing studies specialist, mentioned that one course in particular “[was] full of the most opportunities to talk about pedagogy and the teaching of writing and what it’s like to be a high school teacher and a middle school teacher” (Interview 2, 10/12/09). This course also included discussions about the connection between academic writing and standards (EnH01 Syllabus, 2006). Harley also shared that two goals of this course were, (a) to debunk ideas about writing and (b) to force students to think creatively as writers, both in theory and practice (Interview 2, 10/12/09). One particular assignment that helped reach these goals was the “constrain assignment.” Harley explained what it was about,

I introduce a technological or a discursive or a linguistic or a formal or a structural constraint, which means that there’s a limitation that the students have to work within the composition of their response [...] One of the assignments is you may not use any word more than once, you may not use more than one sentence, you may not write on any other piece of paper than the one I gave you and I give them a piece of adding machine tape that’s long and skinny. (Interview 2, 10/12/09)
The methods course instructors also shared this interest in creativity as writers that English instructors discussed. Instructors emphasized “look[ing] at getting students to tap into the love for writing [...] so we try to look at really creative ways that students can express through words with their feelings, thinking their ideas” (Armani, Interview 1, 9/23/09). Bailey talked about how part of instruction in the methods courses included a critique of traditional essay writing as detrimental to “kids’ ability to sort of use writing as a meaningful tool for themselves” (Interview 1, 9/18/09).

The nature of literacy practices: lessons from syllabi. Looking at the course syllabi, there is a wide range of course emphases and activities. After revising syllabi from English courses, I found that Guadalupe’s courses kept the choices of books and assignments fairly constant. Harley and Kennedy, on the other hand, had a wider range of variation in their courses. They either made quite a few additions and modifications to their courses or just overhauled them altogether. Changes to syllabi depended on current research trends, issues in society and popular culture, and sometimes professional incentives linked to the academic culture of the University of the Midwest (Harley, Interview 3, 12/1/09; Kennedy, Interview 3, 11/19/09).

The syllabi that Armani, Bailey, and Morgan shared showed three main topics that remained fairly constant between 1999 (the first syllabi that Bailey and Morgan shared) and 2009 (Armani’s most recent course): (a) highlighting the importance of diversity; (b) attending to difference; and (c) working on lesson planning skills. When it came to book choices, however, Armani and Bailey constantly revised the texts their students would read on any given course (Armani, Interview 2, 10/15/2009; Bailey, Interview 2, 12/10/09;
Course Syllabi for MCA01, MCA02, MCB01, and MCB02, 1999-2009). Reasons for changing books include their becoming outdated or irrelevant and students’ interest and preference for certain works over others. Morgan’s syllabi, on the other hand, showed less variation. Morgan explained that the ideas that the “Professor of Record” (Interview 2, 12/9/09) infused in the course, as well as this professor’s commitment to issues of literacy and social justice, were strong enough that they did not warrant excessive changes in the syllabi from year to year.

Assignments in the different English and methods courses included writing autobiographical and response papers, tackling alternative writing genres such as poetry or manifestos, and creating websites. Other activities involved watching or creating media, as well as more traditional assignments such as essay writing and examinations. In the English courses, discussions about plagiarism also were part of the courses, either as a course topic (Harley, EnH01 Syllabus, 2006) or as an important consideration for writing assignments (Guadalupe, EnG01 and EnG02 Syllabi).

A model of literacy classroom: instructors’ voices and actions. The instructors highlighted characteristics of instruction that were hallmarks in their classrooms. If we take Morgan’s assertion that “we teach from who we are, not necessarily from what we know” (Interview 2, 12/9/09) at face value, exploring what participants say is a big part of their identity as instructors. That also provides evidence of the kind of messages about literacy classrooms that instructors expect their students to learn.

Taking risks as readers and writers. Guadalupe and Harley described that the need for a safe classroom atmosphere for creativity and risk-taking as writers is fundamental.
Harley’s contribution as instructor is “to encourage them to take risks as teachers [and] to encourage their students to take risks as writers” (Interview 2, 10/12/09). Keeping things grounded in reality is another principle the instructors believe is important for literacy instruction. Both Guadalupe and Kennedy talked about how they make references to popular culture in their English courses. Armani expressed one of the goals of the methods courses,

I want [my preservice teachers] to explore how we can take some of these difficult poems, for example, and make them real for [their future] students, whether they’re interested in poetry or not. So, how we can we make these things that are very uninteresting for some students and make them real, make them relevant. (Interview 2, 10/15/09)

**Focusing on one’s students and their needs.** Having high expectations for one’s students and keeping their responses in mind is another important feature of instruction in which all instructors believe. All methods course instructors want their students to plan not in terms of their experiences, but those of the students they are working with, while keeping those high expectations constant. Armani’s instruction includes reflecting on how students would adapt activities or texts for different grades (Armani, Interview 2, 10/15/09). Keeping one’s students in mind is one of the foundations of student-centered learning. However, instructors also develop principles of student-centeredness that go beyond asking one’s students what they would like to do and simply do that. Bailey proposed a different way to approach student-centeredness within literacy instruction,

I think a more realistic and a more responsible way of thinking about student-centered instruction is to say to yourself constantly as you’re planning things and as you’re thinking things through and as you’re choosing books and everything else, what’s the students’ response to this likely to be? How are they likely to understand this assignment […] and what is the benefit of doing this for students? (Interview 3, 12/15/09)
Using multiple genres when writing. As I mentioned earlier, all instructors have made efforts to move past the essay and incorporate multiple forms of expression and model accordingly. Harley’s goal, “To have students learn that the essay, the genre of the essay, should not be taken for granted as the best genre to make an argument” (Interview 3, 12/1/09) is a good summary of the goals that all instructors shared as part of the selection of activities and assignments.

Navigating the standards. Most instructors talked about how the culture of standards is affecting teachers and students in districts and schools. Whether they have more positive or negative views about them, they all shared a concern about helping their students. The activities and assignments all instructors devised for their syllabi seemed to have one common goal,

Figure out ways to navigate these crazy American school systems, which are just so codified and full of standards and expectations and tests and just rigidity, figure out ways to navigate those systems where you take advantage of any moment you can to encourage innovation, creativity, free play, art and that kind of stuff. (Harley, Interview 2, 10/12/09)

Integrating technology. With a few exceptions, most instructors are highly concerned about how to best integrate technology as a key element of today’s classrooms. Two instructors in particular have made strides in helping their students bridge those gaps. As a methods course instructor, Bailey reported the use of technologies ranging from PowerPoint™ to Skype™. Bailey’s goal for technology is to “try to focus in my teaching not on just, here’s technology that you can use as a teacher but also on, here is technology that your students can use when you’re a teacher” (Interview 3, 12/15/09). In Harley’s case, one of the English courses that we talked about was about the combination of technology and
writing. Topics of discussion in this class included “new media literacy and coding, HTML and CSS and JavaScript™ and how to make websites, and within the context of that, inquire about writing technologies” (Interview 2, 10/12/09; EnH02 Syllabi).

Discussion: revisiting literacy messages in light of the conceptual framework.

Conceptually, participants move across different elements of the continuum. There is not one predominant paradigm among these instructors. That does not mean one cannot pinpoint elements of all paradigms to what participants talked about. For instance, Guadalupe’s concern about the work force leans toward some of the goals of functional literacy about preparing individuals to be productive in society. However, Guadalupe’s overall views of literacy are far more critical than what a functional paradigm might actually call for. Even though preparing for the work force might be a concern of Guadalupe’s, that is not the driving force behind practice. Guadalupe’s views of literacy for critical thinking, while not ascribed to some post-Freirean positions, do align with ideas about critical literacy. Harley, as an instructor, leans a lot closer toward views of the alternative paradigms. Harley’s emphasis about composing and the use of multiple genres aligned in many features with the ideas about “design” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) that Multiliteracies advocates. Harley is concerned about how writing and composing can be used to become more reflective and a more critical member of society. Kennedy’s views about media also lean closer to the critical literacy paradigm. The notion that individuals needs to read media critically has been the object of work in related fields to critical literacy as part of a discussion of how people need to be active users of media.
In the case of the methods course instructors, an alignment to critical literacy and ideas from New Literacy Studies seems to be the norm. How instructors approach the critical paradigm, however, was much broader. For instance, Morgan’s views of critical literacy align much closer to some of the authors and ideas I selected in my discussion of that paradigm (unlike Guadalupe). Morgan believes very strongly in the intersection among literacy, class, race, and ethnicity. Those connections are a fundamental part of the way Morgan taught the methods courses and how one of the goals of the class was to recognize those overlaps and how they affect students every day and every time they read or write. Although Bailey and Armani also believe in these ideas and they have incorporated them to their teaching, their positions vis-à-vis critical literacy are a little different from Morgan’s. Armani was more hesitant to talk about being critical and is still in the process of making sense of what critical literacy really entails. However, Armani’s responses do not reflect by any means a basic literacy position. From all three methods course instructors, Armani would be by far the one undergoing major refinement in the creation of a paradigm where critical literacy will play a major role.

In terms of ideas from New Literacy Studies, I see the effect of technology and multimodality that instructors described as an area of alignment. Also, the discussions about how to rethink classroom practices and make them more inclusive of students has been a major point of discussion in NLS for several years. The concern about difference, about accepting multiple genres and promoting multiple processes has also made it to the syllabi and assignments. I would also argue that, despite the opposition to pluralize literacy that Bailey argued in a previous section, there are elements of the pedagogical outlook that
Multiliteracies has proposed. I particularly believe that the efforts of all instructors and how they have framed their assignments aligns with Cope and Kalantzis' (2000) idea of *transformed practice*. The ultimate goal of the methods courses is to make preservice teachers more aware of how their students and their experiences should be present in what they do.

**Lessons from Secondary English Teacher Education classes: conversations with novice and veteran teachers.** The previous section described what instructors said and how their courses reflect their beliefs on literacy and how one should teach literacy. This section will now talk about what a group of teachers who graduated from the University of the Midwest shared about their experiences. I will describe the lessons the teachers shared from their English courses. Then, the teachers will share the lessons from methods courses. Finally, I will describe one feature present across courses that participants found influential.

**Recalling the lessons from English courses.** Both veteran and novice teachers agreed that the majority of English courses they took emphasized canonical text. However, a closer look at the responses also showed a change toward including more minority courses. For instance, while Dylan recalled taking courses that were all about the canon and nothing beyond that (Interview 2, 12/4/09), Indigo talked about taking courses about minority authors while at Midwest (Interview 2, 10/23/09). The veteran teachers also talked the kinds of assignments in these courses. They all agreed that assignments were rather traditional, mostly focused on response and essay writing. They added that the assignments favored discussion about the text based on a combination of primary and secondary sources, which usually consisted of the instructors’ own writings analyzing the primary text (Dylan,
Recalling the lessons from methods courses. The veteran teachers had mixed comments about the courses they took when they were Education minors. Dylan, for instance, talked about courses that fostered a very traditional view of literacy instruction, where instructors were not very influential in helping shape a philosophy of teaching or a broad view of literacy (Interview 2, 12/4/09). Indigo and Emery, on the other hand, recalled methods courses as providing more information about varied topics and resources, including literacy. They also talked about the emphasis on diversity and attending to cultural differences these courses offered and how that connected to the selection of readings and reading comprehension strategies. In fact, Dylan also admitted noticing that shift toward diversity and difference in encounters with more recent student teachers (Interview 2, 12/4/09). Indigo also recalled the emphasis on creating a sense of community in the classroom (Interview 2, 10/23/09) as a hallmark of the core methods courses.

