It is sometimes assumed that “digital natives” will more easily integrate new literacies into their classrooms once they begin their careers. This study followed preservice teachers at the junior level who were taking part in a year-long field experience set in an urban high school. This field experience was set in the context of an English education methods course focusing on integrating new literacies into the English classroom. Interviews, blog posts, and survey responses suggest that many of the preservice teachers (born around 1990) expressed some of the same traditional views about using technology as teachers of an older generation. With some exceptions, most of the preservice teachers saw new literacies as best used to motivate students to learn traditional content.

Recently, we were in the middle of an in-class discussion about social networking when one of our students stopped the conversation cold. “I’m done with Facebook,” she declared. A silence crept over the room. “I’ve given it up,” she continued, “and I feel that a huge weight has been taken off my shoulders.” There were several heads nodding. Another student said, “The only reason I stay on it is to find out who’s getting married and who’s not!”

This was not the first time we had heard negative comments about popular social networking platforms such as Facebook. Once when we were talking about classroom applications of Twitter, one of our students announced, “I detest Twitter! As soon as this course is over, I’m shutting down my account!” Other comments we’ve heard over the years include, “I’m so glad this course isn’t about technology,” “I can’t even remember all my passwords,” and “I’m just not tech-savvy.”

These comments have surprised us. We, along with many adults born before 1990, have shared the assumption that young adults, teens, and even young children not only have an innate ability to navigate new technology, they also have an affinity for these new media that have been around their
entire lives. The assumption is that the technical abilities these young people apparently have translated into an engagement with (and perhaps even an addiction to) these new media.

This idea was famously turned into theory by Marc Prensky (2005), who suggested that people born in the 1990s are “digital natives”—easily able to use and adapt to new technology—because they have grown up with it. According to Prensky’s theory, older people, because they aren’t “natives,” aren’t as adept at using new media and, so, are “digital immigrants.”

We found ourselves reexamining Prensky’s construct rather unintentionally through a research project we conducted that studied a group of preservice English teachers we taught during the 2010–11 academic year. The 28 preservice teachers in this group were, with one exception, born during the 1990s. Critically examining the digital native/immigrant binary was not the original intent of this study. The study arose out of an opportunity we had to embed, within two of our methods courses, a year-long field experience at a local high school. We wanted to look at the uses (if any) of new literacies in these classrooms through the eyes of the preservice teachers who were taking our methods courses, courses that would immerse them in many teaching strategies that employed new literacies and expose them to the New Literacy Studies. We were expecting to find an interesting tension between what the preservice teachers had been learning about in our methods classes and what the veteran teachers were actually doing with new literacies in the “real world” of the local high school English classroom. What soon became evident, however, as we read over the data, was more of a disconnect between the feelings of the preservice teachers about new literacies and those of our own.

Before describing our study, we discuss our definition of New Literacy Studies and “new literacies” that we used to frame our preservice teachers’ learning and experiences in two methods courses. We provide information about the context of the study by detailing the two methods courses and the connected field experience site. Then, drawing upon preservice teachers’ blogs, interviews, in-class responses, and a questionnaire, we examine their perceptions of New Literacy Studies and their visions for their future classrooms. We argue that English educators have much work to do in regard to the integration of new literacies into the English education experience and that this work has much to do with attending to the literacy practices of the preservice teachers themselves, perhaps more than many of us “digital immigrants” might suppose. We end with implications for English educators who are working with this generation of preservice English teachers, many of whom will be teaching into the mid-century.
Defining “New Literacies” Using a New Literacy Studies Lens

In understanding our preservice teachers’ experiences, we think it is important to continuously engage in reflection and discussion surrounding our notions of literacy. We have similar backgrounds and similar deliberately developed belief systems that see literacy as (a) defined broadly, (b) socially constructed, and (c) as having a necessary critical perspective. We believe these three components of literacy need to be made manifest in English classrooms, in an effort to lessen the century-long influence of the American New Criticism (M. Myers, 1996).

In the methods courses we teach, we have wanted to present an alternative to the predominant view stretching back hundreds of years that the teaching of writing should always be in support of the study of canonical literature (Monaghan & Saul, 1987), functioning as just another kind of catechism for the canon (Resnick, 1991), or as simply existing as a location for test preparation (Ravitch, 2011). We see the advent of new literacies as providing an impetus for a broadening discussion that actually should have been going on from the beginning of English as a field of study.

It was clear, from the early 1990s, that conversations about the teaching of reading and writing were indeed going to have to progress. The New London Group (1996) pointed out even the basic economic consequences for those students who are disenfranchised, perhaps due to lack of access, and cannot, therefore, participate in the knowledge economy in these new times. Scholars who have written about the “digital divide” have pointed out that the concept of “digital natives” is problematic for those children who have grown up without access to technology (Alvermann, 2008; Lesley, 2012). Popular authors such as Thomas Friedman (2005) and Daniel Pink (2005) have added their concern that, in a “flattened world,” teaching new literacies is quite simply a matter of providing equity—many high school graduates will be left out of employment opportunities and even experience a reduced quality of life if they are not able to navigate these new ways of reading and writing. Critics of traditional schooling have also pointed out that, even in schools with ample technology, the traditional organizational structure of schools may be the ultimate determining factor in holding back our students, as they become hopelessly irrelevant to the out-of-school literacies experienced by many people, young and old alike (Alvermann, 2008).

We have certainly not been alone, therefore, as English educators, in trying to come to grips with these new times, and we certainly have seen the implications for our methods courses, as we work with students who will themselves influence thousands of students. We have followed closely the
The evolution of English education, as we have read about requiring preservice teachers to write and design instructional statements of new philosophy and plans (Graham & Benson, 2010); to use online discussion systems to discuss literature and content with K–12 students (Groenke, 2008); to use online discussion systems to talk among themselves about cases (Wade, Fauske, & Thompson, 2008); and to use electronic portfolios to assess performance (Hallman, 2007; Stansberry & Kymes, 2007). We have been inspired by such examples of embedding new literacies in English education methods classes. We have felt the need to infuse our methods courses with these new ideas, so they can help open up these new literacies for their own future students.

And, last but not least, we have seen the descriptions of what new literacies can do for middle school and high school students from a motivational standpoint, even as they altogether complicate classic notions of “adolescence” (Alvermann, 2006). We have seen and written about these stories of engagement based on our own classroom teaching experiences (Kist, 2000, 2005). Studies have linked uses of new literacies in classrooms to increased student motivation (Day, 2010; Ruble & Lysne, 2010), and have portrayed what happens when new literacies are used to teach print literary terms via print texts (Bucolo, 2011; Gorman & Schultz Eastman, 2010) or to enhance print reading comprehension (Myer et al., 2010). Helping students meaningfully use these new literacies has been described as key for success in college and career in the twenty-first century (Reich, Murnane, & Willett, 2012).

We have been careful with our students to make a distinction between “new literacies” and “New Literacy Studies,” delineating the definitional difference between the tools themselves (the “new literacies”) and the literacy practices and events that involve them for our students. Examining these social practices and events has been the focus of the New Literacy Studies, “a specific sociocultural approach to understanding and researching literacy” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 16). Within this approach, “literacy practices” are examined, with these “practices” defined as

The general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy . . . Practices are not observable units of behaviour since they also involve values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships. (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 6)

The New Literacy Studies have rested on a solid foundation of those who have gone before who viewed literacy as mainly social in nature (Gee, 1996; Vygotsky, 1934/1986). As Lankshear and Knobel (2003) pointed out, the “New” using a capital “N” implies a paradigmatic shift, whereas the “new” with
the lower-case “n” implies an ontological shift—“the idea that changes have occurred in the character and substance of literacies associated with changes in technology, institutions, media, the economy, and the rapid movement toward global scale in manufacture, finance, communications and so on” (p. 16). William, the first author of this study, for example, has come from an arts background. So, for him, as the Internet came into mainstream use in the 1990s, these new ways of reading and writing represented a greater variety of aesthetic forms of representation available to English students and their teachers.

