EXPLORING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF ADULT HISPANIC IN MOOCS
THROUGH SELF-EFFICACY THEORY

A doctoral thesis presented
by

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Abstract

Diverse learners’ self-efficacy learning experience in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is an area of research that needs further analysis. This interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study aimed to respond to that need and concentrates on the experience of adult Hispanic learners. Self-efficacy theory provided the lens to explore the learning experiences of seven participants who registered in English Composition I MOOC offered by Duke University. Four themes were identified: 1) prior learning experiences that shaped students’ academic development, 2) students’ cultural background, 3) experiences and attitudes that influenced students’ academic performance, and 4) English composition I MOOC learning experiences. Findings revealed the need to include strategies in MOOCs instructional design that cover the four sources of information: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states that support students’ self-efficacy. Findings also exposed that cultural background, time management skills and students’ registration status—those who want to get a MOOC certificate versus those who register as audit student—have a direct effect in motivation and engagement. The study is relevant for MOOC instructional designers, Universities and MOOC providers and stakeholders. The study also showed the need for further research that includes demography, social interaction and rewarding systems in MOOCs and quantitative research that connects self-efficacy with MOOCs and Hispanics and other ethnical groups.

Keywords: MOOC, Hispanic, Latino, self-efficacy, academic development, IPA.
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Acknowledgments

To my parents
Because they are the reason I’m in this world

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Because she always supports my life decisions, not matter how crazy they seem to be

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Because they guided me through the professional path that I wanted to follow

To Dr. Joseph McNabb, my first reader,
and

Dr. Kimberly Nolan, my second reader
Because the great support and guidance that they offered me during this journey

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To Daniel Hernandez Joseph
Because he believes in me.
Chapter One: I Introduction to the Study and Theoretical Framework

The Hispanic population will grow to approximately 132.8 million by 2050 (30% of the total U.S. population) (Beaudrier & Ducar, 2012), and the projection by the same year of Hispanics in the school age population is 28 million (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Considering the limited access of Hispanics to higher education and that “one-third of all job openings and nearly half of all new jobs created between 2008 and 2018 will require a post-secondary degree or credential” (Pandya, 2012), Hispanics are unprepared to fulfill the educational and professional demands required for the jobs that the labor force requires. In order to help Hispanics move into more professional positions so they may participate in the economic health of the nation, one must address how to provide them with educational alternatives at the local, state and national levels.

Numerous research studies report that students who wanted to improve their academic and professional skills have benefited from MOOCs (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Coursera, 2015; Zhenghao, Alcorn, Christensen, Eriksson, Koller, & Emanuel, 2015). However, this information does not inform how learners from different ethnic groups,, races and languages benefit from the experience and outcomes of learning from a MOOC. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. It is expected that this study produce silent information to be shared with MOOC instructional designers and stakeholders that help them design specific strategies that help the Hispanic community more fully benefit from their MOOC learning experience that support their professional lives. This research used the lens of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology was used to be able to understand
the participants’ experience from their own cultural and personal perspective.

This chapter begins with the context and background of the study followed by the significance of the problem to provide the academic, cultural and social background of the study. Then the chapter provides the methodological approach followed by the positionality of the researcher, the research question and rationale. Finally, it discusses the theoretical framework and explains the reasons why this lens was used to illuminate this study. The conclusion closes the chapter.

**Context and Background**

The U.S. labor force will face a critical situation in the coming years. According to Passel and Cohn (2017) the working age population born in the U.S. (25 to 64 years old) will show a reduction of 8.2 million over the next 20 years (2015-2035). A decline in workforce rates has negative impacts on the economic health of a region. For example, decisions regarding businesses’ development depend on the skilled workers that are available in a region. Pack (2014) claims: “[i]f an area is lacking in the number of people who are in the labor force, many of the local economic development initiatives will not be met due to its low labor participation rate.” To face the shortage of workers, every region needs to implement policies and strategies according to its particular needs to create jobs that attract the skilled workforce required to boost its economy (Masson-Drafen, 2016).

The addition of new skilled workers could come from all sectors of the population if they were to receive specific job training and education. Tossi (2012) suggests that the Hispanic community might contribute to filling the coming working-age population work-ready gap:
From 2010 to 2050, people of Hispanic origin are projected to add 37.6 million people to the labor force, accounting for about 80 percent of the total growth of the labor force. In comparison, non-Hispanics are projected to add only 9 million workers (p.14).

However, on a national level, 44% of Hispanics do not earn a high school diploma (NCES, 2010). At state and local levels, the Hispanic dropout rate varies; yet its general tendency is toward high rates (MAPC, 2011; IDRA, 2012). In regards to post-secondary degrees, Excelencia in Education (2015) reports “Hispanics [have] lower levels of educational attainment than other groups. In 2013, 22% of Hispanic adults (25 years and older) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to Asians (60%), Whites (46%), and African Americans (31%)” (p. 3). This information implies that a majority of the Hispanic population is restricted to working in jobs that do not require higher education degrees or certification. Therefore, it is necessary to find academic solutions that help the Hispanic population achieve their professional goals through innovative academic paths. MOOCs could be a solution.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are creating a new e-learning option that might suit Hispanics’ needs and serve as a way for them to gain academic knowledge that can be transformed into skills that make them competitive in the workforce. MOOCs are high quality college-like online courses. Top universities that include Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Duke offer these courses to millions of students worldwide. By January 2017, 693 universities around the world (Universities, n.d.) offered over 6000+ MOOCs (MOOC Watch, n.d.). The number of universities interested in participating in this educational approach continues to increase (Brahimi & Sarirete, 2015; Kennedy, De Barba, Coffrin, & Corrin, 2015).

Moreover, some MOOC providers—in partnership with the private sector—are redefining the concept of academic degrees by designing new kind of accreditations that MOOC
students can include in their resumés to showcase their skills to potential recruiters. As an example, MOOC provider Udacity has launched the “Nanodegree”, a credential that verifies that a student has gained basic programming skills that qualify him or her to work in an entry-level programming job. Other credentials such as Honor code certificates, Verified certificates, and XSeries certificates have also been designed to provide MOOC learners—especially those who have not earned a graduate degree—with the academic credentials that confirm that they have the required knowledge and skills to be competitive in the workforce (Radford, Robles, Cataylo, Horn, Thornton, & Whitfield, 2014; Coursera, 2015).

In a Coursera (2015) longitudinal study of MOOCs outcomes conducted by the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Washington, and Coursera, researchers found that MOOC students reported significant career and educational benefits. Coursera (2015) reports that out of the 51,954 learner-participants in this study who completed MOOCs on Coursera prior to September 1, 2014, 72% reported career benefits and 61% reported educational benefits. Of those, MOOC learners from less educated and less affluent backgrounds were more likely to report tangible career benefits than those from more affluent backgrounds. Furthermore, those with no postgraduate degree, from low socio economic status, and from emerging economies were also more likely to report educational benefits than their counterparts in more established economies (Coursera, 2015).

Research has also suggested that MOOCs learners require characteristics that give them the confidence to be successful in an online course, and that sustain them during the learning process. Strong self-efficacy beliefs (Johnson & Galy, 2013; Willis III, 2013; Chung, 2015; Wang & Baker, 2015; Barak, Watted, & Haic, 2016; Hodges, 2016), and e-learning skills (Walji, Deacon, Small & Czerniewicz, 2016; Chen & Chen, 2015; Kennedy, et al., 2015; Johnson &
Galy, 2013) are two of those characteristics.