The novice teachers also talked about this sense of community-building and creating a safe atmosphere for students when reflecting on their experiences as preservice teachers.
The teachers talked about the emphasis on cultural differences as a key component of the courses. They also mentioned that these courses were mostly theme-based, which also was reflected on the styles and formats of lesson plans they had to write (Jaden, Interview 2, 11/22/09). In terms of writing, the novice teachers said that most written assignments required them to reflect on the possible applications of concepts and resources in class. They talked about how instructors emphasized modeling teaching and literacy practices that they would be able to use with students. Jaden commented that one instructor

Taught us as if she were the teacher teaching middle school students, so we used her as an example of how it should look like. She framed her course in such a way that even though we were college students, she talked to us as if we were middle school students so we could see how presenting something should be done. (Interview 2, 11/22/09)

Finally, the novice teachers recognized that there was more integration of technology and literacy in the methods courses. Although this assertion was as a contrast to English courses, it is important to add that the veteran teachers did not make any references about how they saw this connection in the methods courses they took while at Midwest.

Recalling the importance of focusing on students’ literacy beliefs and practices.

Looking at all the teachers’ responses, I found a common thread: There is a heightened awareness that because they were exposed to certain experiences as students, they could not simply expect to replicate them with a group of students that was different from them. The participants explained that being in the program helped them reflect on their own experiences and then regroup and make their student and their experiences their new focal point. For instance, Jaden commented how in middle school, “a lot of the act of reading was on the ownership of the student” (Interview 1, 11/22/09). Logan found reading in high
school to be “a lot more rigorous because we were in a suburb with a lot of students heading off to college” (Interview 1, 11/7/09). After that initial description, these participants then reflected on how reading looks different when you are a school teacher. Logan described that “the struggle with the school that I’m teaching at right now is trying to get students to be motivated to read” (Interview 1, 11/7/09). Jaden also shared this realization about the different emphasis and goals,

Teachers have more responsibilities of modeling it than when I was in school because I feel like when I was in school it was, ‘These are the strategies, now put them into place on your own.’ I think that’s how being an active reader has changed. (Interview 1, 11/22/09)

The veteran teachers experienced a similar process of reflection in terms of their own literacy practices and how they changed from the perspective of a teacher. Indigo described how “when I was in high school… reading for me was an everyday, basic thing. You did it, you enjoyed it, my friends read, they all enjoyed it” (Interview 1, 9/22/09). Indigo also noted that “being a teacher of English, I see a lot of emphasis placed on [reading]. I never saw emphasis placed on reading as a student because it was just expected of me and you just did it” (Interview 1, 9/22/09). Dylan also echoed this sentiment about how the program emphasized student learning,

I imagine that it’s probably the beginning of kind of my more liberal sense of what teaching and learning can be about since I came from a pretty small school, from a pretty small town, where people were quite homogenous to even start reading and thinking about working with people who were significantly different from me. (Interview 2, 12/4/09)

**Discussion: Recognizing conceptual overlaps and differences across participants.**

In the previous section, I argued that some of the instructors’ views about literacy moved somewhere between a critical literacy paradigm, New Literacy Studies, and Multiliteracies. A
closer look at the participants’ responses shows that their views are not that far from what their instructors talked about. Although saying that the novice teachers have a well-defined paradigm would be a little premature, it is not far-fetched either to notice that Bailey’s desire of a rather rudimentary set of beliefs and practices that will help the teachers become more sophisticated is already in place. The veteran teachers, by virtue of experience and further schooling, have reached that level. Even if we consider that Dylan’s experience is slightly more different based on graduation date, there are conceptual overlaps about attending to difference and the notion that literacy leads to critical thinking that the other teachers also share. In that sense of how the critical literacy paradigm has permeated to the teachers, there is a degree of influence of the courses that may not be fully recognized in hindsight, but that becomes evident once one reads across the responses.

In terms of the ideas about multiple forms of literacy, linking technology to literacy, and the encouragement of multimodal expression, one can also notice that the novice teachers have received more active instruction in those areas. The veteran teachers noticed it, but in a much smaller degree. This is an instance of conceptual evolution that is more evident from what these teachers experienced and one area where the program and its instructors have shown considerable reflection and effort.

**Policies Affecting Literacy Beliefs and Practices: The Case of No Child Left Behind**

While interviewing the participants, I noticed that their responses would make regular references to “standards,” “teaching to the test,” and other related statements that linked policies to literacy practices. Although I had considered the effect of the educational
context while crafting the interview questions, subsequent revisions of the interview protocol compelled me to include specific questions about the effect that No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) was having on their instructional literacy practices. The participants were very candid about their feelings toward this legislation. There were, however, different layers of reaction to NCLB. I will present the impressions by all participants while keeping the same sequence I introduced at the beginning of the chapter (i.e. Novice Teachers, Veteran Teachers, English Instructors, Methods Course Instructors). There were four issues that participants raised regarding NCLB: (a) the positive features; (b) the effects on instruction; (c) the effects on individuals; and (d) possible solutions.

_**Paying close attention to students is an incidental positive effect of NCLB.**_ Some participants agreed that NCLB forced districts, schools, and teachers not to ignore some features of bad instruction can. Logan, a first-year teacher, expressed that “trying to reach all students and not just kind of teaching generically” (Interview 3, 12/5/09) was one of the positive side effects of the legislation. Dylan, a veteran teacher, said, “probably one of the positive things about No Child Left Behind is that it’s impossible to ignore […] weaknesses, it’s impossible to do that because at some point you’re going to be called out on it” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). Emery, another veteran teacher, agreed that “No Child Left Behind can be good because it forces these teachers to learn more about their craft and learn how to do this in a good way…” (Interview 3, 11/21/09).

Kennedy, an English instructor, argued that “students were being passed in the system without learning to read […] and there needed to be more attention paid to teaching

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17 See Interview 3 in Appendix A for an account of the actual questions I asked.
systematically some of the learners who were being overlooked and dragged upon or passed along” (Interview 3, 11/19/09). Armani, a methods course instructor, mentioned that NCLB was “making some bad teachers better because they can’t get away with being bad quite as easily” (Interview 3, 11/30/09).

**NCLB has affected the ability of good teachers to effect positive change in their students.** A group of participants described the range of effects in instruction that NCLB has triggered. The novice teachers were mostly worried about navigating this legislation. For instance, Francis’ main concern was “find[ing] the middle ground because obviously we have to follow the mandated curriculum and the laws... so we are trying really hard to bring up the scores and close the gap...” (Interview 3, 12/20/09). The veteran teachers had diverse opinions about how NCLB had affected teaching. Dylan, for instance, argued that “at the high school level, it hasn’t affected good instruction” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). However, Dylan cautioned about a direct side effect of the emphasis on standards, “What I definitely see happening is that people who would’ve approached teaching from a real kind of authentic, student-centered, social justice approach are actually stifled from doing that because the measure of schools is the standardized test” (Interview 3, 12/4/09). Indigo explained the larger emphasis on test preparation had forced reading teachers to modify what and how they taught,

The reading teachers have to give two to three tests per quarter and they’re constantly struggling, ‘Ok, I have to teach this, this, and this. The test is in a week.” And they’re teaching just so the students can know for that test and then the students aren’t learning authentically. They’re memorizing for a test and then it’s falling out of their heads [... NCLB] hampers my ability to help them more. (Interview 3, 12/14/09)
Although Emery first said that NCLB was in fact making teachers more aware of their craft, the second part of that statement is a good example of the flip side of this shift, “In other ways teachers feel a little resentful and disappointed that we, it feels like we're just focusing on a test and not the human being sitting in a room” (Interview 3, 11/21/09).

Both English and methods course instructors are concerned about helping their preservice teachers. Harley, an English instructor, mentioned that No Child Left Behind had “unbelievably” changed instructional practices. To Harley, “No Child Left Behind is part of these bigger movements towards standardization, testing, and common expectations for graduation out of high school” (Interview 3, 12/1/09). Part of what Harley does in the English courses is to discuss how teachers can learn to navigate the standards culture, “figur[ing] out ways to productively exist within…” (Interview 3, 12/1/09). Bailey, a methods course instructor, shared a similar worry about the effects on instruction and how the standards are making teachers lose focus of a wider range of literacy practices,

The test is driving everything and [teachers are] so preoccupied with test preparation, they can’t imagine how sitting down and reading a novel in small groups and doing comprehension activities and vocabulary development would not benefit their performance on a test. (Interview 3, 12/15/09)

**NCLB has affected teachers’ efficacy and students’ options to expand their potential beyond taking a test.** There is another reality that participants also shared in their statements: NCLB is affecting teaching to an extent, but students and teachers in an even greater degree. All four participant groups felt this effect of NCLB, ranging from mere concern to complete frustration.

Emery, for example, shared a story about a colleague’s frustrations and issues with “integrating grammar instruction [and] writing instruction into the readings” finally
brought this teacher to a public outburst in the middle of a faculty meeting (Interview 3, 11/21/09). Emery also complained that teachers’ meetings were less about teaching and more about “looking at ACT standards and aligning standards to ACT” (Interview 3, 11/21/09). Francis expressed frustration about the emphasis on standards, “I think that the mandated curriculum that we have focuses more on those novels and comprehension than it does on simply giving students a choice to read. And I think it takes the pleasure out of reading for my students” (Interview 3, 12/20/09).

Kennedy approached the discussion about NCLB not from the position of an English instructor, but that of a very concerned parent. Kennedy explained that No Child Left Behind “has somewhat dumbed down the curriculum and that not entirely, but it’s been too much of a stricture” (Interview 3, 11/19/09). Kennedy was also kind enough to share a story about how this “dumbing down” of the curriculum; the following vignette is a strong illustration of what is going on in today’s classrooms,

Getting ready in third grade for the ISATs, they had to write book reviews that were very limited. They had to read a book and they had to have a certain structure with it, it had to say how this book relates to my life. Well [my child]18 chose a book about mythology, how does this book relate to my life? I was trying to help with that, it was about Jason and the Argonauts... How does this relate to my life, reading about Jason and the Argonauts? So, I tried to find something in common for and such, but in a way that was a distraction, that’s bad writing to try to force something. So, it was lightly alluded to but mostly and [my child has] come to kind of hate writing in part because [of] such a stricture. (Interview 3, 11/19/09, emphasis added).

Morgan discussed the effects of NCLB from the perspective of a “teacher collaborator” rather than methods course instructor. However, the vignette below provides a compelling story of how teachers in the field are feeling the pressures of the policies,

18 Quote was edited to keep it along the same lines of gender-neutrality as a way to protect participants, which in my view also includes their families.
Federal policies such as No Child Left Behind have just gutted their sense of efficacy, I believe, because there's only one standard of success and that is the high-stakes test. There's very little interest in the kinds of evidences that they would like to show in addition to the high-stakes test of success in their classrooms with their students such as seeing children change behaviorally, seeing children develop socially and emotionally, seeing students gain a sense of confidence or master certain skills that are not always fully evident in the high-stakes test... I don't necessarily think I see higher quality instruction occurring as a result of this policy. I would in fact think that the opposite is occurring, there's so much pressure to turn in the right numbers and the right scores that we're just seeing so much deskill instruction and diluted thinking and a diminishing of teacher judgment and the exercise of teacher judgment in their classrooms. (Interview 3, 12/17/09, emphasis added)

Bailey echoed Morgan's sentiments about the effect of NCLB in teachers' morale.