We decided to define “new literacies” with our preservice teachers broadly as meaning all the many forms of representation available to humans today, with an emphasis on computer technology, but not limited to screen-based forms. We also provided our preservice teachers with the following definition of “literacy” that is very broad:

In order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy, when literacy means, as I intend it to mean, a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. (Eisner, 1997, p. 353)

We have been motivated to open our own classrooms (and, by implication, the future classrooms of our students) to a kind of “cognitive pluralism” (John-Steiner, 1997) that would allow all ways of knowing and representing to be honored. We see this as more important than ever for English educators to stress. Indeed, Hutchison and Reinking (2011), reporting the findings of a national survey of current literacy teachers, found that, to a large extent, these teachers have not been integrating new literacies “by engaging in activities typically associated with 21st-century literacy, such as those called for in the IRA and NCTE position statements and standards” (p. 527). In an interesting incongruity in the data, however, the authors reported that, at the same time teachers were not integrating new literacies in a twenty-first-century fashion, the teachers responded that it is important to do so. There were the usual access issues described in this study that could be part of the reason for this incongruity of intent and action—lack of digital projectors, interactive whiteboards, or laptops. But most tellingly, the data in the Hutchison and Reinking study ultimately “suggested that many teachers do not consider new genres of reading and writing, such as online chats, blogs, wikis, and e-mail, to be important to include in literacy instruction” (p. 328). As we are constantly observing in traditional middle schools and high schools throughout the Midwest, the findings of the Hutchison and Reinking study did not surprise us.
As we began to conceptualize this study, we saw it as positioned within the trajectory of the aforementioned studies in English education—we thought it would be interesting to look at some English classrooms in a typical American high school through the lens of our young preservice teachers. How would they see these classrooms during an early field experience? We wanted to explore the tension between those who would be new English teachers and those who are veteran English teachers as these new teachers begin to negotiate the integration of new literacies and the literacies of the traditional English classroom. As mentioned, however, what did surprise us (or perhaps, at the very least, was brought to our attention) was that, as we made our way through the year, our data began to speak to us not so much about the tension between the preservice teachers and the English classrooms they were observing, but more about the tension that seemed to exist between our preservice teachers’ ideologies and ours.

**Theoretical Perspective of the Study**

First, regarding the broadening conception of literacy, our thinking has been greatly informed by the seminal work mentioned earlier, which outlined the concept of “multiliteracies” (New London Group, 1996). As William began (in 2009) to flesh out a methods course focused on the integration of new literacies into the English classroom (the “New Literacies in Secondary Schools” [NLSS] course described below), its development was driven not only by a desire for students to learn about new literacies but also a desire for students to see an arts-based context for these new literacies, to model for them a kind of “cognitive pluralism” (John-Steiner, 1997) using new literacies, and to show how this could ideally allow for all voices in the classroom to be heard (Delpit, 1995; Morrell, 2002; Willinsky, 1990). A goal for this course was that the preservice teachers would experience for themselves just how empowering these multiple ways of knowing could be (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Joined by Kristine, in 2010, together we also have ascribed to the Conference on English Education’s (CEE) “Beliefs about Technology and the Preparation of English Teachers” (CEE, 2006), which places the meaning of this transformation squarely on individual meaning-making: “Newer technologies have altered the space in which the study of meaning-making and meaning-makers occur and these changes have important implications for teachers, learners, and communities” (CEE, 2006).

Second, regarding the social construction of literacy, we wanted to expose preservice teachers to the work of Vygotsky (1934/1986, 1978), with this perspective’s inherent criticism of prevailing power structures (Fair-
Opposite clough, 1989). “The word is a direct expression of the historical nature of human consciousness,” wrote Vygotsky (1934/1986, p. 256). We wanted to outline for our students the real differences in perspective between those who study literacy looking primarily at cognitive functions and those who look at literacy as inextricably interwoven with the contexts of people’s everyday lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996). We wanted to present this twentieth-century work as paving the way for Street’s (1995) work as well as for the views of the New London Group.

Third, we saw, tied inextricably to our first two strands, the need to equip our preservice teachers with a critical literacy lens. Ironically, the writers who most inspired us in this area wrote in pre-new-literacies times (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux & McLaren, 1987). We wanted to extend this critical ability into an English classroom world in which we are all exposed to a plethora of communication at every waking moment.

In our opinions, there has never been a more important time to embed English methods courses with these three strands of thinking about literacy. Current preservice teachers will have decades of influence over yet unborn children. The stakes are high for those of us in English education, especially as we have so little time—just several months, really—with our preservice teachers before they enter the profession of English teaching.

Indeed, how these preservice teachers will make the transition into running their own English classrooms formed the proto-question for our study. Our assumption going into this research study was that this transition in regard to new literacies will not be that difficult, as this group of digital-native new teachers takes over the reins of contemporary English classrooms. We posited that this group will not have to struggle with the befuddled-ness felt by Baby Boomers who do not even know what a wiki is. These next decades should feature, we thought, a relatively natural progression of transition as new teachers pack up their new literacies and bring them into English classrooms all over the world. After all, with the fact that these preservice teachers have grown up with the Internet, and that they will be teaching children who themselves have also been wired from day one, it would seem that the integration of new literacies into the English classroom would be relatively smooth.

What originally motivated this study was our curiosity about what happens when current English teachers who have been described as “digital immigrants” (Prensky, 2005) interact with digital natives just entering the
profession. How will the tensions revolving around an evolving, broadening conception of the English classroom, if any, play out (between the preservice teachers and the veteran teachers they were going to observe)? These were the questions we had in mind as the opportunity for a field experience came about at a local high school. As we began to work out how this field experience would be embedded in our methods courses spread out over the entire academic year, we saw a great opportunity to collect data in a systematic way around an issue that seemed to occasion much speculation and intuitive thought among English educators.

Methodology

The participants in this study were 28 undergraduate preservice teachers who were in their junior years during the 2010–11 school year and who were majoring in English Education. All students, except one, were under 25 years of age and Caucasian; three were male, with the rest female. During the 2010–11 school year, each of the 28 preservice teachers was enrolled in both the YALEC (Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom, Fall, 2010) and NLSS (Spring, 2011).

The Methods Courses

The courses in which this study was housed are required for all junior-level secondary English language arts preservice teachers at a large Midwestern state university. We, the co-authors of this study, are the two tenure-track faculty members whose major teaching and administrative responsibilities are tied to the English education program and who teach these courses.

In the fall of the junior year, preservice teachers take YALEC, which focuses on young adult literature with a heavy component of new literacies. During the spring of the junior year, preservice teachers take NLSS, which is completely devoted to the integration of new literacies into secondary English classrooms.

While the main focus of the fall course (YALEC) is young adult literature, key activities using new literacies were introduced. We felt it was critical for preservice teachers to learn about the changing forms and formats of young adult literature, for example. Throughout the semester, preservice teachers read and studied graphic novels, such as *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2003), *The Wall* (Sis, 2007), and *Beowulf* (Hinds, 1999). In addition, they read and studied radical change novels, defined as novels in new forms or formats, or those books presented in nonlinear and/or non-sequential organization (Dresang, 1999), including books such as *Monster* (W. D. Myers, 1999), *TTYL*
“I Love to Flip the Pages”

(Myracle, 2005), and Wintergirls (Anderson, 2009). Through in-class discussions and activities, preservice teachers explored what these new forms and formats mean for readers and why they might appeal to young adults.