In order to help Hispanic students be successful MOOC learners, there are questions that require further study including the following: How do Hispanics who have studied from MOOCs feel about their own self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning skills? How well did self-efficacy beliefs support them during their learning process and what e-learning skills helped them to be successful in a course? What e-learning skills did they lack when they began a course and how did they subsequently develop those skills? The lack of research in regards to self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning skills and experiences of adult Hispanic who study from MOOCs is a gap in the MOOC research field that needs to be filled.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. The results of this research could inform teachers, tutors, instructional designers, and other educational stakeholders about how to help Hispanic MOOC learners improve their self-efficacy beliefs during a course, and how to develop e-learning strategies and skills that help them benefit during their learning experience.

**Significance of the Problem**

With an increasing population of Hispanics in the U.S., coupled with the impending labor shortage due to the reduction in the working age population, there is both an opportunity and a need to prepare this population through educational services. The Hispanic population and culture is diverse; therefore, understanding how Hispanics learn can provide significant information to Instructional Designers to help them include a variety of pedagogical strategies for Hispanics who want to achieve their academic goals through alternative educational systems
such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Why MOOCs Are Important

MOOCs are advertised as the educational revolution that will benefit millions of students (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Franco-Yañez, Nigmonova & Panichpathom, 2014; Hayes, 2015; Raffaghello, Cucchiara, & Persico, 2015). These authors agree that MOOCs are online high quality college-like courses that promise that someone’s age, geographical location, or social background will no longer be a limitation to receiving an education from prestigious universities of the world such as Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Cambridge, or the University of Tokyo.

Anyone can register for these courses. Students are not required to demonstrate prior knowledge of the subject matter in the course that they want to take or have a higher education credential (Kennedy, et al., 2015). Most MOOCs are free of charge. Additionally, MOOC providers have included new models of certification at a low-cost that can help students demonstrate their knowledge and skills to potential employers. For the Hispanic community who has not had the opportunity to complete post-secondary education, MOOCs might represent the means to achieve their academic goals that in turn can benefit them with better job opportunities.

Considerations To Be Successful in MOOCs

Kennedy et al. (2015) claim that to be successful in MOOCs it is necessary to have a high degree of self-regulation for it helps students in their decisions about when to study, how to study and what activities to tackle. Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy—a mechanism that influences self-regulation of motivation—has been noticed as a determinantal factor in students who complete MOOCs (Johnson & Galy, 2013; Willis III, 2013; Chung, 2015; Wang & Baker, 2015;
Self-efficacy is just one component that influences success in MOOCs. E-learning skills such as digital skills (Walji, Deacon, Small, & Czerniewicz, 2016), goal-oriented skills (Chen & Chen, 2015), problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Kennedy, et al., 2015), time management skills and the ability to work independently (Johnson & Galy, 2013) may also determine students’ success in a MOOC. However, not all students who register in a MOOC have developed these kinds of skills. Alario-Hoyos, Estévez-Ayres, Pérez-Sanagustín, Leony and Delgado (2015), Hood, Littlejohn, and Milligan (2015), and Pursel, Zhang, Jablokow, Choi§, and Velegol (2016), found that a high percentage of learners who enroll, complete a course or program and get a MOOC certificate have post-secondary education, such as bachelors or graduate degrees. Thus, these students are more likely to already possess the required e-learning skills than are those learners who have not attained a post-secondary education. Moreover, Christensen, Steinmetz, Alcorn, Bennett, Woods, and Emanuel (2013) claim that a high percentage of students enrolled in MOOCs from countries with emerging national economies, and developing countries are “young, well-educated males who are trying to advance in their jobs” (p. 8) suggesting that those students who are not goal-oriented and do not have a clear purpose on how they can transform learning into something valuable for their professional or day-to-day life, are less likely to be successful in a MOOC. Hopefully, studies of MOOC students who reside in emerging nations will be the subject of further research.

As seen in Table 1, only 15% of the Hispanic population in the United States has earned a bachelor’s degree. Hence, according to Alario-Hoyos, et al., (2015), Hood, et al., (2015), Pursel, et al. (2016), and Christensen, et al. (2013) the majority of Hispanics who have not completed post-secondary education might not have the necessary skills to be successful in a MOOC.
Therefore, this study will focus on exploring the self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning experiences and skills of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs.

**Definitions of Key Terminology**

**Hispanic**- For the purpose of this work, the ethnic term “Hispanic” or “Latino” will be used interchangeably as a gender/neutral inclusive definition when the researcher refers to “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” living in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2017).

**Adult**- The definition of “adult” used in this research is taken from the 2015 Current Population Survey (CPS) Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that defines “adult” as “the population 25 and older” (Ryan & Baumn, 2016, p.1).

**Hispanics’ Demographic Background**

As shown in Table 1 out of the 57 million Hispanics living in the United States, 64% are U.S. born, and 36% are foreign born (United States Congress JEC, 2016). Hispanics’ demographic background represents over 20 countries and cultures from Latin America and the Caribbean. Education attainment is low: 65% of Hispanics have a high school degree whereas scarcely 15% have completed a bachelors’ degree. The level of education is reflected in the jobs and income that they obtain. They work mainly in the construction, agriculture, and leisure and hospitality industries and only 16% of the Hispanic population work in professional and business services as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1
**Hispanic characteristics in 2016**

### U.S Hispanic population 57 million (18% of U.S. population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Born</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### U.S Hispanic Demography (Country of origin)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Countries (Central American, South American &amp; Spain)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### U.S Hispanic Educational Attainment (25 years and older)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics with high school degree</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born Hispanics with high school degree</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born Hispanics with high school degree</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hispanics with bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born Hispanics with bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born Hispanics with bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>&gt;11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### U.S Hispanics Employment (Private Sector) (16.6% of U.S. Population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Utilities</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional and Business Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>16%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial activities</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Health services</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**U.S Hispanic Household Income**

The median income of Hispanic households is $42,500—nearly $18,000 less than the median income of non-Hispanic white households (60,300).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic Population</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born Hispanics</td>
<td>47,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born Hispanics</td>
<td>34,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hispanics Learning Styles**

As shown in Table 1, the Hispanic population is diverse and although the majority of the Hispanics living in the United States may share some cultural characteristics such as family and social values, religious affiliation, and language, their learning styles and skills (technological literacy, abilities to work independently, ability to create a study environment, etc.) may vary according to their own ethnicity, socio-economic and immigration status, educational attainment or the skills developed through their job experience. Those differences may impact their own learning styles and experiences when they study through MOOCs.

Kaupp (2012) claims that Hispanics’ learning style favors direct instruction; a preference for lectures where instructors control discussions and decision-making during class and teacher-student-teacher respect is the norm. Griggs and Dunn (1995) claim that Hispanics are peer-
oriented. Johnson and Galy (2013), and Tanno (2003) argue that Hispanic students need face-to-face interaction and socialization with “faculty, staff and students and other Hispanic students in particular” (p. 42). Smith and Ayers (2006) argue that adult Hispanics learners prefer “the concrete over the abstract [have] a preference for tangible, specific, practical tasks over theory and broad general concepts [and] enjoy active experimentation in learning” (p. 413). Finally, Rivera (2014) asserts that adult Hispanic have a strong preference for feedback from the instructor and collaborative activities among students and share the holistic and field-dependent culture of African Americans.