First, Bailey explained, “I see [NCLB] affecting, let me not say affecting, infecting everything we do in education” (Interview 3, 12/15/09, participant’s emphasis). Afterward, Bailey continued the indictment on NCLB, adding,

I think that NCLB has destroyed American education. I think it has eroded our own sense of professionalism, it was completely destroyed any impulse teachers might have to think creatively for themselves and to engage in creative activities. It was completely destroyed any ethic of innovation or problem-solving that people might have. (Interview 3, 12/15/09)

There is the case of one participant I will introduce now at the end of this section, given how jarring I found the statements. Jaden, a first-year teacher, was really candid and forthcoming when I asked about NCLB. This is one of those cases where summarizing the quote would be unfair to the participant. As Kennedy's anecdote was telling about parents' struggles, Jaden's can be seen as a cautionary tale of the struggles novice teachers sometimes face when dealing with the culture of standards:

No Child Left Behind has probably ruined all my creativity because I’m on a time constraint and if students don’t understand something, I have to pass them anyway because I cannot leave them behind. Because of No Child Left Behind, I’m doing one of two things: I am passing the students who don’t get it or I’m ignoring students who do because I’m so concentrated on getting my lower-level students to bridge the
gap that my higher level students aren’t being challenged as they should be. My higher-level students are getting lower when my lower-level students are getting higher because I can only challenge one type of student at once. I’m either literally passing students that don’t know the skills or I am kind of stagnating my students who do get it. And I can’t teach like I feel is useful for them as growing thinkers because I’m told what to teach by the administrators, who are told what to teach by the government, who’s being told what to teach because of No Child Left Behind. I feel like I’m just a facilitator of skills than a teacher of English... I’m not growing as a teacher or a lover of English because I’m given like, “This is what you’re supposed to teach it, this is how you’re supposed to teach it, now go and follow these guidelines,” instead of saying, “this is what I know and this is what I have to teach you” and I’m not constantly challenging myself as a teacher because there’s no way to challenge myself when I’m told what to do all the time. (Interview 3, 11/22/09)

During the interview, Jaden reached an apex of frustration about the position some teachers seem to find themselves as well, “[My students] deserve a teacher who is passionate about what they teach and I feel like I’m doing a disservice to my students by just embracing what I don’t agree with. It’s sad” (Interview 3, 11/22/09).

Participants continue reflecting on how to overcome the effects of NCLB. Both English and methods course instructors are preoccupied about the actual effects of NCLB, as well as helping teachers such as Jaden. For instance, Bailey reflected that “[NCLB has] had a completely opposite effect of what theoretically was intended to do.” Morgan also brought a similar frustration related to the idea of “disservice” that Jaden talked about and the intent of the policy that Bailey brought up,

I do think it is important to target a demand for high quality instruction and its delivery to all children. I still think we’re at the stage of at being at the table to identify what that tool would be, to think that we have found it with No Child Left Behind is a misguided notion, to continue to fund it as it is, again, I believe is a significantly successful in gutting our public school system and demoralizing really committed sincere hard-working teachers. (Interview 3, 12/17/09)

Even though there is a degree of uncertainty among instructors, Harley’s statement summarizes the concerns I heard in the interviews,
I know that at least the colleagues that I know in the English and a couple in the College of Education seem to be invested in exploring and critiquing the ideologies and values that lead and contribute to those big policies. I think it’s a part of what we do. The problem is that no matter how, what a critical perspective we take on these policies, students are out there teaching very soon and they’re teaching with the real frameworks of those classrooms and schools and those districts and stuff. That’s kind of a tough negotiation, I think. (Interview 3, 12/1/09)

**Summarizing the Answers: A Composite View of All Twelve Participants**

I have presented comments and ideas about literacy evolution, instructional practices, discussions about reading and writing, the effect of today’s policies, and messages in classrooms, to name a few, throughout this chapter. These ideas reflect the views about literacy from 12 amazing individuals. This section will summarize all those comments as I answer the two questions that I set out for this study. The responses in this section will encompass the main ideas from all participants, the categories I used for data analysis, and elements of the permeable literacy continuum.

**How have the literacy beliefs and practices of instructors and graduates from a Secondary English Teacher Education program evolved in the past 15 years?** In the past 15 years, the participants have moved toward a view of literacy that espouses the need to be critical, the importance of not overvaluing any one writing genre over another, and where there is a constant reflection about how technology can be better used to support literacy practices. In that sense, their evolution has followed some of the major changes in technology and expression that society has experienced in these past 15 years, particularly with the widespread use of the internet, social networks, and other communication technologies. However, these participants have used their experiences to continually question how they are affecting their students’ performance.
Their reflections have been the basis of their currently literacy practices, which attempt to both support and complement the present context. Their practices support the context because they are aware that going against these changes would do a disservice to their students and because they would find a school context that would be completely unfamiliar to them. Their practices complement the context because they are aware of the shortcomings that new students are featuring, as the result of their exposure to multiple groups of students over the years. In this regard, the participants believe that certain emphases on the foundations of the language are necessary because the current context ignores them. Areas such as working on formal aspects of language, including style and grammar, become important and, to these participants, a need that they are addressing and thus making a difference in their students.

When it comes to reading and writing, there is an interesting dichotomy: Participants admitted that writing as a practice, how they talk about it, and how they teach it have undergone major changes in these 15 years. They all acknowledged that they are more likely to use online technologies, blogs, and other forms of writing and composing now than in previous years. They see writing as a very different practice in many aspects. They have moved from print to screen and they are becoming more comfortable with these electronic forms of expression. However, the way they see reading has only changed in the case of being able to access more resources. Unlike the adaptations they have undergone to use new writing technologies, they do not necessarily acknowledge a change in how they approach a text whether one reads from a print copy or from a screen.
How have the messages about literacy beliefs and practices changed within the context of a Secondary English Education program over the last 15 years? The program itself was the subject of conceptual changes over the years. These changes have brought an emphasis on literacy for critical thinking, an attention to how students’ backgrounds and lifestyles affects their literacy practices, and a gradual integration of technology within literacy. The participants who graduated from the program, even if they did not address it explicitly, showed that these emphases in the program, mainly through their interaction with their methods course instructors, have been refined. There is a more explicit work in the integration of literacy and technology, the teachers who graduated recently are more sensitive to issues regarding struggling readers of English Language Learners, and their lessons seek to integrate the use of multiple genres in reading and writing.

In terms of reading, there has been an increased emphasis on the inclusion of texts that go beyond the traditional canon. In this sense, the instructors have constantly reflected on how to infuse their courses with more multicultural readings and resources. The teachers recognize this and have used it as an important consideration for their practice.

The messages arising from English and methods courses, which one could believe are incongruent, align much closer than traditional ideas espoused in the literature would claim. The ideas about critical literacy, use of technology to support writing, consideration to issues of culture and difference when choosing texts, among others, are present in the discussions and syllabi from both English and methods courses. The teachers still possess a more compartmentalized view of these two components, but their comments about the nature of messages did not provide any evidence that showed contradictions.
The major concern that the teachers expressed about the messages was that of relevance. It is important, however, to clarify that relevance was expressed in terms of the difficulty to implement resources, not in terms of not being able to adapt concepts and strategies. Sometimes the difficulty was more the result of the most recent shifts in policy, including mandates stemming from NCLB, than a flaw existing in the messages that instructors from the program believe in.
Chapter Five

Making Sense of the Lessons:
Discussion, Implications, and Future Directions

This chapter links research questions and narratives of the participants to ideas drawn from the literature review and my theoretical framework. I discuss what I ultimately learned and how these narratives helped me answer my research questions. I also offer a series of implications and recommendations for future research and teacher education practice. I conclude this chapter with a very personal account of my own journey and how this research project was not just a step, but a leap forward in my own evolution.

What I Learned About Literacy Beliefs and Practices: Back to the First Research Question

There were two main goals for the data collection process, (a) to learn what participants said and (b) to use those answers to create a view of literacy beliefs and practices that was more encompassing. This section will revisit the ideas regarding the first research question and what ideas ultimately constitute the core beliefs and practices of all 12 participants.

Participants are searching for balance. All participants have undergone a process of evolution. That process is far from finished for all of them. Instructors and teachers continue questioning what literacy means to them and how what happens around them affects those constructions. Regardless of age and background, all participants are in the process of finding a sense of balance for their beliefs and practices. This does not imply that
we are talking about attempts to create a model of “balanced literacy.” In fact, such
discussion did not even surface in the interviews.

**Bringing canonical and multicultural texts together.** The balance that participants
talked about was one where, for instance, canonical and multicultural texts are
complementary and not mutually exclusive. Dylan cautioned in the interviews that some
people tend to equate “multicultural” with “non-white,” which would also do a great
disservice to the ongoing discussions about the role of multicultural texts in the classroom.
What participants are calling for is spaces for the classics and minority authors to be
important parts of the curriculum. Unlike Hamel’s (2008) discussion of literature, all
participants strongly believe that students’ voices need to be part of the reading repertoire,
even if that means defying the conventional wisdom of the districts and schools, as Dylan
illustrated in the description of an administrator who was against the inclusion of
multicultural texts in the curricula.

**Questioning overemphasis on essays.** Participants are seriously questioning
whether districts and schools should highlight or favor any particular writing genre as the
only valid one. Despite a heavy push for standardized testing (Suskind, 2007), participants
believe that a wider expression of written forms that combines formal writing with elements
of design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) or multimodal expressions (Kress, 2003) is the best
option for their students. There is an underlying assumption expressed through the
assignments that a variety of genres is what ultimately benefits students, not the push for a
constrained version of essay writing. When it comes to facing the policies and mandates,
participants all acknowledge that they have a better handle of practice than the mandates
do. This, I believe, confirms McCarty’s (2008) call for “more teacher-initiated” (p. 500) practices.

**Some participants hold simplified, not basic, views of literacy.** This study is a response to reductionist views of literacy that usually equated it with reading, as illustrated in the literature review. I also believe that asking participants about literacy is a beginning point to address the call for more information about what instructors say about literacy practices that Ares and Peercy (2003) were calling for in their study. All participants confirmed the need to operate under a more comprehensive framework that does not reduce literacy to one particular skill. When given the chance to discuss multiple skills associated with literacy practices, the picture that the twelve participants offered was very complex. A review of the responses by the teachers showed a view of literacy that is challenging traditional assertions. In this regard, the findings align with Muchmore’s (2001) study about literacy beliefs.

However, it is very important to point out that the novice teachers are already challenging these traditional and reductionist views of literacy. The expectation that novice teachers needed more time to start elaborating a more complex view of literacy, which some of the literature seems to favor, is a major finding of this study. I would argue that there are two possible reasons for this change. One would be the effects of changes and the appearance of new views of technology are triggering in learners. The other are the ongoing changes and new emphases in literacy practices at the preservice level, which are encouraging students to be more reflective on their and their students’ literacy practices.
Revisiting the views of literacy as reading or writing. Participant responses showed that a discussion of literacy needs to move beyond thinking of either reading or writing as the only two skills or competencies that define literacy. This position presents a challenge to the “literacy profiles” such as Cole’s (2002/2003) study, which ultimately centered on reading. In a similar fashion as scholars such as Street (1995) have called for a level-playing field where oral and written expression are valued, participants argued that oral expression and performance are also important. Many definitions of what literacy or even English were comprehensive and considered that literacy is a more holistic element than some traditional literature has envisioned thus far.

Participants held mixed comments about the true value of orality, but they agreed that it has a proper place and a time in everyday interactions and classroom instruction. There was also an agreement that technology has blurred some of those lines. Participants wondered how texting (Drouin & Davis, 2009) had become one of those gray areas where oral and written expression intertwine. None of the participants talked about embracing these links as part of their current instruction. However, they acknowledged that this kind of technology represents a challenge they need to address if they want to be up-to-par with their students.