During the YALEC course, it was also important that preservice teachers have many and varied opportunities to respond to young adult literature through multimodal avenues. In class, preservice teachers explored how students might respond to young adult literature through visual representations (for example, by drawing or sketching) and also speaking and listening (for example, by creating podcasts). Specifically, preservice teachers created Voice Threads as a way to respond to young adult literature. Additionally, to explore how traditional face-to-face literature could be facilitated online, preservice teachers engaged in online literature circle discussions. Preservice teachers self-selected young adult literature and formed literature circles based on mutual reading preferences. These literature circle discussions took place for two weeks on the university’s Blackboard site. Posts were not synchronous, but preservice teachers were given specific days and times that their discussions needed to be posted. Finally, preservice teachers blogged in response to young adult literature, other course readings, and observations during field experiences. They created online communities by responding to each other’s blog postings. Preservice teachers maintained their blogs through the fall (YALEC) course and then continued into the spring (NLSS) course, creating a substantial data set for the study.

In January of the junior year, the students began the NLSS course. The primary objective of the course, as stated in the syllabus, was “to provide an overview of current (and past) theory and practices related to what are referred to as ‘new literacies.’” Participants of the class followed their own paths of inquiry related to the following questions: How is our definition of “literacy” changing? What do I believe about reading and writing instruction? And how does my personal new literacies life intersect with my (future) instructional practices? During the opening class sessions, preservice teachers engaged in discussions of theoretical positions related to these overarching questions with a special emphasis on New Literacy Studies. The course also focused on technical information, such as what software was being used by teachers for video editing and how to download a sound file.

The NLSS course required preservice teachers to engage in three major units: the Multigenre Autobiography (Kist, 2010); Film Literacy; and Social Media and the English Classroom. The Multigenre Autobiography assignment required preservice teachers to weave together the books, films, music, art, and other texts into an autobiography that would demonstrate the impact these various texts have had on their lives. The preservice teachers used
PowerPoint, Prezi, iMovie, and Moviemaker to create their autobiographies, which were presented to the NLSS class. Within their autobiographies, preservice teachers answered several key questions, including: “How thoroughly do you present a reflection on the place non-print dominated media have played in your life?” “Are there a variety of kinds of texts represented?” “Have you reflected on lessons you have learned from your multigenre past?” and “Do you make implications for how reflecting on your multigenre past may shape your eventual instructional practices, if they haven’t already?” During the presentations the class engaged in discussions about the role of new literacies in their lives and the implications for their future classrooms.

The second major unit of the NLSS class, the Film Literacy unit, engaged students in visual literacy exercises such as micro-examining and deconstructing scenes from films, like the “crop duster scene” from North by Northwest (Hitchcock, 1959). Costanzo’s Great Films and How to Teach Them (2004) was used as the major course reading for this unit. One goal for this unit was to link film literacies (e.g., “jump cuts” and storyboards) to page-based literacy. But, more importantly, this unit sought to give preservice teachers a foundation for discussing visual literacy during these times when so much of our reading is via the Internet, including texts that feature not only words but also moving and still images. Also foregrounded during this unit were the similarities and differences between the affordances of print and film media as well as skills that young people need to critically read all kinds of media.

The third major unit in the NLSS course, the Social Networking unit, focused on ways that preservice teachers could really think about social media such as blogs, wikis, and even venues such as Facebook and Twitter as omnipresent venues for humans to read and write. The class took part in many face-to-face activities collected by one of the co-authors to demonstrate how principles of social networking and reading and writing on the Web can be discussed in class without using much technology at all, thereby complicating the “new” part of “new literacies” as we compared/contrasted virtual networking with face-to-face networking (Kist, 2010). There was a constant discussion about how these experiences could be translated into a lesson plan format and how these activities could be supported by the Common Core State Standards (2012) that have been adopted by our state and will be the curriculum that most of our graduates will be charged with teaching in the coming years.

In sum, both the YALEC and the NLSS courses attempted to immerse preservice teachers in new literacies, by giving them experiences creating and consuming new media, while at the same time comparing and con-
trasting “old” media and examining the places that these new media have as part of their own literacy practices and, by implication, those of their future students. Preservice teachers returned to these themes throughout the year, in both courses, both in classroom discussions and in their blogs. Both courses attempted, implicitly and explicitly, to model strategies and lesson plans that preservice teachers could emulate during student teaching and beyond that would exemplify smart and defensible uses of new literacies in the English classroom.

During the 2010–11 school year, a field experience component was added to the methods classes, and this opportunity led to our research study. We saw many potential benefits to the field experience component—we could give preservice teachers extra opportunities to be in English classrooms prior to student teaching, and we could discuss the integration of new literacies in the English classroom in less of an abstract way, more in the context of a “real world” experience.

The field experience took place at Hollister High School (all names have been changed), a local urban high school with approximately 1,200 students. We began, in the fall of 2010, with our preservice teachers going to Hollister for 50 hours of classroom observation. During this time, each preservice teacher observed classroom instruction and tutored small groups of students. Additionally, each preservice teacher shadowed one high school student assigned to him or her for several half-days. During the spring 2011 semester, each preservice teacher went to Hollister again over a four-week period to tutor students, helping to prepare the Hollister students for the upcoming state standardized testing. Each preservice teacher was paired with a student considered by the school administration as “at risk.” This term implied that the student had not yet passed the state test or was failing an English requirement. A school administrator determined the structure of this spring field experience. Although we had little input over its structure, we decided to go along with these plans, because our goal was to forge new relationships with the school and to give our preservice teachers the opportunity to spend additional time in English classrooms in a high school prior to student teaching. As stated earlier, we also felt it was a great opportunity to examine the place of new literacies in a high school, especially during the weeks leading up to the high-stakes statewide test. A summary of our key assignments and readings may be found in Appendices A and B.

For the study reported on here, our research question was, “What will preservice teachers’ perceptions be of the literacy practices taking place in the high school English classrooms, especially in light of being immersed in studying the concepts both of new literacies and New Literacy Studies for an
entire year in our methods courses?” As stated, we expected that it would be interesting to look at a modern American urban high school and its uses (or non-uses) of new literacies through the eyes of preservice teachers, most of whom were born around 1990. What soon became the primary focus of the study, however, were the literacy practices and ideologies of these preservice teachers themselves—our “digital natives.”

Data Collection

Over the 2010–11 academic year, we collected a range of data. First, all 28 preservice teachers wrote and maintained their own blogs that were published online beginning with the YALEC course and continuing into the NLSS course. Both blog assignments required preservice teachers to respond to course readings and course discussions in their blog posts. The preservice teachers were also required to respond to at least two other classmates’ postings each four weeks. During the YALEC course, preservice teachers wrote 12 blog posts, including a final reflection about young adult literature and new literacies. During the NLSS course, preservice teachers wrote 12 blog posts, including a final reflection on new literacies and their experiences at Hollister High School.

Second, at the end of the fall semester, all 28 preservice teachers participated in a semi-structured focus group interview. These focus group interviews varied in length from 30 to 40 minutes, and each student attended one of the focus group interviews based on availability. Approximately four or five preservice teachers participated in each of the total of four focus groups that were held. All interviews were audiotaped for transcription purposes and began with a brief review of the purpose of the focus group interview. The focus group interviews consisted of four primary questions: (a) How did you see teachers engaging students in reading instruction? (b) How did you see teachers engaging students in writing instruction? (c) Did you notice teachers using non-print texts in their instruction? (d) What role do new literacies have in your future classroom teaching? Probing questions were used to delve deeper into the responses and for clarification.