These characteristics may influence Hispanic students’ academic achievement when they study in MOOCs. A MOOC is student-centered. MOOC students need to do readings, assignments, participate in asynchronous discussion forums, watch videos, listen to audios and use other e-learning tools to be able to comply with the course requirements. Although these e-learning tools can give students the opportunity to work at their own pace and to reflect on what they are learning, this model of instruction where students are responsible for what, where and when they learn is a model that the Hispanic community may not be particularly familiar or comfortable with as suggested by the fore-mentioned researchers.

**Adult Hispanic Limited English Proficient**

The level of education achieved by adult Hispanics with Limited English Proficiency predicts the kind of jobs and income that might attain. Additionally, lack of English language proficiency plays an important role in Hispanics’ professional opportunities. Wathely and Batalova (2013) claim that about 63 percent of the Limited English Proficient population in the United States identifies as Hispanic. Over 12 million are foreign-born and 16.4 million speak Spanish. Wathely and Batalova (2013) claim that the lack of English-language skills hinders the
professional opportunities and advancement of Spanish-speaking Hispanics, resulting in low-income households. Additionally, the lack of English language skills may also be a factor that inhibits Hispanics’ decision to continue their studies through MOOCs, or may affect their learning experience since a large number of MOOC courses are taught in the English language and developed by universities in the United States.

**MOOCs for Hispanics Professional Opportunities**

Fifty-eight percent out of 748 employers located in 47 countries worldwide agreed that MOOCs are appropriate for professional development (MAC, n.d.). Moreover, Coursera—a private technology company that offers MOOCs—has developed partnerships with companies such as L’Oréal, Boston Consulting Group, and Axis Bank to create specific MOOCs. According to Sawers (2016), these MOOCs “feature specially curated curricula tailored to a company’s goals, with the ability to track employee enrollment and learning progress” (n.d.). Employees who take these courses upgrade their skills in order to be competitive for the demands of the company, build leadership and participate in the culture of learning of the organization.

For those who work in companies that have not developed these learning partnerships but who need new knowledge and skills to advance in their careers, MOOC providers have created new concepts of academic accreditations granted to students who complete a series of 4-6 rigorous courses and pay a low-fee. Each certificate is granted by the MOOC provider (Coursera, edX, Udacity, etc.) in partnership with an institution of higher education that provides the instruction. These certificates include Nanodegrees, Honor Code Certificates, Verified Certificates, and XSeries Certificates, among others. Additionally, for those students who want to pursue a Bachelors’ or a Masters’ degree, they offer graduate credit-eligible courses or
MicroMasters credentials that can provide a new path to continue graduate school and significantly reduce college tuition costs.

**Methodological Approach**

Through a qualitative research method with a primary focus on interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this research will explore the self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning skills and experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. This research will address how Hispanics’ self-efficacy beliefs support their learning experiences through MOOCs, and what e-learning skills positively support their learning process. This research will examine these factors within the cultural context of the larger Hispanic community and analyze what the research subjects reveal with respect to their learning styles as well as include their specific experiences and insights. The outcomes might benefit researchers, curriculum designers, teachers, and other educational stakeholders to include strategies in the design of MOOCs that support Hispanics learning styles to help them achieve their academic goals and become more competitive in the workforce and life.

**Positionality**

In 2013, I submitted my application for admission to the Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. As a native Spanish-speaker, born and raised in Mexico, I obtained my undergraduate degree in my country of origin. Years later, I moved to Laredo, Texas where I earned a Master of Arts in Hispanic Literature. During my Master’s program, all my classes and written assignments were in Spanish.

My English language skills were built from English as Second Language classes in
Mexico and only one English writing course in a Community College in Austin, Texas. Although I am able to communicate verbally and in written English, I never felt confident to be able to continue my graduate studies in English. Hence, when I decided to apply for the Doctor of Education program, I was concerned about not being able to write with the academic rigor and clarity in English that is required for an advanced degree. I could not afford to pay for college-level English composition courses before my doctoral program started because I was unemployed at that time and needed to use my savings for the future doctoral courses. Searching on the Internet, I found an English composition MOOC designed at Duke University. It was free of charge, so I decided to enroll in it. At the end of the course, my writing skills had improved significantly and—most importantly—I gained the necessary confidence to start my doctoral program.

Had I not taken the English Composition MOOC, I do not know if I would have been able to successfully complete the demanding writing assignments of the first doctoral course. The English Composition MOOC was convenient for several reasons: a) it was self-paced, b) the professors and classmates offered great feedback on the writing assignments, c) I could watch the video lectures as many times as I needed, d) the informal e-learning environment was relaxing, e) I learned something new from each writing assignment and f) the course was free of charge.

My classmates varied from professors at universities who enrolled in this course to learn about MOOC teaching-learning approaches, to students who had no post-secondary education. Also, there were a lot of English Language Learners, some of them Spanish-speakers, with whom I shared academic and language concerns and from whom I received a lot of encouragement and valuable feedback.
My positive experience with the English Composition MOOC led me to take additional MOOCs related to e-learning that helped me gain academic knowledge and skills that will support my professional career. Most importantly, being a MOOC student motivated me to analyze the instructional and technological components of a MOOC from a scholar-practitioner point of view, and learn how MOOCs may benefit societies and communities, including the Hispanic community in the United States, that need to improve their economies through education.

As an educated Hispanic, I’m a strong advocate for providing best educational practices and opportunities to the Latino community at large. According to my own experience as a student and researcher, I see MOOCs as an educational model that can benefit thousands of Hispanics in the United States.

Several authors have written extensively about how “one’s identities, particularly those associated with one’s positioning in society, influence the way in which one perceives and understands the world” (Briscoe, 2005, p. 24). In this light, Briscoe explores the convenience and inconveniences of conducting research of a social group of which the researcher is a member and argues for inclusive representation, meaning, “that a scholar’s social group should not determine which social group they should or should not study and represent in scholarly discourse” (Briscoe, 2005, p. 24).

I am a member of the Hispanic community in the United States, but being Hispanic does not mean that I see this ethnic group as a homogenous one. On the contrary, the different countries and cultures that we represent make us a complex group. Although we have many similarities, we also have many differences. To be sure that I am appropriately aware of the ways my identity and biases could impact the clarity and usefulness of my research, I acknowledge
Hispanics’ complexity and “relational roles of race, class, gender, and other socially constructed identifiers in being” (Parsons, 2008, p.1129). I also avoid labeling all Hispanics with respect to their income or marginally as being from an underrepresented group in the United States, as this may not be the most relevant information about my subjects. I have reflected on my own educational journey and the way it has and has not affected the way others see me and the way I see myself. I focus my research on those adult Hispanics who have access to technology and the Internet, and who have had the experience of learning through MOOCs. In my research role, I expect to learn from their own experiences as MOOCs students, and hope that this experience guides MOOCs designers to include theories and methodologies that respond to the Hispanic community’s needs. By analyzing their own experience in their own words, I also gain awareness of my own biases and preserve the value and accuracy of my research. As a Hispanic who benefited greatly from the MOOC experience, I think my role as a participant-researcher is most appropriate.