Broadening literacy definitions. The participants share the idea that literacy in this new millennium requires a broader understanding of what it means to read and write. Whether the participants would describe themselves as Freirean (and it is very likely that only one of them would go in that direction) or not, Freire’s (1970; Freire and Macedo, 1984) idea of “reading the word and the world” was present in how participants discussed
their beliefs about literacy. Even if some of the English instructors began by talking about the binary of “literate/illiterate,” an idea that scholars in New Literacy Studies and Critical Literacy, for instance, have strongly advocated against (Mora, 2009), the subsequent discussions with these participants showed that they all have larger expectations for literacy.

Participants in this study talked about literacy from a social perspective, as was the case in Moje’s (1999) study and how her participants emphasized this social component. Nonetheless, the discussions about this social component have come a long way since Scribner and Cole (1981) talked about literacy. Current conversations show a concern that the individual, and specifically the students, are the participants’ main constituency and responsibility. Instructors and teachers are interested in helping their students to learn to read and write as a step to become better, more empowered individuals. At least among these twelve participants, there was none of the “nation-building/nation-eroding” discourse that permeates some forms of basic literacy that scholars such as Hirsch (2006) advocate as the main goal for literacy teaching. Some of these participants are less interested in “nation” and more about “world,” another position that aligns with alternative views of literacy (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

The distinction between formal and informal language. Participants questioned whether students will lose track of the boundaries and differences between formal and informal language. Participants believed that more formal instruction in those formal elements of the language is more necessary today. They worried that the influx of technologies such as instant messaging was affecting students’ ability as writers. Advocates of multimodal expressions of literacy (e.g. Kellner, 2000; Kress, 1997; Nixon, 2003) have
echoed this sentiment and thus suggested instructional practices that address those foundational and formal elements of the language as a precursor to other literacy skills that the new technologies require of students.

**What triggers the evolution of literacy beliefs and practices.** One of the main curiosities that guided my interviews was finding out what particular features participants would link to literacy. It has been my experience that discussions of diversity or culture, for instance, are attached to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, family status, socio-economic status, to name a few. Some of the questions and analysis aimed at learning what elements of the participants’ background influenced how they constructed their core beliefs and practices.

**Race and gender are not the most influential factors.** One interesting feature about how participants talked about literacy was that, unlike diversity, race was less predominant for participants in the process of profiling their beliefs. Only one participant talked about the condition of being African-American as a factor that influenced instruction and which this instructor expected to also have a positive effect on the preservice students.

Gender did not make a difference in what participants believed or did in terms of literacy. There were no statements that said that literacy was different in the case of a “middle-aged White female” from that of a “young Asian-American male,” for instance. When I first chose not to imply gender in any of my participants’ descriptions, it was intended as a measure to protect their identities. But, as the interviews progressed, I realized that the participants’ gender and ethnicity, the one participant I mentioned in that chapter notwithstanding, were non-factors in the conversation.
While interacting with the twelve participants, I learned that four were male and eight were female, five were married (four of whom had children), one participant was Asian, and two were Jewish. However, that information did not necessarily appear in the data. In some cases, it was rather anecdotal or I knew that before beginning my data collection. Most importantly, those demographics were not the heart of the discussions.

**Education is a crucial factor when discussing one’s literacy beliefs and practices.**

While analyzing my data, I realized that education had a more lasting effect on the participants’ constructions of literacy. For instance, Dylan, Emery, and Morgan attributed the evolution and complication of these constructions to being in graduate school. Bailey, another literacy specialist by training, made references to how the evolution of the discussions on literacy coincided with the completion of a doctoral program. As the interviews progressed, Kennedy repositioned her discussion of literacy from the position of a film studies scholar.

Guadalupe expressed limitations to discuss some issues of literacy in full depth due to her background as a British literature scholar. This in some cases prevented a more detailed discussion of ideas such as multicultural education, which in the field of Victorian British literature would be retroactive. Harley relied on his background in writing studies to offer very strong responses about changes in writing and literacy. For instance, Harley’s explication of writing as a subset of composing relates closely to discussions of how composing should be the emphasis instead of just writing. These discussions about composing are an important conversation in views of multimodality (Kress, 1997, 2003) as a
changing factor in how one should view writing today. However, Harley’s discussions of literature or reading, for instance, were far more limited.

*Life and educational experiences also make a large difference.* Another factor that complicated the discussions about literacy was the participants’ educational and life experiences. The instructors with overseas experiences (Bailey, Guadalupe, and Kennedy) talked about how these experiences affected their literacy beliefs. In Bailey’s case, they continued affecting the contents, resources, and assignments he chose for his courses. The fact that, for Bailey, definitions and discussions of literacy and English had to consider issues of power can be attributed to his work with non-native English speakers. That was the case for Kennedy also. There were references to some of her experiences as a visiting instructor in Asia and how that made her have two very distinct definitions of English. The first-year teachers, on the other hand, had ideas of literacy that were still more simplified, as opposed to basic. I will return to this idea later in the chapter.

*The role of children in literacy beliefs and practices.* Only Kennedy, in her discussion of No Child Left Behind, made a conscious choice to present her views from the perspective of a very concerned parent. Other than her, whether a participant had children or not was a factor in the construction of literacy beliefs and practices. What was a factor, though, was the kind of children either they (as teachers) or their preservice teachers (as instructors) would be working with.

Armani constantly expressed concern about better preparing students to teach English Language Learners. She made a conscious effort to make that concern part of the methods courses while including resources, whether readings or contact with second-
language speakers in the community, within the regular activities. Bailey was adamant that the true constituency that the methods courses were serving was the students in schools rather than the preservice teachers themselves. Morgan also talked about the need to keep in mind that the students in schools were in many cases different from the preservice teachers that made up most of the student body at the University of the Midwest.

**Heightened awareness of difference.** Novice and veteran teachers reaffirmed an awareness that their literacy experiences were very different from those of the students they have been working since they started their careers. The teachers talked about how their background and schooling experiences, in many cases as honors students in high school, was their experience. They also expressed that they did not expect in any way for their students to replicate these experiences. The teachers shared that they never felt that their students were “worse” than them, what differed were their experiences.

The teachers, as former preservice students, made part of their everyday discourse ideas such as keeping students in mind, including multicultural readings, and varying their literacy strategies part of their curriculum. Those are ideas that have made it to syllabi and instructional practices in methods courses over the years. Participants talked about the influence of methods course instructors and how they helped shape practice. Although the instructors recognized that students entered with a set of beliefs that did not necessarily reflect that recognition of their students, in a similar vein as what Stuart and Thurlow (2000) described in their study, the interviews and the resources these participants shared with me showed an increased awareness of these issues. Whether the program is over-emphasizing the issues of diversity, as Dylan implied in an interview, one can also imply
from those statements that there is a genuine concern in the methods courses and their instructors to impact instruction. The first-year teachers showed a heightened awareness of the differences and need for a different approach from those that made their instruction. This is a significant finding and should therefore be a guideline for areas that preservice teacher education should continue emphasizing. This recognition of the importance of students’ prior experiences and knowledge provides a response to the levels of awareness that Bainbridge and Macy (2008) were suggesting in their own research.

*Defying narrow views of literacy in the literature.* All participants constructed their literacy beliefs and practices from a comprehensive approach. The way they created a complex picture of literacy beliefs and practices distanced this study from other research I reviewed in Chapter Two. I have argued, as Massey (2002) did, that in order to capture the complexity of views in literacy, we need a more complex framework. Reductionist views that only ask about reading and writing, as many studies did, are providing us with incomplete stories. These views and the notions that literacy practices become complicated as the result of life and education also challenge Boling’s (2008) assertion that a narrow view of literacy yields better results. If anything, the fact that this study relies on a complex, more comprehensive conceptual framework has provided a larger spectrum of answers, as well as multiple layers of meaning and interpretation.

**Technology will be a contested issue for a while longer.** In the case of technology and literacy, we are far from reaching a consensus about how to implement it or whether this is a blessing or a curse for teachers. The participants’ responses expressed a divide in this regard, showing two positions vis-à-vis technology. However, it is unlikely that the
implementation of technology would ever trigger a deep ideological divide like the “reading wars” in the 1990s, to which both Armani and Bailey made reference in their interviews. Instead of two completely antagonizing camps, what the data found are a series of efforts to both use technology more constructively and minimize the potential damages that the combination of literacy and technology may trigger.

**Making sense of technology as a step to maximizing it.** All participants, regardless of age, are trying to make sense of these technologies and how they affect classroom instruction. In terms of technology and literacy, participants are engaging in a process of reflection like the one Boling (2008) asked for. This process includes asking why we are integrating technology and literacy and how we can really make it more accessible for teachers.

One clear example of this reflection is Dylan. Although Dylan may have described himself as “old school” in some matters, he was constantly questioning how technology really makes a difference. Other participants, such as Bailey or Harley, talked extensively about their ongoing efforts to make technology a better support for literacy practices. I still feel, however, that the literature needs to explore more deeply how teachers reflect on these issues. The data indicated that participants are really engaging with these questions and concerns on a daily basis.

**Does technology influence writing more than reading?** Looking at participants’ answers, they seemed to defy some of the conventional wisdom that drove most studies to choose reading over writing. The paucity of studies where writing is the focus has lost track on one of the findings of this study: technology and literacy seem to be more influential for
writing than for reading practices. Participants are tinkering with online and computer
technologies to offer multiple alternatives of writing. They also admit that the way we write
has dramatically changed in some ways: there is a sense of agency that online technologies
have increased. Students feel that they have access to broader audiences. In fact, my
participants’ experiences with blogs are far more positive than what Boling (2008)
experienced with her students.

**Defying traditional categories: Can we still talk about “natives” and “immigrants”?** The participants in this study come from a broad range of ages and
educational backgrounds. However, all participants reported varying degrees of success
using blogs and online technologies. They talked about innovations and efforts to negotiate
technology and literacy. They questioned the traditional assumptions that novice teachers
would be more willing to use technology or that the more veteran instructors would be less
willing to learn. Kennedy’s account of all the efforts she made to integrate technology,
including joining research groups, would be evidence that willingness has nothing to do with
age or experience. Findings from this study provide an invitation to revisit the fixed
categories of “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” (Prensky, 2001). Those two
categories are, in my view, unfair and will become obsolete in a few years. After all, the next
cadres of teachers and in a few years, teacher educators, will be participating in all these new
technologies.

This study challenges Prensky’s assertions that teachers and teacher educators need
to be reminded that “our students have changed radically” (p. 1). If there is one important
and fundamental change in terms of literacy beliefs and practices is that all participants are
very well aware that things have changed. They have all evolved and have adapted their literacy practices for the new kinds of students they are now facing. Whether they have done it willingly or reluctantly is a different story. That is one indictment that this study does not intend to do. The goal of this study is to analyze the beliefs and practices, not demonize them. I am interested in the evolution of these practices, not in judging if they have evolved enough.

From that perspective, the evolution and adaptation are evident. Participants have embraced technology in many ways. In some cases, they have completely modified their literacy practices. Some participants acknowledged printing less and less and reading more from screens. Others recognized that new resources are effecting changes in the way they plan and create activities for their classes.

What I Know About Instructional Practices in the Context of Secondary English Teacher Education: Back to the Second Research Question

The discussion about literacy beliefs and practices in the context of English and methods courses and how they are shaping instruction provided a series of challenges and questions to traditional ideas in the literature. I want to point out again that the purpose of this study is not to evaluate the program, but to describe the practices in which instructors and former preservice teachers engage. However, there were issues that surfaced in the data that may help us rethink what the literature has said.