Third, during the NLSS course, preservice teachers were asked to respond to two unannounced in-class reflections. The prompts for these reflections were (a) What are you finding/did you find most beneficial about the experience? (b) What are you finding/did you find most challenging about the experience? (c) Would you recommend this experience be given to next year’s group of preservice teachers? Why or why not? (d) Is there anything else you’d like to say about the experience?
Fourth, after their spring field experience was complete, in the NLSS course, preservice teachers were asked to complete a written, open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire asked students to respond to the following questions: (a) Based on our conversations last semester, you reported not seeing new literacies incorporated into classroom instruction. Did you notice anything new this semester? And, why do you think this is? (b) In an ideal world, how would you teach young adult literature, new literacies, and canonical literature?

Data Analysis

Data sets were prepared, reduced, and analyzed in a recursive, interactive process (Merriam, 1998). We used inductive approaches to examine how the data provided an understanding of preservice teachers’ perceptions of new literacies and their experiences with new literacies at Hollister High School (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the data were prepared, William engaged in a systematic and rigorous reading of all the data, specifically identifying data that spoke to new literacies. During this time William framed these close readings with a distinction to the concepts of “literacy events” and “literacy practices.” Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) definitions of literacy events as “observable episodes which arise from practices and shared by them” (p. 7) and literacy practices as “processes internal to the individual” (p. 6) guided these distinctions.

Categories of data were developed and refined using the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with the intent that the categories reflect the purpose of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, be sensitizing, and be conceptually congruent (Merriam, 1998). The categories established by William were: (a) New Literacies as Somewhat Undesirable in General, (b) New Literacies Seen in Service to the Existing Curriculum, (c) New Literacies as Missing at Hollister High, and (d) Defending the Status Quo (Table 1 provides the categories, a description of each category, and an example text coded into the category).

Kristine then engaged in an independent close reading of the data using William’s established categories. Kristine’s coding matched up with William’s at a rate of 89.5 percent. This led to the analysis of making interpretations (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Some clear-cut codes emerged from the data, surprising us, regarding our preservice teachers’ literacy practices related to new literacies. In the next section, we discuss the findings, selected quotes from preservice teachers, and the implications of this study for English education. Code labels, definitions, and examples may be seen in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Labels</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Literacies as Somewhat Undesirable in General (“Traditional” Viewpoint)</td>
<td>Comments that demonstrated that preservice teachers could see uses for new literacies in their own lives, but these uses seemed, ultimately, tied more to a traditional, print-centric, hierarchy of literacies.</td>
<td>“I love to flip the pages and smell that new book smell.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Literacies Seen in Service to the Existing Curriculum</td>
<td>Comments that demonstrated that preservice teachers could see using new literacies as mainly in service to the existing canonical curriculum.</td>
<td>“I used the song, ‘Baby Got Back’ by Sir-Mix-A-Lot and changed the words to Shakespearian words and made a music video.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. New Literacies as Ice Breakers (Motivational)</td>
<td>Comments that demonstrated how preservice teachers used talk about new literacies as a means of getting to know their students.</td>
<td>“She said she went to the Li’l Wayne concert—I was there as well.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New Literacies as a Means to Promoting Understanding</td>
<td>Comments that demonstrated how preservice teachers used new literacies as a means of teaching curriculum objectives and/or preparing students for standardized tests.</td>
<td>“If you use multi-modalities to teach, improve, or clarify a subject, then that is when multi-modal practices work at their best.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Literacies as Missing at Hollister High</td>
<td>Comments in which the preservice teachers discussed the lack of new literacies at Hollister High.</td>
<td>“I think many teachers...either do not know how to implement these things into their classroom or do not have the resources to implement them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending the Status Quo</td>
<td>Comments in which the preservice teachers defended the existing system of emphasis on teaching the literary canon and preparing students for standardized tests.</td>
<td>“Students aren’t humans in this game; they’re a test score. Welcome to standardization. Get used to it.” “I think education should be standardized across the country and that we should seek to catch up with other countries, which is what the...state tests seek to do.” “I see smart teachers, doctors, lawyers and business professionals who got where they are today without the help of any kind of technology or multimodal literacy. They were brought up with the basics—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.”</td>
</tr>
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Results

What follows in this section are the salient categories that we found expressed in the data, demonstrating, somewhat surprisingly to us, the kinds of literacy practices that were in place for the preservice teachers themselves. We had expected our data to shine more of a spotlight on the English teachers of Hollister, as they were being observed by our preservice teachers who were mostly in their early 20s. We were looking, originally, at how preservice teachers would encounter (or not encounter) new literacies in the English classrooms at Hollister High. What we did not expect was that the data would speak so clearly to the tensions that existed, apparently, between ideologies—the ideologies and literacy practices of the preservice teachers and the ideologies and visions of new literacies in English classrooms that we had discussed in our methods classes. We present our findings below in an order that has no significance, matching the order of the results of Table 1.

New Literacies as Somewhat Undesirable in General ("Traditional" Viewpoint)

This “digital native” population had a number of negative comments about new literacies in general. As we began to analyze their blogs for the preservice teachers’ perceptions of new literacies, in both their personal lives and future classrooms, we noticed there were a number of seemingly negative comments. We were surprised that these statements were consistent throughout the year. Summing up these comments, one preservice teacher stated at the end of the year, “I feel like I wouldn’t really use very much new literacies [in teaching], because I don’t know how they will affect the students.”

Preservice teachers discussed technology’s displacements of books as a negative occurrence in the classroom. Preservice teachers associated the physical nature of books to relationships with others. One wrote,

I agree with not being a fan of the iPad or Kindle . . . I love to flip the pages and smell that new book smell. Plus it is nice to have something tangible and to share with friends. I feel I am always sharing and passing books around with friends.

Statements about personal connections through books were present in preservice teachers’ discussions about their future teaching practices. For example, a preservice teacher wrote,

When I buy books now, especially YA Lit, it’s nice to collect them so I am already building a classroom library. I wouldn’t loan an e-reader to my
students when I’m teaching . . . they will be outdated in 5 years, so I think the lower technology gets you farther in the long run.

The tactile nature of books was extremely valued by this preservice teacher—seemingly valued more than the content of the text itself. And, in fact, the technology of e-readers was seen as not helpful to her regarding her goal of setting up a classroom library that would last for years to come.

Included in this conversation about new literacies was how preservice teachers positioned themselves as users of new technologies, both in their personal lives and future teaching. Preservice teachers began to position themselves as far removed from the lives of their future students. Even though the participants in the study were almost all between the ages of 19 and 21, they seemed to set themselves far apart from their future students’ literacy practices. For example, one preservice teacher wrote,

In some ways, I still love the old fashioned aspects of learning with book, pen and paper. However, I appreciate the value of showing interest in what is important to students, and I like the idea of communicating via technology in some instances.

Her comment that multimodal forms of communication are “important to students” distanced herself from the notion that she might also engage in these literacy practices herself; she aligned herself, seemingly, more with a kind of traditional literacy construct even though she was close in age (in some cases, only three years apart) to the high school students with whom she was working.

One preservice teacher even seemed almost embarrassed and defensive about her own text messaging patterns, seeming to rationalize the texting she does with her boyfriend. First, she stated that she valued talking on the phone much more highly than texting:

I value phone calls with my loved ones. I love hearing the voice of my boyfriend and my grandmother. Both of them have distinct voices and when I’m missing them I would rather hear their voices than constantly be updated about what they are doing.