**Research Question**

How do adult Hispanics who have high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs?

**Rationale**

Understanding how Hispanics learn through MOOCs is important because “nearly half of all new jobs created between 2008 and 2018 will require a post-secondary degree or credential” (Pandya, 2012, n.d.), and because the Hispanic community is projected to add 37.6 million people to the labor force by 2050 (Tossi, 2012). The task of understanding how they learn from a
MOOC may differ according to their learning style—which in turn might be influenced by the intersections of their ethnicity, culture, language, educational level socio economic level, and immigration status. An analysis of Hispanics’ self-reported experiences when learning from a MOOC should help MOOC designers include specific strategies that assist the Hispanic community to leverage their academic knowledge and skills to obtain MOOC credentials. That in turn might help position them to fulfill the demands the jobs industry of the twenty-first century requires.

**Theoretical Framework**

In this study, Bandura’s self-efficacy theory will inform the research design as well as guide the researcher’s analysis as he explores Hispanic students experience about their ability to attend and successfully employ with the learning skills that MOOC demands, and the manner in which they do or do not persist with the course when facing difficulties. Bandura’s (1989) self-efficacy theory is derived from his social cognitive theory. Bandura (1989) explains: “Social cognitive theory favors a model of causation involving triadic reciprocal determinism. In this model of reciprocal causation, behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other” (p. 2). Social cognitive theory argues that a person is a self-regulator agent of change and adaptation. People set goals and anticipate outcomes. In order to achieve those goals, people include strategies, monitor, and regulate their actions, and make adjustments when necessary (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

According to Bandura (1977) self-efficacy plays an important role in human agency. Bandura (1989b) defines self-efficacy as “people's judgments of their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives” (p.59). It determines how humans behave, think, and
react when facing demanding situations to produce expected goals “through cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes” (Bandura, 2002a, p. 270). Bandura’s extensive writing on self-efficacy includes the term *perceived self-efficacy*. According to Bandura (1982) *perceived self-efficacy* is “concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (p. 122). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will use both definitions interchangeably when referring to one’s belief that he/she can execute an activity to produce expected results.

Self-efficacy impacts human behavior and emotional reactions that affect personal agency (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy influences what activities to perform, where to perform those activities, how much effort to invest when performing them, how long to persist and remain motivated in an activity or what courses of action to take when facing stress, depression or other obstacles (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1991; Bandura, 1997). Additionally, Shea and Bidjerano (2010) claim that there is a “connection between self-efficacy, effort, and subsequent performance” (p. 1724). Bandura and Locke (2003) agree that experiences after performing a task affect one’s beliefs and these experiences affect one’s decisions in performing similar tasks and undertaking challenges in the future. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals, and one’s convictions become firmer when achieving those goals (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1989a; Bandura, 1991).

Stajkovic and Luthans (2002) observe: “self-efficacy expectations are, in fact, formed on the basis of subjective perceptions of personal and situational factors, rather than on the direct impact of ‘objective’ reality” (p. 136). Therefore, when one lacks the required skills to perform a task, high self-efficacy beliefs—on their own—will not necessarily help the person produce the
expected outcomes (Shunk, 1991). Therefore, Shea and Bidjerano (2010) warn that overestimating one’s capabilities may produce negative effects.

On the other hand, when perceived self-efficacy is low, humans are more inclined to visualize failure when they perform a difficult task (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1989a). Additionally, humans are more vulnerable to lose motivation and perseverance in the face of challenging situations; hence they are more susceptible to negative emotional arousals such as stress or depression (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1989a; Bandura & Locke, 2003). However, Bandura and Locke (2003) claim that low perceived self-efficacy may change over time as individuals overcome challenges.

According to Bandura (1978) when individuals have strong reasons to engage in an activity, perceived self-efficacy helps them judge if they are able to achieve the outcomes expected. The bigger the goal, the stronger is the decision to undertake the demands to achieve the goal (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). According to Hodges (2008) goals can be classified as proximal or distal. Proximal goals are those that are “perceived to be attainable in a short period of time or with minimal improvement. A distal goal is a goal that is thought to be more long-term or attainable through much improvement” (p. 9). When humans feel that they can achieve these two kinds of goals, they increase self-confidence and build a sense of success and achievement (Jabbarifar, 2011).

Bandura (1982) writes of main goals and sub-goals. He claims that in order to achieve main goals it is necessary to set sub-goals that help one determine the progress of the main goal. The successful completion of sub-goals fosters a growing sense of self-efficacy and reinvigorates motivation. It likewise maintains an individual’s interest in achieving the ultimate goal. When
individuals attain their goals, they set higher standards for further challenges (Bandura, 1991; Bandura & Locke, 2003).

However, Bandura (1997) acknowledges that setting and accomplishing goals also depend on sociostructural factors such as living conditions or political and economic systems. Those who show strong self-efficacy beliefs recognize that they can exercise control over those sociostructural factors and proactively work to overcome difficulties (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

Finally, Bandura and Locke (2003) argue that self-efficacy is shaped by one’s interpretation and reflection of four main sources: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states. An analysis of the mentioned four sources of information is explored in the next section of this literature review.

**Self-Efficacy: Four Sources of Information**

Self-efficacy can be developed through four sources of information: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states (Bandura, 1997). The influence of these four sources over personal behavior can make a difference between persisting and desisting when facing barriers in pursuing a goal. Self-efficacy’s four sources of information are explained below as they apply to the field of education.

**Enactive mastery experiences.** According to Bandura (1997) enactive mastery experiences refer to one’s previous successful experiences when facing a challenging task that contributed to building self-efficacy beliefs. Enactive mastery experiences are the strongest evidence that one can perform a task; they give confidence that one can face barriers and setbacks when working on similar tasks in the future (Bandura, 1977; Stajkovic & Luthans,
Enactive mastery experiences support learners’ beliefs about their capability when performing challenging activities (van Dinther et al., 2011). Additionally, Bandura (1977) sees failure as part of the learning process: “occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort” (p. 195).

**Vicarious experience.** Hodges (2008) claims that vicarious experience refers “to one’s observation of a role model performing a task successfully” (p. 15). This literature review identified two types of role models. The first one has similar characteristics to the observer. When a person see a peer successfully perform or seriously attempt demanding activities, it can help enhance the observer’s belief that he/she can perform similar activities and can contribute to his/her own self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 1989b; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002; Pajares, 2003; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005; Moos & Azevedo, 2009).

The second role model is a figure of respect—such as a mentor or a professor—whose actions and words impart the possibility of success to others. Mentors and professors are perceived as credible and knowledgeable people whose faith and encouragement in student’s academic achievement influence student’s self-efficacy. Moreover, DeFreitas and Bravo, (2012) argue: “when students interact with faculty outside of the classroom, they are likely to learn from observation in various settings in addition to receiving advice as well” (p. 2).

**Verbal persuasion.** This refers to the positive influence that a person receives from a role model—teacher, mentor, peer, parents or any figure of respect—who provides positive comments about an individual’s capabilities when developing a task. Role model trustworthiness ranks high on his/her qualifications and competences (Bandura, 1989b; Bandura, 1997; Hodges,
2008; Moos & Azevedo, 2009; Jabbarifar, 2011; DeFreitas & Bravo, 2012). When a learner receives good feedback from a role model, the learner’s self-efficacy grows. However, Hodges (2008) notices that when a learner receives unrealistic feedback, it can lead to “failure, which in turn may decrease self-efficacy and diminish the belief in the persuader as a credible judge of the performance” (p. 16).