Instructors are overlapping with, not contradicting, each other. Some of the literature that deals with English teacher education programs and instructors assumes that there are mixed messages stemming from English and methods courses. The findings did
not find contradictory or antagonizing messages. I did find, however, plenty of overlaps among instructors. I heard English and methods course instructors talking about the incorporation of multicultural texts, multimodality, or media literacy. There were a few conceptual differences, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, however. I talked about how instructors defined critical, for instance, or how they approached the selection of multicultural texts. Looking at the data from novice and veteran teachers also confirmed this lack of antagonism. The teachers mostly talked about the contributions from either side, but there were no statements where any of them stated that instructors’ definitions of critical thinking were contradictory, for example.

These findings actually challenge notions that English teacher education programs have a divide between teaching the canon and teaching multicultural texts (Callahan, 2000). These findings also challenge that mixed messages are the norm in English teacher education. What these findings are calling for is a revision of how we are learning about instructors’ literacy practices and the nature of messages they are sharing.

**Ongoing reflection and evolution.** The Secondary English Teacher Education program remains in a state of flux. Instructors in English and methods courses are continually reflecting on how to better prepare the next generations of teachers. One of the first elements of instruction that I discovered was how instructors, particularly in methods courses, are very well aware of their preservice teachers’ backgrounds. The way instructors described the strengths and weaknesses from their students confirms my critique to the suggestions by Mallette and colleagues (2005) to find ways to recognize shortcomings in students’ beliefs. I questioned that these authors seemed to assert that this was not
happening. The way the methods courses are constructed, from the notion that the
students’ experiences are not necessarily better, but different, is a step forward in how the
instructors in the program are creating a different level of awareness about literacy in their
students. The fact is that these students, once they become teachers, are recognizing those
differences and keep finding ways to adapt their teaching to their needs.

Another question I had while reviewing the literature was why some studies (e.g.
Hamel, 2008; Mallette et al., 2005; Muchmore, 2001) assumed that either English or
methods course instructors were not engaging in specific practices. Their findings gave the
impression that instructors were not engaging their students in deeper reflections about
literacy practices. The findings in this study actually challenge these assertions and invite us
to revisit how we are learning about English teacher education programs. It is not about
assuming things are not happening, but probing deeper to learn what is happening.

Instructors hold core beliefs, but they are far from stagnant. This study
challenges the findings by Dilworth and McCracken (1997) on the grounds that instructors
do not have stagnant views about literacy and literacy instruction. I also improved
substantially on what Hochstetler (2007) and Marshall and Smith (1997) did, since I looked
at multiple syllabi from both English and methods courses. My findings showed that the
instructors operate from a fixed set of beliefs that they have established over a career, as
some studies have also affirmed. However, the claim that some studies have made that
instructors have not changed is a disservice to the reflection these participants constantly
engage in. My data showed that instructors have adapted their teaching and even their
research to address issues of technology and of better instruction. In some cases, they are
also rethinking how to help students face the ongoing emphasis on standards. I feel confident that once we all know what new policies the Obama administration will set, they will also find ways to make that part of their reflection.

In terms of what the instructors are saying, I found that assuming that English instructors all frame literacy practices from a basic literacy paradigm just because some courses emphasize canonical text is a very shortsighted assumption. I believe that my study considerably challenges the findings by Marshall and Smith (1997) about how English instructors construct their literacy beliefs and practices. These instructors are continually reflecting on how to incorporate reflections about areas in the permeable literacy continuum such as multiculturalism, multimodality, and multiple forms of written design.

A wider range of literacy practices. One of the goals of this study was to discover the extent of literacy practices that instructors and students engage in. None of the instructors stated being heavily involved in implementing an entire framework based on Multiliteracies, as was the case of other studies (e.g. Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). Nevertheless, that did not mean that the range of literacy beliefs and practices was narrow. The data showed that ideas from multiple literacy paradigms were present. The data also showed that the preparation of teachers in the Secondary English Teacher Education program has continually evolved over these 15 years. In that time, ideas like taking risks, creating comfortable atmospheres for play, attention to multiple genres, etc. have become constants in the different courses these instructors offer. The preservice teachers have also recognized the extent in which these messages made part of their courses. Their responses
about their literacy practices in their classrooms are in many aspects a reflection of these emphases and beliefs from their instructors.

This evolution and expansion in literacy beliefs and practices from both English and methods course instructors challenges the assertions of Marshall and Smith (1997). There is a much wider range of perspectives than other studies has shown. One possible reason is the kind of instruments that studies have used to learn about instructors, especially those in English courses. Instruments such as surveys or the collection of one single syllabus will provide an incomplete picture. Only through an exploration of multiple syllabi and interviews was I able to learn about this range of practices.

The role of critical thinking in instructional practices. Apol and colleagues (2003) called for more efforts to incorporate critical views of literacy. As I stated in the previous section, the authors operated under the assumption that this was not taking place already. In fact, their findings did not lend themselves to that question. Instructors and teachers are engaging in deeper conversations about the value of critical thinking within literacy. There was a consensus that critical thinking was a need for good literacy practices. All instructors, whether in English or methods courses, had strong feelings about the importance of introducing critical thinking in their instruction. The fact that all instructors talked about how literacy practices had to be critical in nature should be taken as a challenge to Apol and colleagues and a call for a more expanded analysis of how critical thinking is part and parcel of literacy practices in secondary English teacher education programs.
Implications

This research has triggered a number of thoughts of things we need to rethink and revisit as we continue our conversations about literacy beliefs and practices in secondary English teacher education. This section will discuss the implications that this study has generated for the fields of literacy research and English education at large.

**Literacy research.** This study explored literacy from a different conceptual perspective and the findings reflected the expanded views in the literacy continuum. This reflection and the data provided three main implications, (a) the need to rethink a new paradigm for literacy; (b) the need to revisit the traditional binaries that have plagued literacy research; and (c) the need to reflect on that imbalance between changes in reading and writing practices.

**Revising the conceptual framework: Foundational literacy.** In Chapter One, I questioned whether or not the differences between basic and foundational literacies were easier to notice in adult education than in secondary education. Once I read the participants’ answers, I realized that two of the conceptual pillars of these paradigms were noticeably absent from the responses. I pointed out earlier in this chapter that this notion of “nation-building” that proponents of the basic literacy paradigm such as Hirsch and others seem to promote. Also, the idea of “labor-force skills” (Smagorinsky, 2006) that ideas from functional literacy seem to foster was also missing from the participants’ discourse. Some participants still talked about ideas such as “literate vs. illiterate” and emphasis on elements of grammar and development of fundamental skills as part of their literacy beliefs and practices. However, their disagreements with the culture of standards and their interest in
students’ growth (Dixon, 1967; Smagorinsky, 2002) made me question whether I had to rethink my own framework.

As a consequence, I think we need to move toward another paradigm for literacy practices. We need a paradigm that still pays attention to the basic skills that are still required by students while ignoring the deep ideological and political (usually right-wing) undertones that want to force teachers’ decisions. I propose, then, talking about foundational literacy instead of either basic or functional literacies. I still think those two paradigms have a place in the conversation. I am just challenging whether they are more appropriate for discussions of adult education than they are for the school context.

I believe this foundational literacy paradigm, since it is linked to the idea of “person,” rather than “citizen,” would bring it closer to the alternative views of literacy insofar as it provides a more global perspective to how we frame the students. It would bring literacy closer to the ideas of self-reflection and the larger goals for reading that Muchmore (2001) described for his participant. It would also keep the goals for literacy along the lines of applicability and “real meaning” that Smagorinsky and colleagues (2006) introduced in their study about functional literacy.

However, a foundational literacy view also takes into consideration how my participants talked about literacy from a position that views their role as larger than preparing them for the work force or to simply pass tests. A foundational literacy paradigm would pay attention to the reading, writing, and oral communication practices that individuals need in order to engage in larger, more sophisticated literacy practices as the ones required with the ongoing presence of online technologies. Unlike New Literacy
Studies, which has made their focus to the exploration of out-of-school contexts, I still think that a foundational paradigm should center on schools, but not to reaffirm Street’s (1984) autonomous model, but to defy it. In this paradigm, the school practices are a bridge to better approach other literacy practices. A strong foundation in grammar and standard forms of the language, for instance, may allow a student to really exploit alternative genres of writing. Beginning from a strong foundation in reading comprehension in hard copy readings would be the first step to move on to other forms of reading that online technologies demand. An emphasis on critical thinking (which sometimes seems to be ignored in some basic and foundational literacy models) should be the bridge to critical thinking ingrained in social justice and a global view of society and the world, as proponents of critical literacy and Multiliteracies, for instance, seem to call for.

If literacy beliefs and practices are evolving, the paradigms need to continue evolving in order to properly address the demands of a new society. The basic and functional literacy paradigms, as initially conceived, are no longer responding to the kinds of students that are entering our schools today and the ones that will enter in a few years. A foundational literacy paradigm, then, opens room to a deeper reflection about what the fundamentals should be like, while returning to that goal for English education that goes as far back as the Dartmouth council (Dixon, 1967): the person.

**Moving away from binaries.** When I started working on the idea of the permeable literacy continuum, one of my main concerns was moving away from the traditional binary oppositions that seem to affect a number of studies in literacy research. I believe that this study and the conceptual framework that I used for this work are a necessary first step.
toward more inclusive frameworks. If we set paradigms opposing or antagonizing, there will be information that one single paradigm will always miss. This framework is far from perfect, but the concept behind a broad range of schools of thought yielded more complex results and narratives than choosing only one or two paradigms would have otherwise.

A deeper reflection on literacy beliefs and practices, then, should build on broader frameworks. The benefits of a conceptual framework as the one I have proposed are a more useful alternative to interrogate values and practices.

**The disparity between writing and reading.** There was one element about the participants’ description of literacy practices that we need to explore closely: the fact that participants thought reading practices remained far more constant than writing ones. Participants agreed that access to resources had increased as the result of online technologies, but they saw more opportunities for expansion than they did in reading. The discussions about multiplicity of genres and avenues for writing is a stark contrast about the assumption that reading is reading, no matter the media we use to approach the texts.

Whether there was a need to rethink how we are teaching reading comprehension, however, was missing from the conversation. Participants had conflicting responses about how reading had changed, but it was more about quality or performance and less about the evolution of change of the required skills to face reading in the advent of new technologies. Although I think the participants have showed interesting changes in the methods in which they are combining writing and technology, I still challenge the need to rethink reading and reading comprehension.
The nature of reading has changed, and it goes far beyond the transition from reading from a book to reading from a laptop or a Kindle™, for instance. I have experienced myself that the way I read online is different from the ways I read hard copies. This is a change in practice that some scholars in the New Literacy Studies paradigm, for instance, are already studying (e.g. Leu et al, 2007; Leu, O'Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry, & Everett-Copacardo, 2009) and one I believe needs to be part of the discussion.

**For English education.** The field of English education at large is constantly reflecting on how to improve the quality of instruction. However, some of the studies and their data do not lend themselves to deeper reflections of what still needs to change. The implications in this section have a scope much broader than the University of the Midwest. They are reflections that I think other English education programs need to consider. Three implications stem from the data, (a) we need to revisit the messages and resources; (b) we need to rethink our efforts in preparing English teachers, and (c) we need to explore the existence of overlaps more deeply.

**Reinforcing messages.** The data raised questions of whether English instructors are opening spaces to address the realities of today's schools and students. Novice and veteran teachers alike argued that there are contents from these courses that they cannot really utilize unless they are teaching high school, especially Advanced Placement Literature courses. English programs need to consider whether sections tailored toward Secondary English minors could take a deeper focus on the process of approaching literature. Participants appreciated the critical thinking skills they learned in their English courses, as well as the different skills they developed to approach a reading. A more systematic effort
from the perspective of literature courses would be a starting point in giving prospective teachers more tools to approach the teaching of literature.