But, in the next sentence, this student wrote, “My boyfriend and I do text all through the day, but it’s more about funny stuff than constant updates.” This preservice teacher defended her use of texting by referring to the content of their texts, seeming to think that the texting she and her boyfriend did was more acceptable than the texting of others, because she and her boyfriend didn’t engage in minute-by-minute updates of what they were doing. Because they were just sending each other random jokes, she felt that
their texting was defensible. But why did this 20-year-old feel the need to defend her texting at all? Minute-by-minute updates that some people do via texting and Twitter were criticized as a waste of time by several of the other preservice teachers as well. In sum, we were surprised by the traditional, almost nostalgic nature of comments from preservice teachers about “old” literacies and the disparaging comments that were often made about some new literacies (even though it appeared that they made extensive uses of these new literacies in their personal lives).

New Literacies Seen in Service to the Existing Curriculum

Those comments that the preservice teachers did make that seemed favorable about new literacies seemed to demonstrate a view that new literacies could be most useful in service to the perceived existing test-driven curriculum. During the focus group interviews at the end of the fall semester and then, again, on the questionnaire at the end of the spring semester, when asked how they might teach new literacies, preservice teachers’ ideas were quite limited. They mainly focused on ways that new literacies could “hook” students into reading and writing about the literary canon. For the preservice teachers in this study, it seemed that classroom applications of new literacies were mostly useful to help students connect with the canon in two overarching ways.

First, new literacies were seen as “ice breakers” in a motivational fashion. During focus group interviews that took place at the end of the fall semester and in their responses to the final open-ended questionnaire, preservice teachers discussed supposedly “off task” (albeit strategic) conversations they had with students they tutored or shadowed. Preservice teachers stated that they found themselves talking about new literacies in some way with the high school students, just to get to know them. Preservice teachers used these conversations as a way to interest their students toward the ultimate goal of teaching academic content.

While the data showed that our preservice teachers chatted with the high school students about a variety of kinds of texts—sitcoms, movies, social media, malls, and sports—it was music and texting that seemed to be the media that came up most often during the spring semester. One preservice teacher wrote: “We talked about how music and movies are representative of the society we live in. We talked about his different taste in music and
movies from his parents’ taste, and how a generational gap occurs between parent and child.” Similarly, another preservice teacher discussed how the student she tutored constantly talked about music. The preservice teacher explained, “She [the high school student] is in band and talks about it constantly. She likes ‘My Chemical Romance’ and ‘The Beatles.’”

Preservice teachers seemed to focus on the fact that they were able to “use” the closeness in age they had to their students to discuss music in which they were both interested: “We talked one time about concerts,” one preservice teacher wrote. “I told her I worked at [a local concert venue]... She said she went to the Li’l Wayne concert—I was there as well.” Another wrote, “I remember her mentioning how much she liked Kid Cudi, so we started talking about when his concert was and his new album. I am not a huge fan of him, but I like a couple of his songs.” What came through in this grouping of data was nearly a feeling of surprise on the part of the preservice teachers that talking about new literacies could be such an effective way of breaking the ice and snagging and maintaining student interest in the conversation.

Second, new literacies were seen as means to promoting understanding. In the spring, when asked on the open-ended questionnaire how they would ideally teach new literacies, preservice teachers often expressed that relating some curricular objective to a form of new literacies was an effective way to get students to engage with and to understand the curriculum objective. As one expressed it, “If you use multi-modalities to teach, improve, or clarify a subject, then that is when multi-modal practices work at their best.” This was a commonly expressed opinion—that the new literacies were most useful in service to traditional school content. When new literacies were discussed to help teach content, they were sometimes featured by the preservice teachers simply in terms of using the search engine function of a computer:

When I was working with my student through the... test packet, we came across some questions that I couldn’t explain the answer to. An iPad would have been great to have with me because I could have easily looked up information on the iPad while she was sitting beside me.

Another preservice teacher described how the student with whom she was working used his cell phone as a calculator. There were several preservice teachers who were able to use cell phones as quick references on the spot:

I used my smart phone to allow my student to use my dictionary app. When we went through the [practice test] booklet, there were words she didn’t
know. Instead of giving her the definition in my words, I allowed her to construct a definition that was meaningful to her.

Apart from the usefulness of the high-tech tools as search tools, several comments indicated that preservice teachers viewed using new literacies as useful to foreground historical issues in canonical texts. One preservice teacher wrote about how she would use a new text “to show how far we have come from the 1800s or earlier, and to compare themes and ideas for books and stories that are the same now as they were then.” Along these same lines, one of the preservice teachers talked about using new literacies as “useful in having them realize how relevant the literature can be even if it is hundreds of years old or seemingly boring to them.” Another student described a lesson plan she wrote that took advantage of this element of new literacies—“I used the song, ‘Baby Got Back’ by Sir-Mix-A-Lot and changed the words to Shakespearian words and made a music video.” Another preservice teacher was able to relate text messaging to one of the standardized test practice questions:

One of the prompts for a practice [test] question was about an unfair law in school that could be changed effectively. She chose texting and cell phone use during school. We talked about the current consequences of texting and the reasons why it isn’t allowed in school right now. We also talked about how it could effectively be changed to allow students some free time to learn.

In many cases, the preservice teachers saw such media as television and music only in relation to curricular objectives. One preservice teacher wrote:

I told her [the student] that poetry could be hard to understand but could be easier if she put the words to a tune. Instead of thinking of it as poetry, think of it as a song. That got us on the topic of what sort of music she enjoys.

Another wrote,

I tried to make some references to TV shows with one of the [standardized test] practice sections. . . . One of the questions was about using anthropology in forensic science [aging a person to determine age] and I talked about how they do that in Bones.

Other preservice teachers talked about using board games or other types of games to help students learn the curriculum. One student suggested that texting could be used, but only to send practice test questions to students.
Showing films and relating music to content were often suggested as worthwhile instructional strategies. One preservice teacher talked about how much the student with whom she was working loved music and how she used this love of music to teach a vocabulary word.

There is a song by Kanye West . . . that uses a form of the word . . . “aristocracy,” which is [a] word my student became paralyzed by in one of our tutoring sessions. When I heard her singing along to this song on her mp3 player one day, I asked what the song meant. She said it was about people who were really high in society, socially, which is a very close description of the word “aristocratic.” When I asked her how she knew that she said something to the effect [that] Kanye is always talking about people who have money in the song and what they buy with it, [that] money is power and is what everyone wants, [and] so he must be talking about someone high up in society. This led me to help her use that definition to find aristocracy’s definition. She essentially read the context clues around the word in the song and figured out the definition of the word accordingly. After this instance of enlightenment both for her and me we began turning most of the [practice test] passages into songs or stories so she could relate to them.

Preservice teachers thought of other ways that new literacies could be used to help prepare students for standardized testing.

When going over different reading prompts and questions, it may be good to organize one’s ideas by doing a storyboard—discuss with the student that if they were to make this prompt into a movie, how you would describe it. Even though we will not have the time to make a movie, it gets the students to look at the prompt in a different way.

Others suggested using social networking as a hub or clearinghouse for all things related to the class, housing the syllabus and practice test questions. It was suggested that this would be a great way, also, for students who miss class to catch up.

The most common attitude expressed regarding new literacies in classrooms was that they can be used as “a spoonful of sugar to help the curriculum go down” (Kist, 2005). In many cases, new literacies were described solely as motivational tools to draw the high school students into more print-centric literacies, showing how a popular song, for example, is “just like” a Shakespeare sonnet. As one preservice teacher wrote:

[Students] just don’t see the point of understanding the material we give them, or the tests they must take. This is the challenge we face as teachers when trying to prepare students for a test that could change their grade or even their life [sic]. We have to make things important and we have to do some of the creative thinking for them. By presenting methods of
literature analysis in another form . . . we make them think differently and approach tests differently.