**Psychological states.** The emotional feedback received during or after completing a task influences an individual’s self-efficacy beliefs. According to Bandura (1997) anxiety, stress, fatigue or other aversive arousals lower one’s perception of one’s capacity to perform a task, and elevates one’s fear of not being able to achieve the expected outcomes. In contrast, positive emotional feedback creates serenity and the belief in one’s ability to successfully perform a task (Phan, 2013).

Moreover, students’ self-evaluation of their own performance during learning experiences is an indication of personal competence. Usher and Pajares (2008) claim “[s]trong emotional reactions to school-related tasks can provide cues to expected success or failure […]. A pessimistic outlook leads individuals to misconstrue their mistakes as signs of inability, which in turn diminishes their self-efficacy” (p. 754).

**Conclusion**

One of the main characteristics of students taking a MOOC is their desire to learn. However, if those students lack strong self-efficacy beliefs, they might not be able to organize and execute MOOC requirements, or might decide to drop out when their psychological state is vulnerable. By placing Bandura’s self-efficacy theory as the framework for this work, the researcher will explore adult Hispanic students’ self-efficacy beliefs and how they impact their success in MOOCs. The researcher hopes that this research and analysis will point to ways to
strengthen and improve the MOOC experience and success academic rate for adult Hispanic students.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Research shows that the majority of adult e-learning users has higher levels of education than the general population; they are, for the most part employed adults, goal-oriented, self-directed, and intrinsically motivated (Ke & Kwak, 2013). Additionally, researchers claim that students’ self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in their e-learning success (Johnson & Galy, 2013; Willis III, Spiers, & Gettings, 2013; Chung, 2015; Wang & Baker, 2015; Barak et al., 2016; Hodges, 2016). Bandura (1980) asserts, “self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of the likelihood that one can organize and execute given courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (p. 263). Therefore, there is the expectation that students who develop high self-efficacy beliefs in an e-learning environment tend to perform well in MOOCs.

This information is gleaned from general populations, without respect to cultural or ethnic background. While the data is useful and important, this researcher and others believe it is an appropriate time to focus on certain populations, particularly those who are still not proportionally represented in the group of successful college graduates and those employed to their fullest potential. Those are just two of the reason this researcher selected Hispanics as the focus of this research.

The research question of the study explores how adult Hispanics in the United States who have a high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs. After a thorough exploration of the literature, this researcher found no current research about adult Hispanics learning from MOOCs or any research that connects Hispanics’ self-efficacy and its impact on their experience and success in MOOCs. Therefore, to try to respond to this study’s research question, this researcher began by selecting literature that explored how Bandura’s self-efficacy
theory is connected to learning experiences. Once this connection was established, this researcher pursued literature that specifically explored how Hispanic self-efficacy and learning styles are influenced by their culture and how self-efficacy may influence Hispanics’ academic achievement and career choice.

The literature review also included a brief story of MOOCs, their taxonomy and pedagogical components, their different providers, the different kinds of certificates that they offer and the debate around MOOCs. Finally, this literature review explored the connection between the experiences of MOOCs learners and self-efficacy, and how self-efficacy may influence students’ motivation, engagement and academic achievement. This researcher found that the literature review provided targeted information that may be relevant to guide the interviews of the participants during the research process that will help this researcher answer the research question.

**Self-Efficacy’s Contribution To Successful Learning**

Bandura (1989b) states that schools are places where learners have experiences with cognitive competencies, problem-solving skills, thinking skills, peer modeling, social comparison, and motivational incentives. They set proximal goals, and are constantly evaluated. These factors contribute to a constant exercise to develop self-efficacy from enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological states. Therefore, Bandura (1989b) suggests that from their first years in school, students should be exposed to age-appropriate strategies that help learners navigate through these four sources of information to build strong self-efficacy beliefs. In this way students will be prepared “to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative” (p. 67).
Analysis, reflection and judgment of learners’ own competences may inform students on how self-efficacious they are in their determination to successfully perform an academic task, and the positive results they might achieve when facing academic demands (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). Bamhardt (1997, as cited in Jabbarifar, 2011) described self-efficacious learners as those who have developed strategies to solve problems in the past, improve abilities through learning experiences, and acknowledge that failures are part of the learning process. On the contrary, learners with a low sense of self-efficacy do not believe that they have the ability to fulfill demanding tasks and prefer not to engage or put much effort into such activities (Jabbarifar, 2011).

According to Shunk (1991) students can assess their own self-efficacy before starting a new learning experience:

[They can] make judgments about what they will need to learn, what knowledge and skills are prerequisites for the new learning, how well they can recall the prerequisite information from memory, how easily they have learned similar skills in the past, how well they can attend to the teacher's instruction and rehearse material to be learned, and how skillfully they can monitor their level of understanding. Self-efficacy for learning involves assessing what will be required in the learning context and how well one can use one's knowledge and skills to produce new learning (p. 4).

Once students begin their academic journey, learners develop their self-efficacy as they a) start believing in their capabilities to acquire knowledge, perform skills, and master the new material, b) use prior experiences to guide the new learning experience, c) set goals, d) use teacher feedback or other situational signals to evaluate their own performance, e) enhance motivation through progress, and f) become more skillful (Shunk, 1991). van Dinther et al.
(2011) claim that self-efficacy “influences motivation and cognition by means of affecting students’ task interest, task persistence, the goals they set, the choices they make and their use of cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory strategies” (p. 97). As a factor in motivation, self-efficacy is associated with optimism, and academic help-seeking. It is also recognized as an anxiety regulator (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Therefore, self-efficacy has been identified as a good predictor of academic achievement (Usher & Pajares, 2008; Jabbarifar, 2011), college persistence, and college GPA predictor (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010).

Finally, self-efficacy is linked to vocational interest (Bonitz et al., 2010). It is associated with career options and goals, occupational aspirations, student engagement, motivation and performance (Bandura, 2002b; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). The higher the learners’ sense of self-efficacy contributes to their ability to comply with educational requirements, the greater their interest and commitment, the better their efforts when facing career challenges, and the wider their career options will be (Bandura, 2002b; Bandura & Locke, 2003).

**Conclusion.** Students’ self-efficacy should be cultivated at an early age because it promotes student’s agency, learning strategies, and problem-solving approaches. Self-efficacy also assists students evaluate their own knowledge and skills to calculate how successful they could be in relation to a new learning experience. Self-efficacy influences motivation and cognition and is associated with optimism and stress reduction. Finally, self-efficacy is associated with academic achievement, college persistence, and vocational interest.

**Hispanic Learning Style, Cultural Differences and Self-Efficacy**
Bandura (1989b) defines self-efficacy as “people's judgments of their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives” (p. 59) and explains that self-efficacy is shaped by four sources of information: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. This section of the literature review explores how both culture and ethnic identity are connected with Hispanics self-efficacy and learning styles.