**Rethinking some practices.** English courses need to continue reflecting on how to better help the preservice teachers they are serving. The data indicated that instructors are concerned about these issues. English programs should offer courses that combine interdisciplinary instruction with courses whose constituencies are education students. One good example of how to combine these efforts would be the grammar courses. Such courses could be multi-disciplinary, offered to both Secondary English Education minors and students pursuing a degree in English as a Second Language. If the responses from the participants are any indication, they feel the pressing need to work with English Language Learners. Secondary preservice English teachers would benefit from the conversations with prospective ESL teachers and both groups of preservice teachers would be able to find a more articulated view of teaching and how to offer maximum support to ELL students.

If there are writing-specialized classes in English, they should also include separate sections for Secondary English minors. A specialized course on writing would give instructors the chance for deeper reflections about the nature of writing, opportunities for more hands-on work over the course of a full-semester. The findings actually indicate that teachers agreed that there is a need for a bigger push on writing.

**Bridging gaps.** I have argued that the literature has worried more about the possible contradictions than the existence of overlaps. This lack of knowledge about the overlaps is something that needs to be addressed. I think articulation needs to happen at all levels. Preservice teachers are developing a sense of identity as being part of this program. That is a
head start. However, more information about what instructors are doing is a pressing need. Considering the time constraints that surround the program, setting meetings, for instance, would be difficult. But, if there were for instance, a database for instructors to exchange syllabi, I think that at least would give them the chance to learn more and either avoid unnecessary repetition or turn repetition into a source of reinforcement.

**Limitations**

I am certain that the lessons I learned through this study are important and I am excited about its contributions. That does not mean I am not aware that some things could have been better and that this study had some limitations. I want to explain what some of them were in order to offer a higher degree of credibility to this study:

**Access to participants**. Finding participants was a daunting task in some instances. Although I think the lessons from this study are priceless and I will expand my research thanks to what all twelve participants shared with me, the conditions of this study prevented me from access to certain key informants in the process. I probably would have benefited from a few more participants who had a deeper historical perspective about the program and the University as Bailey and Kennedy did. Some of these participants were unavailable due to their unwillingness to participate, some due to logistical impossibilities. This became a limitation because some of the instructors were part of the program in more recent times, missing out on the evolution of the program itself.

**Access to data**. I believe I made the right choices in the selection of documents. The blog entries, the syllabi, the assignments, etc. are the kind of data that provides a larger
picture about literacy beliefs and practices. However, since I was collecting some data from the college years, there was a risk that the teachers did not have these data available anymore. That was a risk that I had assumed from the outset and one that I hoped would be offset by the depth of the interviews. However, I admit that had I had access to more of these data, the degree of complexity of the findings would have increased substantially.

**Timeline.** I have to be realistic in the expectations of a research project that is linked to degree completion. Sometimes one has to fit the study to that expected graduation and visa restrictions. That is a reality that I cannot avoid as an international doctoral candidate. The timeline proposed allowed me to successfully reach my goals of conducting this study and complete it in a timely fashion that would not jeopardize my visa status. However, having that time disadvantage prevented me from conducting a larger study or considering different data sources.

**Future Directions for Research**

I designed a study about literacy beliefs and practices, framed within the context of a secondary English teacher education program. I am certain my findings have responded to features that previous studies and reviews of research believed were missing. However, I was also realistic that my study, given my time limitations and choices of data and participants, cannot answer all the research needs. In addition, I discovered other research needs as the result of my own work. I will highlight some possible lines of research I suggest to build upon and follow on some of the issues I have discussed. I will also suggest ideas based on what I deliberately chose not to do.
Research on the complication of literacy practices. I learned that education and experience were two important factors that complicated literacy. Graduate school became a large factor that really pushed the evolution to another level of complexity and elaboration. I have seen studies (some reviewed for this study) that looked at graduate programs in teaching, but I have not found studies that look at the effect of graduate school in teachers’ beliefs and practices. As this study proved, graduate school makes a difference. I believe, however, that we need more research on the ways graduate courses complicate and modify those beliefs and practices. I think there are important lessons to learn for preservice education in looking at graduate programs in reading or writing studies.

Research on literacy events. This study showed how by providing a broader conceptual framework for literacy provided a better outlook for the ranges of beliefs of practices that stem from a secondary English teacher education program. I believe that future research can expand on the findings illustrated in this study by look at literacy events (Moje, 1996; Street, 1995). Learning about literacy directly from the stories and narratives of teachers and teacher educators is a powerful source to illustrate future lines of work. Exploring what takes place in the classrooms is just the natural next step to continue learning about what instructors and teachers are doing and how those lessons from the preservice methods and English courses are utilized in the classrooms.

In this regard, I suggest taking the categories for analysis, the conceptual framework I have already suggested, and the four participant groups I chose as the starting point for this research on literacy events. The exploration of these events would entail detailed observations of classrooms where all four participant groups teach. In addition, any research
that takes into account literacy events would need to include follow-up questions and probes in the interview protocols that expand on the different elements found in the observations. The questions should keep the evolution thread that I have followed for this study, including inquiries about how these events have changed in the past 15 years. My questions in the protocols provide a start by asking how participants experienced the changes in their own classrooms. By triangulating these questions with observations, future research will provide a progression in how we learn about the evolution of literacy that teachers and teacher educators experience.

Another area of expansion within the research on literacy events would include collecting student work in those same classrooms. A look at the examples of practices described in the previous chapter should provide future studies with a solid start on the kinds of artifacts they should collect. The collection of these artifacts should also be complemented with follow-up questions in the interview protocols. The questions should allow participants to reflect on changes regarding quality and other issues. The findings of this study provide an excellent example of that line of questioning. If one looked at Kennedy’s reflections when comparing student work from different courses over the years, one could expand that reflection by having participants use the student work collected as the starting point of their discussions.

**Future research on policies.** Although this was not a study about policy, I did inquire about the effect of policies. Based on participant responses, I propose two areas of future research and reflection, (a) more follow-up on NCLB and (b) follow-up on what the Obama administration may have in mind for education.
Follow-up on NCLB. There were four studies I read to gather some background about how NCLB was affecting classrooms. Two of them (Dooley & Assaf, 2009; McCarthey, 2008) focused on the context of English instruction. The other two (Barrett, 2009; Suskind, 2007) provided more general background about the effect on teachers or instruction. When it comes to the effects of NCLB on instruction, I believe my findings and the stories the teachers shared are very consistent with what other studies have already said. Teachers feel constrained and unable to do what they think are better practices.

My findings uncovered some very candid and some, to be fair, very disheartening accounts of how NCLB is affecting teachers and teacher educators. As researchers, we cannot ignore the loss of morale and the feelings of impotence that some participants expressed. It may be safe to assume that there are stories that mirror theirs. Although these findings are still a long way from fully addressing Marshall’s (2009) questions about "the way teachers are affected by current mandates" (p. 123), I am confident they serve as a head start. I suggest a larger study, based on interviews and testimonies as its primary source, to address Marshall’s questions about how mandates affect teachers’ performance, their conception of professional identities, etc.

If responses such as Morgan’s and Jaden’s are any indication, we need to find more of these stories to rethink better ways to support these teachers both in terms of preparation and advocacy. I think the findings of the questions about NCLB mirror concerns that Barrett’s (2009) surveys already discovered. However, since I relied on interviews rather than surveys, I was able to collect in a higher degree the true effects of these policies. That said, I do not think that three interview questions within a much larger protocol is enough. I,
therefore, would go as far as not simply suggesting but encouraging other research in the fields of literacy and policy to pick up this trail and pursue this line of research.

**Follow-up on the Obama administration.** In the process of interviews, I added a question inquiring about what participants had heard about changes proposed by the Obama administration. On the one hand, some participants made references to ideas like Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) and made references to Arne Duncan’s experience as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. On the other hand, their responses also showed that they were still really worried about the present pressures and demands of NCLB to even begin to fathom what President Obama had in mind.

However, with recent reports of an overhaul that would eliminate NCLB altogether (Associated Press, 2010), I believe that as literacy and teacher education researchers and from the position of the different professional organizations (e.g. NCTE, IRA, AERA), we all need to keep a mindful eye on the new government proposals and policies and really be proactive in interrogating them (Marshall, 2009, p. 115), their effects for teacher preparation, their consequences toward teacher quality and even, once again echoing Morgan’s statement, the overall morale of teachers.

**Research looking at other content areas.** In their study about instructional changes across math and English teachers, Stodolsky and Grossman (2000) argued, “English may offer a more hospitable context for adaptations to diverse learners. Over all, English teachers do not see their subject matter as static, and while they believe that English is sequential, they hold this belief significantly less strongly than do math teachers” (Conceptions of Subject Matter, para. 4).
Bearing this in mind, I wonder how different the findings would be if one looked at the context of the Secondary Teacher Education program in any of the other three content areas (i.e. science, math, and social studies). Would the participants hold similar views regarding changes? How would technology be a factor (or non-factor) in the changes in the instructors and teachers’ beliefs and practices? How would the messages about teaching the content areas have changed over 15 years? Those are some issues where an analysis of beliefs and practices in the other three content areas might be beneficial. This could also expand to an analysis of core beliefs and practices at a larger programmatic level.

**Coda: What This Study Meant to Me**

The day I took the Preliminary Examination, where I presented my initial proposal for consideration, one of my Doctoral Committee members asked me why I was doing this study. My response to her made it to the introduction of this dissertation. However, I could not stop thinking about this question and I decided to revisit it as part of my final reflections on this study. After all, reaching this point has been a six-year journey from the day I started my doctoral program.

Working on this dissertation was a challenge. It pushed me to question everything I think I knew about literacy. It made me ask deeper questions about what literacy, evolution, and change meant to me. My beliefs and practices have evolved again. I have different perspectives of what it means to prepare English teachers and the efforts that both English and methods course instructors engage in to prepare the next cadres of teachers. This research also made me question my own education. I realized, just like some of my
participants did, that graduate school made me question a number of things. I questioned not only my understandings of what literacy means, but also my own education as a foreign language preservice teacher sixteen years ago. I am more appreciative of the good instructors I had and I am far more critical of the shortcomings of that program. This study helped me reshape the way I engage with preservice teachers. One short-term effect was in how I designed my own methods course this semester. A long-term effect will be how I will design those methods courses I will teach.

As I engaged in this research on literacy beliefs and practices, I had to make a wager on how far I would distance myself from my background as an English as a Foreign Language teacher. I chose to move toward teacher education, English education, and literacy development from a larger perspective with the belief that it would be easier for me to start there and later zero in on issues of foreign language instruction. This is a new challenge that begins for me once I finish the process of this dissertation. I will have to engage on a much bigger reflection of how I will use the theoretical framework I have proposed in this study to address questions about literacy beliefs and practices from the local context of my own country. The Colombian education system is facing a process of realignment to make bilingualism a national policy. Part of my reflection will include then how to analyze this shift using a multi-faceted framework and a research methodology based on a multi-vocal study. This is a question that I will not be able to answer at the end of this dissertation. It is more a possibility for a new chapter in my research agenda, but one that I would not be able to face had I not studied literacy issues in the level of depth that my research project demanded.
Finally, there is a level of personal involvement in this study. If we are to believe that literacy is a way to make sense of the world, then one’s view of literacy affects everything. I would be foolish to believe that my personal life did not intertwine with this study. Working on this dissertation alone, from the very first notes I wrote until writing these final words, has taken four years of my life. Some things of my life have changed, as do literacy practices. New chapters in my life will open after I this, including relocation, marriage, and even children. I know that my evolving views of literacy will have an effect on how I face my life after graduate school and it is not too far-fetched to assert that they will even affect how I will raise my children. I just feel that my work on this stage of my degree has left me better equipped to face all those challenges, all those instances of change and evolution. That alone has made this journey the best learning experience. I am a better researcher, a better teacher, a better scholar, and better human being after this. And, if we hold those lofty goals of the Dartmouth Conference almost fifty years ago, then I believe this study will lead me in the right direction.
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Appendix A

Interview Protocols

For each of the three interviews, there was a protocol for the instructors and another for the graduates. I present each protocol below.