It is worth noting that there were some mentions of new literacies as a way for students to process the curriculum in more open-ended, inquiry-based ways. One example given was that students could be required to keep a blog, using it as a learning log:

I love the idea of using a blog in the classroom if the teacher effectively tells the students how to blog. If you lay down specific instructions, yet still leave room for creativity, the students will start to use their blog to better their understanding of texts just through writing about them. This strategy would actually help [my student] a lot with her comprehension.

Another preservice teacher talked about how photography could be used to teach vocabulary with students taking pictures that represent words being studied. Other students explained how using new literacies could allow for choices in reading, describing, in a way, a digital reader/writer workshop:

New literacies would be great to teach in a very organized tech lab. Think how cool it would be for every student to have a Kindle, or be able to have a laptop and a beanbag chair. It would be like learning in a big comfortable library!

New Literacies as Missing at Hollister High

As the NLSS course and the embedded field experience neared its end in the spring of 2011, we found it interesting that, even while the preservice teachers were mostly ambivalent about their own future uses of new literacies, in their two written reflections, there were an increasing number of negative comments being made about the lack of new literacies in use at Hollister High, this at the same time the preservice teachers had expressed negative comments in regard to their own feelings about new literacies. One preservice teacher talked about how, even when a film was shown in class, it was played with no preview or focus set and that the students were not paying attention to the film. Likewise, the Internet at Hollister seemed to the preservice teachers only to be used in mundane fashion, as a digital grade book allowing for students and parents to check up-to-the-minute grades.

However, there were some exceptions to this dearth of new literacies, according to the preservice teachers. One said,

I observed a truly amazing English teacher. At the time, she was teaching works by Poe and discussing literary terms such as “archetype” with her students. I remember going to [the school] on Halloween, and literally
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everyone [including the teachers] were dressed in costumes. Before the bell rang, I sat in class thinking how this teacher would keep her students’ attention with all of the festivities going on. During class she showed an episode of The Simpsons, which was based on the poem “The Raven.” She also showed the music video “Thriller” by Michael Jackson and had the students point out different archetypes in the music video.

When speculating as to why there was such little evidence of new literacies at Hollister, there were several reasons given by the preservice teachers, some sounding ironic coming from those who seemed, at the least, conflicted themselves about their use:

I think many teachers . . . either do not know how to implement these things into their classroom or do not have the resources to implement them. Also, there is still a stigma attached to many of these things and some teachers may not want to even deal with it.

Another reason expressed by the preservice teachers for the lack of new literacies at Hollister was the teachers’ lack of time to prepare new lessons; it was also suggested that laziness on the part of teachers or fear of what the parents will think prevented more common uses of new literacies. “I think that [new literacies] are controversial,” one preservice teacher wrote, “and that some teachers may not want to go through the hassle of sending letters home and getting parents’ permission” to use them.

Defending the Status Quo

What is particularly noteworthy, however, is that, even when obstacles were cleared away and preservice teachers were encouraged to “think outside of the box,” in their written reflections and the open-ended questionnaire they frequently fell back on bromides that have been in education throughout the twentieth century. Even at the end of a year of methods courses that integrated new literacies, they espoused fatalistic attitudes about literacy that seem sad coming from the mouths of people on the cusp of a teaching career.

As much as we all wish knowledge was amorphous and that personal responsibility is enough, we need to make sure students are on some sort of track to a normal level of intellect. And because of this, we have to teach particular things in a particular way. And, to go outside of that, risks failing the only thing that matters: the test. Students aren’t humans in this game;
they’re a test score. Welcome to standardization. Get used to it.

Ominously, another preservice teacher wrote,

I think education should be standardized across the country and that we should seek to catch up with other countries, which is what the . . . state tests seek to do. But it does not actually work in practice. I feel like the standards should be the same everywhere and it is up to each individual teacher and school district to meet those standards.

One preservice teacher questioned the need to incorporate new literacies at all:

I see smart teachers, doctors, lawyers and business professionals who got where they are today without the help of any kind of technology or multi-modal literacy. They were brought up with the basics—Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

Other preservice teachers seemed to shrug their shoulders in a “that’s just the way it is.” One wrote,

I believe these alternate activities [new literacies] can help to break up the monotony of traditional test preparation . . . While I disagree with the idea of standardized tests, I understand that students need to pass these tests in order to graduate so it is my job as a teacher to prepare them.

Two preservice teachers questioned the disconnect between the standardized test expectations and the real-life issues students deal with:

I feel like the experience in actually working with students who are stressing out, trying to do well on these tests, has opened me up to the dissonance between what I’d like literacy education to be and what the high school system has made [it]. The main problem seems to be that standardized testing isn’t taking into account all of the issues a student might be dealing with on any given day . . . The modern American high school does not consider these individual students . . . We’re not looking at the student as an individual. In this system, the student is a number—and hopefully a high one.

Another preservice teacher expressed hopefulness that new literacies may lead to a complete re-creation of standardized tests.

I think instead of being a stumbling block, new technology and multi-modal literacy can help to alleviate the problems with the standardized testing system. With computers and the internet, social networking and video games as educational tools, we can make testing and assessment that much more fair and accurate. If multi-modal education and literacy
doesn’t [sic] make state testing obsolete, it [sic] can least make those tests and tools for passing them more accessible to all people at all ability levels from every social and economic background.

In sum, however, there was a clear trend in the data that, at the least, the preservice teachers (whom most would label “digital natives”) struggled with the concept of using new literacies in the English classroom. Even before we had started into the field experience, it was apparent that these relatively young people were not having an easy time figuring out how to or even whether to integrate these new literacies. This seemed to us to be counterintuitive, again by virtue of the perception about their generation’s experiences. If we researchers weren’t sure of the origin of the comments, we might have mistaken them as coming from veteran teachers out of the ditto-machine era. What’s more, the preservice teachers seemed to construct new literacies as “add-ons” for the classroom—not as something to be integrated into reading and writing in completely critical, transformative, and, at the least, even particularly meaningful ways. For some of our preservice teachers, seeing a teacher play the “Thriller” video during a Poe lesson unit was a highlight, perhaps even a visionary classroom use of new literacies.

What was most surprising to us was that, for these 20-year-old preservice teachers, the new literacies were even discussed as being inconveniences to their future careers, as simply necessary evils to help teach the academic content (to even younger generations). One preservice teacher offered an explanation for this seeming dissonance:

New literacies are my weakest area at this point, as I think is true for most future teachers. We are part of a generation that was pulled in two different directions growing up; we were supposed to read books and write papers traditionally, and continue with school in the same way our parents had, but still be able to blog, and IM, and use social networking tools. It is one thing to have a Facebook (account) or Twitter (account), but another thing completely to teach other students how to use them.

This preservice teacher was explaining the divide she saw growing up between uses of new literacies outside of school and inside of school; the comments overall from the preservice teachers involved in this study suggest that this binary may hold strong for years to come.

It needs to be mentioned that there were a few comments throughout the data set exhibiting a perception that new literacies are deserving of some meaningful integration into the English classroom. One wrote, “I would like to teach students how to effectively read new literacies and be able to process them.” Another student referred to a project we had done in the
Kist and Pytash > “I Love to Flip the Pages”

NLSS class—the Multigenre Autobiography—as being a way to explore the concept of “text” with students. “I think students really need to be taught how to read new literacies,” one student wrote.

For example, I would not simply give students a graphic novel and tell them to read it. I would explain what’s different about this type of book and how to approach it. I would also have students discuss the value of the new literacy.