According to Smith and Ayers (2006):

Culture, as defined by anthropologists, is the sum total of all learned behavior. It is passed down from generation to generation through individuals and human groups, and it exerts a profound influence on our behavior, our attitudes, how we solve problems, how we interact with each other as social beings, the values we carry with us, and the spiritual beliefs we hold (p. 402-403).

Yosso (2005) argues that culture is connected to race and ethnic identity and it is associated with schooling, and academic achievement. Some scholars (Bandura, 2002b; Gushue, 2006; Smith & Ayers 2006; Ojeda, Piña-Watson, Castillo, Castillo, Khan, & Leig, 2012; De Freitas & Bravo, Jr., 2012; Orange & Ramalho, 2013; Phan, 2013; Kelley, Siwatu, Tost, & Martinez, 2015; Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017) argue that personality constructs such as ethnic identity influence Hispanic learning styles, and self-efficacy. Finally, Cox et al. (1991); Vandello and Cohen, (1999); Alders, (2011); Phan (2013); and Bandura (2002b) claim that Hispanic learning styles, academic achievement, and self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced by two cultural systems: collectivism and individualism.

Bandura (2002b) claims that “[a] high sense of personal efficacy is just as important to group-directedness as to self-directedness” (p. 273) suggesting that self-efficacy is equally
important for both collectivist and individualistic cultures. The question is how Hispanics, who are raised under the precepts of a collectivist culture (Cox et al., 1991; Vandello & Cohen, 1999; Alders, 2011), can develop this sense of personal efficacy even while pursuing an academic goal within an individualistic culture such as the one that prevails in the United States (Bandura, 2002b).

First of all, it is necessary to clarify, using a rather broad brush, the differences between collectivist and individualistic cultures. Phan (2013) argues that individualistic cultures encourage and elevate individual success, pride, and recognition, and that these characteristics are included and rewarded in the school system. Phan (2013) asserts, “[i]ndividualistic learning and achievements may also extend to include other deliberations, such as mastery and individual growth of personal competence (e.g., improving literacy skills), and an appreciation and valuing for learning tasks” (p. 73). Additionally, Liu, Liu, Lee, Seung-hee, and Magjuka (2010) claim that in individualistic education, learners are expected to be challenged or questioned or take leadership in group discussions since that is part of students’ learning process. On the contrary, in collectivist cultures, group goals and interests and family well-being prevail over the needs and wants of one individual. Bandura (2002b) agrees with Vandello and Cohen (1999) that collectivistic and individualistics systems have their own differences and cannot be considered uniform systems:

Americans, Italians, Germans, French, and the British differ in their particular brands of individualism. Even within an individualistically oriented culture, such as the United States, the Northeast brand of individualism is quite different from the Midwest and West versions and the latter differ from that of the Deep Southern region of the nation (p. 274).
Cox et al. (1991); Vandelo and Cohen (1999); and Alders (2011) claim that Hispanic culture is a collective one. Gudykuns (1998, as cited in Center for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.) states that:

Hispanics come from a collectivistic culture where group activities are dominant, responsibility is shared, and accountability is collective. Because of the emphasis on collectivity, harmony and cooperation among the group tends to be emphasized more than individual function and responsibility (p. 2).

Additionally, Phan (2013) highlights the importance that collectivist cultures give to family well-being and respect to others. Valenzuela (1999) adds that in collectivist cultures—such as the dominant culture in Mexico—respect for elders and teachers is important. In regards to education, Valenzuela (1999) explains that in Mexico, education is based on mutual respect among students; it enhances communication between student and teachers and it is a valued skill when working on group activities.

Phan (2013) highlights the interdependence embedded in collectivistic cultures and suggests that it must be considered when educational systems design strategies to include self-efficacy for academic purposes and for sociocultural changes:

Collective self-efficacy beliefs towards academic and non-academic criteria may encourage and/or promote shared feelings of hope, idealism, and joy and fulfillment in objectives, goals, etc. What we could do, for example, is to structure learning activities (e.g., group investigation) and social events (e.g., school term fete) that accentuate and encourage group connectedness, interdependency, and belongingness (p. 80).
Finally, Bandura (2002b) notes that people who belong to a collectivist culture obtain better results when working with people from their same ethnicity, suggesting that working in groups that include people from different ethnicities will not necessarily always give positive results.

**Hispanic Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement**

In relation to race and ethnicity, Orange and Ramalho (2013) found that self-efficacy and self-regulation are critical for Hispanic adolescent students’ academic achievement. Hispanics’ self-regulation contributes to their being able to better manage learning experiences and to achieve higher levels of motivation. Self-efficacy assists them in their construction of learning strategies and academic achievement. On the contrary, Hispanic students with low self-efficacy show lower levels of achievement due to issues such as lack of attention, concentration, lack of help-seeking, and goal setting, among others. Orange and Ramalho (2013) claim:

Low self-efficacy students could benefit from training in the development of high self-efficacy and more use of self-regulatory behaviors early in secondary school […]. Once low self-efficacy students are identified and it is known that they use less self-regulatory behaviors, teachers can intervene and help students construct meaning of what it means to be a more self-efficacious, self-regulated student (p.58-59).

Three out of the four self-efficacy sources of information (enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion) were addressed in this literature review when exploring Hispanic self-efficacy and academic achievement. Most of available information was related to *verbal persuasion* and *vicarious experience* that are interconnected with *psychological states*. 
Verbal persuasion and vicarious experience were explored from the works of Valencia-Tanno (2003); Smith and Ayers (2006); and De Freitas and Bravo, Jr. (2012). According to Valencia-Tanno (2003), the predominant Hispanic learning process is linked to “face-to-face interaction with faculty, staff, and students in general, and other Latino/a students in particular” (p. 413). Smith and Ayers (2006) agree with Valencia-Tanno’s (2003) statement and affirm that these preferences among Hispanics are consistent in e-learning environments. Moreover, De Freitas and Bravo, Jr. (2012) state that faculty interaction and mentoring have a positive effect on ethnic minorities including Hispanic college students as they perceive respect and appreciation from faculty. De Freitas and Bravo, Jr. (2012) claim “when ethnic minority students have positive interactions with faculty [...] they feel a sense of belonging in the academic environment and embrace the idea that they can have a successful academic career” (p. 7). However, De Freitas and Bravo, Jr. (2012) also found significant improvements in Hispanics GPA when they receive mentoring from other students rather than faculty.

Additionally, Song, Singleton, Hill and Hwa Koh (2004); Smith and Ayers (2006) and Liu et al. (2010), claim that flexibility in communication patterns (i.e., one-to-one communication and group communication) is recommended as cultural differences may cause miscommunication between teacher-students and student-students.

Hispanic psychological states were explored from Lopez’s (2014) study. Lopez conducted an investigation in an elite, largely White university regarding Hispanic gender differences and how self-efficacy is affected during Hispanic students’ first year of college. In this study, Lopez (2014) found clear differences in how Hispanic males and females manage self-efficacy beliefs: “[m]ales reported higher levels of Social and Coursework Efficacy (sic) at the beginning of the academic year. Toward the end of the freshman year, males reduced their
levels of reported efficacy” (p. 99). According to Lopez (2014) changes in self-efficacy judgment could be due to Hispanics’s efforts to manage emotional arousals (Bandura, 1997) such as the stress that occurred when facing a hostile racial climate in which they experienced microagressions, difficulties in establishing social integration among peers, undervalued feelings, and isolation.