First Interview

The goal of this interview is to learn about your personal and professional experiences regarding literacy practices. My questions will tackle different areas of literacy and what changes you have experienced. I have chosen a 15-year time span. All of your comments and insights will be very useful as we reflect on how different literacy was then and what literacy practices look like now.

Question Zero (for Instructors Only) In order to have some background information, please tell me what the last 15 years would cover in terms of your career (i.e. just your professional career; graduate school and academia; teaching, graduate school, and academia; etc.)

1. Please tell me how you would define or describe Literacy.
2. Please tell me how you would define or describe English (as a subject).
3. Please tell me how you would define or describe English Education.
4. Please tell me how you would define or describe Literature.
5. Please tell me about the changes that you have noticed in how society has approached the act of reading since you were in middle/high school until now (e.g. what constitutes “good” reading; why, how, and what people read; the overall importance of reading; etc.)
6. How do you see these changes reflected in the context of the students you have worked with?

7. Please tell me about the changes that you have noticed in how society has approached the act of writing since you were in middle/high school until now (e.g. why, what, and how people write; how important people consider writing; etc.)

8. How do you see these changes reflected in the context of the students you have worked with?

9. Please tell me about the changes you have noticed since you were in middle/high school until now in terms of people's ideas about what text is and what constitutes text.

10. Please tell me how reading and writing in your personal life have changed since you were in middle/high school until now. Think about you own agendas, kinds of writing you engage in, methods and tools you use for writing, etc.

11. Please describe how you have changed, if at all, your approach to reading and writing in the time you have been a teacher.

12. Tell me about changes that you have noticed in how society has valued oral communication since you were in middle/high school until now, for instance vis-à-vis written communication.

13. How do you see these changes reflected in the context of the students you have worked with?

14. Technology and media have changed radically since you were in middle/high school until now. Tell me about changes you have either seen or experienced in the way people rely on media and communication technologies to support literacy practices.

15. How do you see these changes reflected in the context of the students you have worked with?

16. Over time, society, media, and politicians have assigned literacy and literacy practices particular goals and agendas. Tell me how different those messages about the goals and agendas for literacy have looked like since you were in middle/high school until now.
Second Interview (Version for Instructors)

In this interview, I want to further explore some elements of your work as an instructor at the University of the Midwest. You’ve kindly shared some of your syllabi for two courses you have taught, (make a direct reference to the courses you picked!). The following questions will zero in on some of your curricular decisions, resources, feedback, and the potential impact of these courses in the preservice teachers you (may) have encountered during your time here. As always, feel free to answer the questions as openly as you wish.

1. Please describe how often, if at all, you revise the choices of topics, readings and additional resources for this/these course(s) since you first taught it/them.

2. Follow-up questions: (a) What have you changed? (b) Why have you/have you not changed the resources? (c) Are there any resources you would consider adding/eliminating if you were to teach/when you teach that course again?

3. I would like for you to tell me now how often, if at all, you revise the assignments for this/these course(s) since you first taught it/them.

4. Follow-up questions: (a) What have you changed? (b) Why have you/have you not changed the assignments? (c) Are there any assignments you would consider adding/eliminating if you were to teach/when you teach that course again?

5. Tell me about the value and use of feedback as part of writing the syllabi for this/these courses and as you prepare to teach them again.

6. Follow-up questions: (a) Whose feedback have you considered/would you consider? (b) Are the students vocal about the changes? (c) Do you ever get feedback from graduates or other practitioners outside your department (e.g. teachers, superintendents, etc.)

7. Tell me to what extent your previous experiences at the personal and professional levels (as a reader and writer, as a student, as a teacher, as a researcher, etc.) have influenced your choices of topics, readings, resources, and assignments for this/these courses.
8. Follow-up questions: (a) Do you talk about the kinds of reading and writing you engage yourself into? (b) Do you show them examples of your own work? (c) If yes, how do your students respond to that? (d) If not, would you consider it beneficial as a way to help them construct their own practice?

9. Please describe the contribution you think the topics, readings, and assignments in this/these course(s) offer to the development of the students you've worked with in the following four categories, as it may be applicable. I will mention them one by one: (a) their professional content base (i.e. ideas about reading, writing, literature, English etc.) and (b) their teaching style.

10. Please tell me how you see your contribution as instructor in the development of students you've worked with in the categories that we talked about in the previous question.

11. (Question for English faculty only) Tell me if you would consider opening a separate section of these courses for Secondary English majors as a viable option. Describe the course for me. OR (Question for Methods course faculty only) Tell me how you would design and teach your ideal Secondary English methods course.

**Second Interview (Version for Graduates)**

In this interview, I want to further explore some elements of your experience as a student at the University of the Midwest. The questions will zero in on your perceptions about your instructors' decisions about contents, resources, assignments, feedback, and the potential impact of the courses you took in your past and current practice. As always, feel free to answer the questions as openly as you wish.

For this first group of questions, I want you to think about two courses you took in the English department and the first two courses of the methods course sequence (i.e. CI 301/401 and CI 302/402).

1. Describe what the different instructors in the Secondary English Education courses you picked (both literature and education) emphasized on their courses in terms of contents and resources.
2. Describe the kind of reading and writing assignments favored in those courses you took.

3. Follow-up questions: (a) What did the instructor emphasize most through the readings (i.e. literacy development, literature, etc.) (b) Did the instructor provide specific strategies to help you improve your writing?

4. Tell me how technology influenced how those instructors set up their courses, if at all. Think about access to resources, assignments, instructional strategies, etc.

For this group of questions, please talk about the English courses you took and the CI methods course sequence.

5. We talked about your personal and instructional approaches to literacy practices in the first interview. Please tell me which of those ideas you can trace back to what you learned in the Secondary English Education program.

6. Follow-up questions: Tell me what other places/people/resources that have been influential besides your Secondary English background?

7. Please tell me the contribution you think the contents and instructors in the Secondary English Education methods courses offered in the development of your current teaching practices in the following two categories: (a) your professional content base and (b) your teaching style.

8. Please tell me the contribution you think the contents and instructors in the English courses you took for your Secondary English Education major offered in the development of your current teaching practices in same categories I described in the previous question.

9. From your experience as a teacher, describe what you think the Education methods courses should emphasize in terms of contents, resources, and assignments.

10. Imagine that the English department will offer separate sections of their courses for Secondary English Education majors. Describe what you think these courses should emphasize in terms of contents, resources, and assignments.
Third Interview

We talked about some issues regarding your courses in the previous interview. In this first part of the interview, I'd like to probe more about other factors affecting the design of your syllabus/courses.

1. Please tell me what you take into consideration when you are designing the different courses you teach for the Secondary English Education program/your classes at school.

2. Probe whether they factor in some of their possible strengths and weaknesses they have noticed in students.

3. Describe whether your departments/colleges/districts have any preset expectations for what you're supposed to teach or the kinds of activities you are supposed to favor in your courses.

4. Probe for specific literacy practices (kinds of readings, kinds of reading assignments, reading comp strategies, writing assignments/genres, oral communication, technology assignments, etc.) that teachers are expected to do.

5. In the case of English faculty, probe for whether there are any particular policies or guidelines regarding their work with potential Secondary English Education majors or if expectations for these students are exactly the same as everybody else's. Also, probe if having such guidelines might be helpful to them. OR In the case of graduates, probe for how much latitude the departments/districts offer them to tweak their syllabi or if they must work with pre-programmed lesson plans.

This part of the interview will now focus on more general issues related to literacy practices and the present educational context.

6. Describe how, if at all, you are engaging with multicultural literature/texts/media.

7. Describe how, if at all, you are engaging with technology/media for text creation and interpretation.

8. Describe how, if at all, you are engaging with alternative forms/genres of writing in the classroom.

9. Describe how, if at all, you are engaging with use of literacy for critical thinking.
10. Describe how, if at all, you are engaging with teaching of literacy from a more student-centered perspective.

11. In the case of the teachers, probe for the influence of their own English departments and their own districts in the engagement or lack thereof.

12. Based on your own experience with the different students you have worked with, tell me how you think ongoing policies such as NCLB have affected teachers’ classroom literacy practices?

13. How have these policies redefined literacy goals for students?

14. What are teachers doing to either embrace or resist these changes?

15. Probe for departments/districts in the case of the teachers.

16. Recent news outlets are reporting changes that the Obama administration has in mind for education reform. Please tell me if you have heard what colleges of education (namely U of MW), schools, and districts may be doing in preparation for these changes.

17. Describe how you think the Secondary English Education program has responded to these changes within the courses the program offers. Otherwise, tell me how you think it should respond to them.

18. Tell me about the effect that the current demands of schools and districts, as well as the existing policies, have on your ongoing efforts (for faculty) to support English Education students as they prepare to teach English? (for teachers) to help your students in their process to develop literacy practices?

19. Tell me what you think the Secondary English Education program at large needs to address in terms of preparing students for the literacy practices that we are facing today and the present context of the educational system today.
Appendix B

E-mail Script Samples

This appendix includes samples of the messages I used to contact all participants in this study. Scripts were required to comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) rules regarding participant recruitment.

Recruitment Message for Instructors, English Department

Dr. XXXX

English Department

University of The Midwest

Dear Dr. XXXX,

My name is Raúl A. Mora. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am about to begin the data collection stage of my dissertation. For this purpose, I intend to interview faculty from the department of English who have been involved to some capacity in the Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of the Midwest.

After reviewing the information about courses and instructors currently available on the Course Information Suite website, I noticed that some of the courses you have recently taught are among the list of possible courses to comply with the requirements for the Teaching of English Option. Given that prospective English teachers may have taken one of these courses, I believe that you are someone whose work and insights would be

19 I made some minor edits to the letters shown here in order to keep the anonymity already established in the rest of the dissertation.
valuable for the nature of my study. Therefore, I would like to discuss with you the possibility to be part of my dissertation research during this semester. Participation would only require two things: Meeting with me for three interviews and sharing a few documents that relate to your teaching. There might also be the need for occasional email communication, but that will be kept to a minimum.

According to the IRB regulations under which this dissertation study was approved, this letter constitutes an invitation and is the first step of consent. In the event you agree to participate, I will send you a formal consent form with further details and more information about your rights as a human subject in a UIUC-approved research project. Should you have any questions about the nature of my project and the expectations for participation, feel free to contact me via e-mail at abc@illinois.edu or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and interest in my research. I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

Raul A. Mora, MA

Recruitment Message for Instructors, College of Education

Dr./Mr./Ms. XXXXXXX

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

University of The Midwest

Dear Dr. XXXXX,
My name is Raúl A. Mora. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am about to begin the data collection stage of my dissertation. For this purpose, I intend to interview faculty from the department of English who are currently involved to some capacity in the Secondary English Teacher Education program at UIUC.

After looking at the information about courses and instructors available on the University of The Midwest Education website, as well as what I know about the structure of the Secondary English Education Minor, I believe that you are someone whose work and insights would be valuable for the nature of my study. Therefore, I would like to discuss with you the possibility to be part of my dissertation research during the Fall 2009 semester. Participation would only require two things: Meeting with me for three interviews and sharing a few documents that relate to your teaching. There might also be the need for occasional e-mail communication, but that will be kept to a minimum.