Another student wrote about wanting to help students understand film as a medium, as we also discussed in the NLSS course: “I . . . like the idea of having the students analyze a film like they analyze literature.” There were also some students who spoke in generalities of wanting to use “tons of technology” in their classrooms, especially if access wasn’t an issue. But these kinds of more progressive comments seemed to be fairly random and lacked much in the way of specifics.

Discussion and Implications

We feel that we purposefully revised two methods courses to incorporate new literacies and found that, when our students got out in the field, these learning experiences in our classes had not significantly affected their attitudes toward and about new literacies in the classroom. What accounts for this, especially in light of the fact that these students were “digital natives”? It appears that traditional cultural models about teaching and literacy held firm in the ideologies of our students and this accounted for some tension between them and us as their perspectives had not seemed to shift. In this section, we make recommendations for English teacher educators in light of these findings.

The original purpose of this study was to examine the literacy practices of a typical set of English classrooms through the eyes of preservice teachers during a field experience. As the study unfolded, however, the data pushed us to focus, rather, on the preservice teachers’ “awareness(es) of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

Certainly the relatively small number of preservice teachers involved in this study necessarily limits broad generalizing. Also, the nature of the spring field experience focused the preservice teachers on standardized test preparation. The preservice teachers were observing teachers who were routinely teaching from test preparation materials during this time. So, this intense focus during the field experience at Hollister could be responsible for the preservice teachers’ lack of enthusiasm for innovation and their lack of creativity when thinking about the English classroom.
The findings of this study seem to problematize the notion that pre-service teachers who grew up with new literacies (as “digital natives”) will automatically bring these new literacies through the schoolroom door in groundbreaking ways, just by virtue of their generational experiences. Examining these data has made us realize, in retrospect, that we have more than occasionally felt a strong pushback from our young students when we have been introducing some classroom application of new literacies (as mentioned at the beginning of this article). It wasn’t until we conducted this study that we were able to articulate these hints of something deeper; perhaps these kinds of comments we’ve heard over the years were not just due to some random laziness or hostility within the preservice teachers we have taught. For most of the preservice teachers interviewed for this study, when there was willingness expressed to try to incorporate new literacies into the English classroom, it was usually in an effort to facilitate the teaching of traditional curriculum goals. These data suggest that prevailing schoolhouse traditions—their strong pre-existing ideologies about English teaching—may be more forceful than any new piece of hardware or social networking application will be in shaping the curriculum and instruction of the future (no matter how much they may use these media in their personal lives as “digital natives”).

What are we to take away from these data, as English educators as we, the co-authors of this study, remain committed to the potential for smart pedagogical uses of new literacies? We were, honestly, disappointed at some of the deeply ingrained opinions stated by our preservice English teachers, especially given that these comments were made in the context of two specially designed methods courses that emphasized literacy as broadly defined and socioculturally constructed. In an attempt to move forward, based on the findings of this study, we have started to wrestle with how to use what we have learned. We present the following implications (expressed as possible goal statements) for going forward as a starting point not only for ourselves but also for others in English education who may be interested in beginning a similar conversation with their students.

Integrating New Literacies Rather Than Isolating Them to Go Forward

We believe that one of the implications of these findings is that English education methods courses need to focus more on the underlying New Literacy
Studies perspective and downplay the focus on the new literacies themselves. What good does it do to teach preservice teachers how to set up a blog, if they are just going to use it to prepare their students for the next standardized test? If we are striving for true “cognitive pluralism,” shouldn’t the emphasis be on giving practice in using a critical literacy lens, rather than the latest cool app? Teacher education courses must get at the underlying belief systems of preservice teachers about English education in general. It is not enough simply to show preservice teachers how Voicethread can be used in an English classroom and immerse them in various exercises set in blogs and wikis. We felt that we had provided the needed foundation in our courses, that our courses provided more depth than, perhaps, what an Instructional Technology course might provide. It’s important to give preservice teachers concrete ideas of assignments and assessments that can be used with new media, but the rationales for these models need to be more heavily foregrounded.

**Going Backwards to Go Forward**

It is ironic that one of the implications of our study, which set out to foreground the future of the field, is that one of the most useful things we can do as English educators may be to spend more time on the past. These findings suggest that what preservice English teachers may need more than experience with the most recent new literacies classroom applications is a thorough grounding in the history of our field. Without an adequate knowledge of our genealogy, students may have such blinders on that they are not able to recognize the historic reasons for why they and current teachers may end up using Sir Mix-A-Lot to teach Shakespeare, or to use Prezi to replicate the kinds of tired book reports that have been assigned to kids for the last century. How will preservice teachers know when they are in danger of propping up existing English classroom paradigms if they don’t know the history of what those paradigms have been to begin with?

English education faculty should consider discussing the historical foundations of the literacy instructional policies that have been set in place for decades, even tracing the genealogy of the classroom-level instructional decisions that have been made. As well as helping students learn to “read” an Alfred Hitchcock film, for example, preservice teachers need opportunities exploring the sometimes banal, sometimes inspiring ways that film has been used in classrooms over the last century (Kist, 2008). When discussing the place of the literary canon, teacher educators need to uncover the roots of our field in a pedagogy of recitation and decoding (M. Myers, 1996).
When discussing using social networking in the classroom, preservice teachers should be investigating how such forums can actually end up just being new repositories for low-level, mundane question/answer parroting, simply replicating a system for whom “academic success has been elusive for large numbers of young people who are economically poor, or culturally and racially different from the ‘mainstream,’ or both” (Nieto, 2005, p. 61).

Going Inward to Go Forward

But an examination of the history of English education needs to go hand in hand with critical self-evaluation for future English teachers. It is worth asking whether such self-examination, if it comes in English education classes, will take place too late for preservice teachers. Can preservice teachers effectively examine and be critical of their own enculturation? Or are they too deeply rooted in a lengthy apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975)? The findings of this study suggest that, while it may be fair to say that a “digital native” may be more able to quickly navigate the interface of the newest smartphone than a Baby Boomer can, this technical skill seems to have a rather minor impact in the face of the overwhelming literacy practices that have tight holds on our future English teachers.

And can we really blame these preservice teachers when they have grown up with such an in-school/out-of-school binary enculturation? Are we really helping them when we just tell them about this binary in college, during their junior years, right before they go off to student teach? We thought that the Multigenre Autobiography assignment, just to name one example, would be a key learning experience for our preservice teachers, helping to expose not only this binary but also the existing hierarchy of symbol systems. But, given the results of this research, we are afraid that the autobiography has simply been an exercise in nostalgia for these students who do, indeed, acknowledge the importance of various kinds of texts in their lives, but yet, apparently, don’t transfer the out-of-school textual experiences they have uncovered to inform their in-school instructional practices. Assignments like the Multigenre Autobiography are apparently only the first baby steps on a journey of inquiry for preservice teachers who may be slow to acknowledge the place that a wide diversity of texts has in English classrooms and that allowing for the variety of forms of representation is, in fact, an equity issue.

The most important step of assignments such as the Multigenre Autobiography, therefore, is the critical self-reflection piece—helping preservice teachers construct implications for what embracing a true diversity of texts means for the English classroom, and how this integration goes beyond just
playing that classic *Simpsons* episode when “doing” Poe. Preservice teachers may have an aha moment when they are putting together their autobiographies and realize that watching a Fellini film was an important marker in their intellectual growth. But if this realization does not extend to the implications for the English classroom, then the Multigenre Autobiography just becomes, at best, a fun “navel-gazing” assignment.