As for female Hispanics, Lopez (2014) found that they started the first year of college with lower self-efficacy appraisals and more stress and anxiety compared to their male counterparts due to both family obligations based on their gender-role, and academic achievement stereotypes. Contrary to Hispanic males, Lopez (2014) found that Hispanic females showed a positive change in self-efficacy appraisal after the first year of college.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest that a culturally responsive pedagogy may support perceived self-efficacy among the Hispanic community. Ladson-Billings (1995) claims that culturally responsive pedagogy “helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p.469). Ladson-Billings (1995); Villegas and Lucas (2002); and Kelley et al. (2015) argue that the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy supports learners’ academic achievement, motivation and respect. In turn, these three benefit self-efficacy. Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest that cultural diversity might be promoted and valued in academic institutions by including the effort and contributions that people from different ethnicities make as part of the curriculum that can fulfill various course requirements such as group projects. Finally, Song et al. (2004); Smith and Ayers, (2006); and Liu et al. (2010) recommended more flexibility in the designing of learning experiences to address cultural differences.

**Hispanic Self-Efficacy and Career Choice**
Gurshue (2006) explored self-efficacy through the lens of social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to understand the relationship between self-efficacy and outcome expectations in Hispanic high school students. Gurshue (2006) found that there is a connection between Hispanics’ ethnic identity and their vocational decisions. He suggests that a strong identification with one’s culture may influence Hispanics’ self-efficacy, outcome expectancies, career choices and development. However, Bandura (2002b) notices that:

Cross-ethnic comparisons, such as Latinos, African-Americans, and Orientals, can be highly misinformative because of the diverse nature of ethnicity. For example, to lump Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chicanos, and Spanish, who have quite different cultural origins, into a Latino category imposes homogeneity on intra-ethnic diversity. Hence, cultural contrasts, in which members of a single collectivist culture is (sic) compared to those of a single individualist one, can spawn a lot of misleading generalisations (p. 275).

Niehaus, Rudasill and Adelson (2012) claim the importance of enhancing Hispanic self-efficacy in middle school by helping students believe that they have the capacity to reach their goals. However, Niehaus et al. (2012) advise that those variables be explored at home as well, since they may affect students’ expectations of continuing post-secondary education. In this respect, Ojeda et al. (2012) explored the importance of Hispanic middle-school student and career decision self-efficacy (CDSE). Ojeda et al. (2012) claim that:

Perhaps increasing their CDSE during youth could encourage them to pursue occupations with higher financial compensation. In essence, it is important to consider CDSE during adolescence in preparation for entering the future workforce
to ensure Latinos do not lag behind in their potential to impact the U.S. labor force.

(p. 210).

Additionally, Mejia-Smith and Gusue’s (2017) research, Latina/o College Students’ Perceptions of Career Barriers (p. 145), found that a positive approach towards one’s own ethnic identity, and an awareness of the “career barriers inherent in the sociocultural power dynamics within American mainstream society” (p. 151) may help Latinas break social barriers and consider better career-decisions.

Wright, Perrone-McGovern, Boo and White (2014) found that career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) might be affected by the perception of educational and societal barriers and personal conflicts. Mejia-Smith and Gushue (2017) explain that CDSE explores how “individual’s racial and ethnic background, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and cultural background interact with societal ideology and structures to influence self-efficacy […] and outcomes expectations […] to shape career behavior” (p.145). Mejia-Smith and Gushue (2017) analyzed the career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) of college Hispanic students through the lens of social cognitive career theory. They found that there is a strong relationship between self-efficacy and ethnic identity, and that ethnic identity makes Hispanic more confident to overcome career barriers. Additionally, Hispanic college students with a high degree of self-efficacy mediated their ethnic identity and gender with contextual barriers such as discrimination, unequal access to opportunities, and socio economical status.

Similarly, Ojeda et al. (2012) found that Hispanic college students have lower career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) compared to White students. Ojeda et al. (2012) claim that the more barriers Hispanics face, the less assertive they are in career decisions. Ojeda et al. (2012) explain that some of the barriers that can hinder Hispanics’ career decision are: low level of
acculturation to the United States school system and culture, enculturation, and ethnic identity. However, Mejia-Smith and Gushue (2017) argue that acculturation to the United States culture may be both a barrier and a benefit for Hispanics career decision self-efficacy.

Conclusion. Hispanics self-efficacy, learning styles and academic achievement are influenced by their own collectivist culture and ethnic identity, in relation to the individualistic culture that prevails in the United States school system. Self-efficacy is critical in the development of adolescent students and it supports Hispanic students in college by helping them deal with unequal access to opportunities and negative emotional arousals. Research shows that building Hispanics’ self-efficacy in college is possible through faculty interaction, peer mentoring, and by including culturally responsive pedagogy in the curricula.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

When it comes to the topic of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), most researchers conclude that MOOCs are educational disruptive innovations that will change today’s concept of higher education (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Franco Yañez, Nigmonova & Panichpathom, 2014; Hayes 2015; Raffaghelli et al., 2015). These researchers agree that MOOCs will benefit thousands of students regardless of location, time, or age. Where this agreement ends, however, is on the question of how MOOCs really will benefit the learning experience of learners from different cultures, languages and learning approaches. The importance of this study rests on the need to respond to the question: how do adult Hispanics describe their self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) History
Massive, open, online courses are the key components of an educational model known by its acronym MOOCs. The characteristics that distinguish these kinds of courses from other online courses are their massiveness and openness. The massiveness is made possible by a technological scalability that allows thousands of students to enroll, take and participate in the courses at the same time regardless of geographical location. Openness means that any interested person can have access to a MOOC regardless of age, social-status or education level.

MOOCs first inception in the e-learning world dated back to 2008 when Dave Comier introduced this term to describe University of Manitoba’s professors Stephen Downes’ and George Siemens’ “Connectivism and Connective Knowledge” course that was shared online for free to over 2,300 students. The course’s purpose was to explore connectivist pedagogy so interaction among students was important. The use of discussion boards, wikis and chats was encouraged throughout the course, permitting students to interact with each other and grow knowledge by reflecting on their comments (Conole, 2013; Grainger, 2013; Yuan & Powell, 2013; DeBoer, Ho, Stump, & Breslow; 2014; Bartolomé & Steffens, 2015).

The main evolution from this first MOOCs experiment was in 2011 when professors Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig from Stanford University offered their course “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence” online, attracting 160 thousand students, from 190 countries. Despite the fact that not all 160 thousand students completed the course, over 20 thousand students did, proving the potential that this kind of course could bring to students and to higher education institutions (Norvig, 2012).

MOOCs Platforms

At the end of 2011, Stanford launched three MOOCs. That same year, MIT launched the project MITx to deliver MOOCs. By 2012, MOOCs exploded: Sebastian Thrun left Stanford to
found the startup company Udacity, and Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller founded Coursera. MIT partnered with Harvard to create edX with venture capital funding of $30 million from each institution, and Banco Santander and Universia—from Spain—launched MiríadaX, the first platforms to offer MOOCs in Spanish (Bartolomé & Steffens, 2015).