According to the IRB regulations under which this dissertation study was approved, this letter constitutes an invitation and is the first step of consent. In the event you agree to participate, I will send you a formal consent form with further details and more information about your rights as a human subject in a UIUC-approved research project.

Should you have any questions about the nature of my project and the expectations for participation, feel free to contact me via e-mail at abc@illinois.edu or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and interest in my research. I look forward to meeting and working with you.
Sincerely,

Raúl A. Mora, M.A.

Recruiting Message for Teachers – Direct Contact

Dear Mr./Ms. XXXX,

My name is Raúl A. Mora. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am about to begin the data collection stage of my dissertation. For this purpose, I intend to interview teachers who have graduated at either within the first three years or beyond five years from the Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of the Midwest. Based on information I have gathered about you and your graduation date, you are someone whose work and insights would be valuable for the nature of my study. Therefore, I would like to discuss with you the possibility to be part of my dissertation research during the Fall 2009 semester. Participation would only require two things: Meeting with me for three interviews and sharing a few documents that relate to your teaching. There might also be the need for occasional e-mail communication, but that will be kept to a minimum.

According to the IRB regulations under which this dissertation study was approved, this letter constitutes an invitation and is the first step of consent. In the event you agree to participate, I will send you a formal consent form with further details and more information about your rights as a human subject in a UIUC-approved research project.
Should you have any questions about the nature of my project and the expectations for participation, feel free to contact me via e-mail at abc@illinois.edu or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and interest in my research. I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

Raúl A. Mora, M.A.

**Recruitment Message for Teachers – Third-party Contact**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I forward you the following message on behalf of Raúl A. Mora:

My name is Raúl A. Mora. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am currently in the process of conducting a study for my dissertation in which I intend to interview teachers who have graduated at either within the first three years or beyond five years from the Secondary English Teacher Education program at the University of the Midwest. Based on information I have gathered about you, you fit the profile to participate in my study. Therefore, I would like to discuss with you the possibility to be part of my dissertation research. All that would be required of you, should you choose to participate, would be to meet with me for a series of interviews.

This letter constitutes an invitation and is the first step of consent. If you agree to participate, I will send you a formal consent form with further details and more
information about your rights as a human subject in a UIUC-approved research project. However, you are not expected to give me any formal answers until we have established direct communication.

Should you have any questions about the nature of my project and the expectations for participation, feel free to contact me via e-mail at abc@illinois.edu or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and interest in my research. I look forward to talk to you about this and working with you.

Sincerely,

Raúl A. Mora, M.A.
Appendix C

Consent Letters

I used two different models of consent letters tailored to the two groups of participants with whom I was working. Modifications in some parts of the letter corresponded to the nature of each participant group and some other relevant issues.

Consent Letter for Instructors

This is a formal invitation to participate on a research project about the evolution of your literacy practices in the context of an English Education program, from your viewpoint of a faculty member who works with preservice teachers. This study will explore your views, your ideas on the implications for practice, and the role that you think the present context plays in what literacy practices are favored in today’s classrooms. Raúl Alberto Mora, a Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will be the investigator in charge of this project. This project will be conducted under the direct supervision of Dr. Arlette Ingram Willis, Professor at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois, as Responsible Principal Investigator (RPI).

In this project, Mr. Mora will be interviewing you three times during a five-month period of intensive data collection. The interviews will take place at times and places to be negotiated with you, either in person, by phone, or via e-mail. Interviews are expected to last around 60 minutes approximately, depending on the nature of questions and other additional inquiries arising from the previous interviews. During these interviews, which will
be audio recorded with your permission, Mr. Mora will ask questions that will explore your personal and professional views about literacy practices, the different influences that have affected those views over the years, the implications for practice, your views on how preservice teachers incorporate those ideas in their practice, and the role and influence of today’s context in the development of literacy practices. We expect that these three interviews will suffice to collect the desired information.

In addition to the interviews, Mr. Mora will ask for some documents that will provide further information about your views on literacy practices. Documents will include course syllabi from your courses in the English Education program, relevant writing that you have accessible (including online sources that you may have created for professional purposes, such as websites or weblogs), and other materials that support your work with the English Education majors.

The audio files and all other information obtained during this research project will be kept secure. Audio files will be kept in a secure, password-protected computer and hard drive. Only Mr. Mora has access to the files and their storage hardware. Most materials will be handled in electronic format and any required printouts will be shredded once they have served their purpose. Mr. Mora himself will transcribe audio files. No real names will be used at any stage of the data collection, including recordings of the interviews. We will use pseudonyms and code names for all persons and institutions mentioned in this study. Mr. Mora will be the only person who will know what the codes stand for and that information will not be shared at any stage.
There might be a risk of identifiability in the event that other people knowledgeable with UIUC faculty may read the findings. To minimize this, Mr. Mora will confer with you about possible quotes he may use to illustrate findings. Otherwise, Mr. Mora will discuss the statements in his own words, without making an explicit reference to the source. In addition, you as participant will have the option to review and comment on any of the interview transcripts. Transcripts will be available to you shortly after the completion of every interview for your consideration.

In addition to what was mentioned above, we do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of how professionals interpret literacy practices in their personal and private lives and how they negotiate those views in today’s school context. We also expect the findings to benefit teacher educators and help them improve their practice. The results of this study will be primarily used for Mr. Mora’s dissertation. However, data from this study can be also used for future conference presentations and journal articles. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will continue to be used unless you consent otherwise.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will not impact your job or status at the University of Illinois. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Mr. Mora will share information about his findings at different stages of the project.
If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Mr. Mora by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by e-mail at abc@illinois.edu or Professor Arlette Ingram Willis at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or xyz@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Raúl Alberto Mora, M.A.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

___________________________________________________ _____________________
Signature        Date

I agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription.

___________________________________________________ _____________________
Signature        Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or arobrtsn@uiuc.edu or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu
Consent Letter for Teachers

This is a formal invitation to participate on a research project about the evolution of your literacy practices in the context of an English Education program, from your viewpoint of a graduate from this program who currently works in a school. This study will explore your views, your ideas on the implications for practice, and the role that you think the present context plays in what literacy practices are favored in today’s classrooms. Raúl Alberto Mora, a Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will be the investigator in charge of this project. This project will be conducted under the direct supervision of Dr. Arlette Ingram Willis, Professor at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois, as Responsible Principal Investigator (RPI).

In this project, Mr. Mora will be interviewing you three times during a five-month period of intensive data collection. The interviews will take place at times and places to be negotiated with you, either in person, by phone, or via e-mail. Interviews are expected to last around 60 minutes approximately, depending on the nature of questions and other additional inquiries arising from the previous interviews. During these interviews, which will be audio recorded with your permission, Mr. Mora will ask questions that will explore your personal and professional views about literacy practices, the different influences that have affected those views over the years, the implications for practice, your views on how preservice teachers incorporate those ideas in their practice, and the role and influence of today’s context in the development of literacy practices. We expect that these three interviews will suffice to collect the desired information.
In addition to the interviews, Mr. Mora will ask for some documents that will provide further information about your views on literacy practices. Documents will include course assignments from your time in the English Education program, lesson plans, syllabi, and other pertinent materials you have either used or designed (including online sources that you may have created for professional purposes, such as websites or weblogs) which may provide more information about your views of literacy practices.

The audio files and all other information obtained during this research project will be kept secure. Audio files will be kept in a secure, password-protected computer and hard drive. Only Mr. Mora has access to the files and their storage hardware. Most materials will be handled in electronic format and any required printouts will be shredded once they have served their purpose. Mr. Mora himself will transcribe audio files. No real names will be used at any stage of the data collection, including recordings of the interviews. We will use pseudonyms and code names for all persons and institutions mentioned in this study. Mr. Mora will be the only person who will know what the codes stand for and that information will not be shared at any stage.

There might be a risk of identifiability in case some people very knowledgeable with the English Education program at UIUC may read the findings. To minimize this, Mr. Mora will confer with you about possible quotes he may use to illustrate findings. Otherwise, Mr. Mora will discuss the statements in his own words, without making an explicit reference to the source. In addition, you as participant will have the option to review and comment on any of the interview transcripts. Transcripts will be available to you shortly after the completion of every interview for your consideration.
We do not anticipate any risk to this study greater than normal life and we anticipate that the results will increase our understanding of how professionals interpret literacy practices in their personal and private lives and how they negotiate those views in today’s school context. We also expect the findings to benefit teacher educators and help them improve their practice. The results of this study will be primarily used for Mr. Mora’s dissertation. However, data from this study can be also used for future conference presentations and journal articles. In any publication or public presentation, pseudonyms will continue to be used unless you consent otherwise.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. Your choice to participate or not will not impact your job or status at your school nor will it affect your relationship with the University of Illinois. You are also free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Mr. Mora will share information about his findings at different stages of the project.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Mr. Mora by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by e-mail at raulmora@illinois.edu or Professor Arlette Ingram Willis at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or xyz@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Raúl Alberto Mora, M.A.

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have been given a copy of this consent form.
I do agree to have the interview audio recorded for the purposes of transcription.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or arobrtn@uiuc.edu or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or irb@uiuc.edu
Appendix D

Interview Timetable

As described in Chapter Three, I conducted 36 interviews for this dissertation. The table below summarizes the timetable for each of them.

Table D1

*Interview Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #</th>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tr>
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**Interview Schedule (Continued)**

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(Continued)
### Interview Schedule (Continued)

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</table>
Appendix E

Data Organization and Storage

Over the course of this study, I recorded close to 20 hours of interviews and examined hundreds of pages worth of different documents. The next section describes how I stored, organized, labeled, and secured all these data, including different efforts to ensure human subjects protection.

Storing the Files. With a few exceptions, I collected all data in electronic formats. In most cases, the participants shared copies of their syllabi in electronic format. A few participants provided me with hard copies. In the case of material from websites or weblogs, I copied the information I needed in Word documents. I recorded all the interviews in digital format. Although using electronic media instead of physical copies saves space, it requires an extra degree of care. Even though I had back-up files for the interviews and transcripts, only I had direct access to all files. I stored the files in three separate locations: My personal laptop, an external hard drive, and at an online, password-protected, storage website (http://www.dropbox.com). I only kept on my laptop files essential for the work I was doing at a specific moment. The bulk of the files were either in the external hard drive or online. Once I finished my data analysis, I removed all data files from the hard drive. I intend to keep copies of my data for the next five years, for purposes of future publications. I made this timeframe explicit when I completed my IRB forms.

Accessing the Files. Only I had access to the raw data. I did not share any raw data with any of the participants or committee members. Member-checks did not include access
to raw data either. Only I know what the assigned pseudonyms stand for and I did not keep sensitive information in hard-copy format.

**Labeling the Files.** To reference the interviews or documents (except syllabi) during the interpretation of findings, I used the following format: Participant Name/Source/Date (as month/day/2009). In the case of syllabi, I used the following format: (Course code) Syllabus, year.

**Recorded materials.** I recorded my interviews and some of my interpretive notes using an Olympus VN-5200PC Digital Voice Recorder. I kept the interviews stored inside the laptop and the external hard drive during the transcription process. I deleted all the recordings from the voice recording once I finished the transcription process and from the laptop once I completed the entire data analysis procedures.

**Journals and Other Interpretive Notes.** I used two separate journals while working on this study. One was a journal for notes related to the theoretical framework and literature review. The other journal was an interpretive journal that I used during the processes of data collection and the transcription of the interviews to record all the notes that I would later use for the writing of my findings. I scanned this interpretive journal and kept it in a secure file to preserve the information.