English educators need to help their students dig deeply into their own literacy practices. To that end, assignments for preservice teachers that involve new literacies need to challenge preservice teachers to really get at the underlying implications of even the existence of these kinds of assignments in the English classroom. Beyond modifying such assignments to add a critical self-reflection piece, we need to acknowledge that such self-examination and reflection regarding inquiry into what we are to be about as English teachers must permeate every element of English education courses. We need to expose the inner ideological tensions that exist and uncover the fact that, for many preservice teachers, just bringing new literacies into the English classroom really changes nothing.

**Becoming Strategic to Go Forward**

Helping preservice teachers get in touch with their own new literacies lives will, however, only lead to professional stress and strain without equipping them with much needed coping skills for how to operationalize this in their own future classrooms. Our study is certainly not the first to suggest that new literacies are sometimes used in the service of traditional in-school literacy practices (Hull & Schultz, 2002; Kist, 2005; Lewis, 2011). As mentioned earlier in this article, there have been more than a few studies proclaiming the benefits of using new literacies in the English education classroom. The results of our own study left us wondering about these studies—what does it matter if preservice teachers learn all these new literacies-based instructional strategies and believe in using them, if the existing school culture does not allow them to make use of them in meaningful ways?

We need to openly discuss such questions as: How can the ideological tensions be resolved or at least brought out into the open when preservice teachers are being ultimately trained for a job in which they will have to fit into a print-centric straightjacket? One answer may be to open preservice teachers to a “retro” philosophy—that teaching is a subversive activity (Postman & Weingartner, 1971). Drawing upon the work of Cresswell (1996, 2004), Poveda (2012), for example, recently urged literacy researchers to focus on “the geographies of transgression, deviance, resistance, and transgression” (p. 85).
It’s not enough to help preservice teachers to be able to discern a long shot from a close-up, if they are going to lose their jobs or a pay raise if they are unable to use that information to help their future students answer a multiple-choice standardized test question about the literary canon. In an age when one frequent mention of technology as applied to the English classroom is for computerized scoring of student writing (Collier, 2012), preservice teachers need significant support. Learning to navigate the political realities of these developments in the English classroom probably merits the creation of its own methods class.

It has become a cliché to say, about technology, “It’s just a tool,” but English educators need to extend past introducing their preservice teachers to blogs and wikis and help them to learn how to follow an inquiry path that allows for new ways of reading and writing at a time when they will be under enormous pressure to “add value” to their students’ standardized testing scores. Preservice teachers need to be capable of being strategic about including new literacies within the current test-driven environment, and we English educators need to help them to be strategic as they seek to embrace these new literacies in the context of a well-developed and critically aware belief system about English education.

This inquiry path becomes even more crucial when we realize that not every high school is equipped with the latest technology; however, rather than accepting this as the “way things are,” English educators need to help preservice teachers become critical of the social structures that influence schools. We believe it is critical for conversations that critically problematize the reasons why some high schools have 1:1 technology and some only have one computer lab for an entire high school to use. English educators need to make room for discussions about socioeconomic status, race, and power so preservice teachers are not accepting this reality but thinking of the larger inequities that exist in our educational system. As a community, English educators should be helping preservice teachers view a lack of technology in schools as a social injustice and inequity, rather than status quo.

**Final Thoughts and Summary**

It must be acknowledged, as mentioned earlier, that the preservice teachers in this study came of age in an era when technology and new literacies were just being developed; the English teachers who taught these preservice teachers have not themselves overwhelmingly integrated new literacies into their classrooms (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). The findings of our study suggest that at least some of these 28 preservice teachers will follow in the
footsteps of their own teachers if they do not make the leap to consider new literacies as worthy of inclusion in literacy instruction (apart from being motivational tools). Perhaps the findings of a study similar to ours will be markedly different in four or five years when preservice teachers will be mostly people born in the late 1990s. And perhaps the findings of our study can be seen as a quaint last gasp of a traditional “back to basics” educational worldview, as those who do not see blogs and wikis as “important to include in literacy instruction” are (to use the new verb) “sunseted” into retirement.

On the other hand, as we pored over the comments of our students, we were reminded of the work of Peter McLaren (1986, 1989) who, years before the New Literacy Studies, talked about the ritual of “doing school.” Our data suggested that the power of these education rituals, including, even, their sensualities (“I love to flip the pages and smell that new book smell.”), may be so familiar to and even loved by our preservice teachers that any uses of new literacies will just be co-opted into the overarching script.

The preservice teachers of today, while perhaps proficient at using some new literacies in their personal lives, may simply not be able to visualize anything that contradicts (or even completely rewrites) the types of rituals in which they have been enmeshed for their entire lives. One or two methods courses will probably not be able to eradicate 15 or more years of enculturation in the never-ending dramedy of our schools.

We know that we probably should not have gotten our hopes up; we know that, from the earliest days of the Internet, scholars have cautioned about overemphasizing the tools of technology as reform agents (Bruce & Rubin, 1995). One might have hoped, however, that these new literacies might have created at least a few new storylines. Perhaps the new stories will, yet again, have to be found upon the fringes of schools (Iddings, McCafferty, & Teixeira da Silva, 2011), making in-school literacies just as irrelevant to out-of-school literacies as one might argue they have always been (Resnick, 1991).

For those of us who remain in English education, however, we still must try to wrestle with the question: How do we have at least a modicum of influence in the development of preservice teachers’ long-held, ritualistic constructions of literacy—their “literacy practices”—when we, at best, may only have one or two methods classes with them? How can we best use the limited time (and influence) we have? And should we even bother with attempting to inform such changes when our preservice teachers will, most likely, be working in an “old school” that reduces their students to numbers on an assembly line that must be “value-added”? While we were relieved that the preservice teachers in our study saw some uses for new media, even if they were mainly related to student motivation and engagement, we were
ultimately more concerned with their view of how the new literacies can help them help their future students do better on standardized tests. Our participants came across as willing understudies to the current leading players in the English classrooms they were observing.

This study, albeit based on the views of a small number of participants, suggests that there is much work to be done on the part of English educators and teacher educators in general if we are to avoid simply adapting these new forms of reading and writing into already worn-out scripts. As of this writing, many of the preservice teachers who participated in this study are finishing the first year of their first teaching jobs. Many may be on their way to decades of teaching English. Judging by their comments, many of these English teachers may actually end up replicating the English classrooms of those of us who are considered “digital immigrants.”

Appendix A. Course Readings for Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom (YALEC)


Young Adult Literature Selections included radical change novels, nonfiction, graphic novels, realistic fiction, folktales, poetry, and short stories.

Appendix B. Course Readings for New Literacies in Secondary Schools (NLSS)


References


**William Kist** teaches undergraduate and graduate literacy courses at Kent State University. With three books and more than 50 articles and book chapters to his credit, Bill may also be found online at www.williamkist.com and at www.twitter.com/williamkist. **Kristine E. Pytash** is an assistant professor in literacy education at Kent State University. Her research interests include writing instruction, young adult literature, and literacy instruction for youth in juvenile detention centers.

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**2015 Call for CEL Teacher-Leader of Excellence Award**

Please nominate a teacher-leader who has had a strong, positive impact on his or her school, district, and/or state through work that has focused on exceptional contributions to teaching and local leadership practices, such as team building, coaching, and curriculum development. This award is given annually to an NCTE member who is an outstanding English language arts educator and leader. Your award-nominee submission must include a nomination form, two letters of recommendation, and the nominee’s curriculum vitae. Candidates not selected for the year in which they are nominated will receive consideration for the next two years. The nomination form may be found at http://www.ncte.org/cel/awards. The award will be given for the first time in 2015. Send nominations by **February 1, 2015** to **Rebecca Sipe** at rsipe@emich.edu (Subject: CEL Exemplary Leader) or 8140 Huron River Dr., Dexter, MI 48130-9323.