According to numerous sources, (Marketwired, 2017; edX, n.d.; Udacity, n.d.; Udemy, n.d.; FutureLearn, n.d.; MiríadaX, n.d.; Class Central, n.d.) the six main MOOC providers offer more than 49 thousand courses and have registered more than 59 million students, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
**Principal Platforms Offering MOOCs by January 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># Courses</th>
<th># Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coursera</td>
<td>2K</td>
<td>24 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edX</td>
<td>1.5K+</td>
<td>11 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FutureLearn</td>
<td>1000+</td>
<td>6 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiríadaX</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>3 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udacity</td>
<td>170+</td>
<td>4 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udemy</td>
<td>45K+</td>
<td>13+ M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MOOC Certificates**

For those students who pursue a certificate, MOOC providers are including: a) Verified Certificates, XSeries certificates, and Micromasters credentials (edX), b) Nanodegrees (Udacity),
c) Specialization programs (Coursera), and d) graduate diplomas and master’s degrees (FutureLearn). These new certifications programs are composed of 6-8 courses and the cost ranges from a monthly subscription of $39.00 - $89.00 USD (Arnett, 2016), to $200.00 USD per course (Lohr, 2016). Udacity and edX report a 60% completion rate since they started this new certification programs, and the benefit for students is that diverse companies are partnering with MOOC providers to validate their certificates. For those students who do not pursue a MOOC certificate, the course is free of charge, and students can audit and finish the course as they please (Hew & Cheung, 2014). However, scarcely 15% of learners who enroll in free MOOCs worldwide finish the courses (MOOC Completion Rates: The Data).

**MOOCs Taxonomy and Pedagogy**

Researchers have developed a classification of MOOCs according to their pedagogical components. Conole (2013); Grainger (2013); Cabero-Almenara et al. (2014); Franco Yañez et al. (2014); Rosselle, Caron and Heutte (2014); Liu and McKelroy (2015) agree that there are two main classifications: xMOOCs and cMOOCs. Various scholars have devised taxonomies of MOOCs but that information is not directly relevant to the scope of this thesis. Ongoing critical analysis questions various ways of discussing MOOCs including their pedagogical components. There is also disagreement about the best way to evaluate MOOCs and their content. Bali (2014) points out that “MOOC pedagogy cannot be evaluated as a genre, but each MOOC needs to be looked at individually” (p.44).

This study does not intend to provide an in-depth analysis of the body of literature that has explored MOOCs taxonomy and pedagogy since the main purpose of the study is to explore how adult Hispanics —living in the United States— who have a high school diploma or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning experiences and skills with
respect to their participation in MOOCs. However, it is relevant to talk about the most acceptable classification of MOOCs: cMOOCs and xMOOCs since some of their pedagogical components are included in the analysis of the Hispanics’ MOOCs learning experience, and they and will be explored during the interview sections for this research.

CMOOCs and xMOOCs. Some scholars (Conole, 2013; Grainger, 2013; Cabero-Almenara et al., 2014; Franco Yañez et al., 2014; Rosselle et al., 2014; and Bartolomé & Stephan, 2015) agree that cMOOCs and xMOOCs are the most common pedagogical models used to describe MOOCs. As table three indicates, cMOOCs rely on the theory of connectivism that inspired the first MOOC designed by Downes and Siemens.

According to Yuan and Powell (2013), cMOOCs “provide great opportunities for non-traditional forms of teaching approaches and learner-centered pedagogy where students learn from one another” (p.11). cMOOCs are based on “connectivism” that states that learning is influenced by socialization and technology. Supported by social media resources such as discussion forums, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, wikis, etc., students create networks, engage in discussions, share knowledge, and construct their own in a personalized way (Yuan & Powell, 2013).

xMOOCs are mainly university courses influenced by cognitive-behaviorism and limited social constructivism (Liu & McKelroy 2015; Bali, 2014). xMOOCs’ teaching-centered instruction is supported by reading material in the form of text or links to websites, video lectures improved with auto-graded quizzes, discussion forums interactions, and peer-reviewed assessments (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Bartolomé & Steffens, 2015). Social learning experiences are limited to discussion forums where students discuss a topic asynchronously.
Franco Yañez et al. (2014) provided a thorough explanation of xMOOC and cMOOCs’ differences as seen in table 3 “The Two Types of MOOCs and Their Pedagogical Approaches” (p.23).

Table 3.

*The Two Types of MOOCs and Their Pedagogical Approaches*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>xMOOCs</th>
<th>cMOOCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical Objective</strong></td>
<td>To deliver content to a massive number of users with a framework that is different, yet similar to the traditional model classroom, with the creation of an environment where learners can freely participate; work at their own pace and ‘regenerate’ the knowledge they have learned from the well known instructors that are from famous universities.</td>
<td>To encourage a connectivism among the users/learners with the framework that is designed to be different from the traditional behaviorist method of learning where participants can collaborate, connect, interact and exchange their knowledge for the creation of ‘new knowledge’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical framework</strong></td>
<td>Instructive or Instructional learning approach (instructor-centered).</td>
<td>Evaluative or Connected learning approach (learners’ connections and collaboration).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Instructors</strong></td>
<td>The instructors have to create and review the content; distributed to the learners; create activities; set the objectives and goals of the class and evaluate the students.</td>
<td>As “co-learners,” the participants have to create the content; distribute it to the others learners; create activities; set the objectives and goals of the class and generate among themselves the new knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of learners</strong></td>
<td>Learners are expected to ‘receive’ knowledge through the lecture videos; participate in group works; online assignments and quizzes.</td>
<td>Learners are expected to ‘generate,’ ‘pass on,’ and ‘exchange’ their knowledge to/with others in the learning community that communicates through the use of social media platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The creation of new knowledge</td>
<td>No knowledge creation, but the learners can learn from the content and knowledge developed by the instructors, however, they might also be able to learn from their peers in the online discussion forums.</td>
<td>Learners create ‘new’ knowledge when they share the ideas and content that they have developed by themselves to others; with the use of peer assessment, interaction, and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of learning</td>
<td>Learners will be assessed by their peers (‘peer-assessment/review’), however, the overall assessment in terms of comprehension will be evaluated by the instructors.</td>
<td>Learners will share their ideas and opinions with others; which, in turn, creates an environment for ‘knowledge-building processes’; also they have to employ the method of ‘self-assessment’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content creation</td>
<td>Instructors</td>
<td>Learners/Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Online discussion forums (from learner to learner), however, the interaction with the instructors was (sic) not designed to be the most convenient, personalized or simple; (top-down and one-way communication).</td>
<td>Social media platforms and online discussion forums: horizontal-way of communication; networking communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Flexibility</td>
<td>The course’s activities, content, materials and assessment are pre-designed by the instructors: ‘fixed and inflexible’.</td>
<td>The course’s activities, content, materials and assessments are constantly and continually shaped by the co-learners: ‘open with the feature of weekly basis review’ and relatively flexible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MOOCs Debate**

It is important to be aware of the ongoing debates about MOOCs. As previously mentioned, MOOCs have been classified as a disruptive innovation that can transform higher education and foster social inclusion (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Franco Yáñez et al., 2014; Hayes, 2015; Raffaghelli et al., 2015). Since 2012, universities around the world have adopted MOOCs;
however, not all education stakeholders endorse them. A debate about the possibility that MOOCs could replace traditional education has agitated the minds of many higher education professors. They argue that MOOCs are not of sufficient quality to replace higher education courses, and that they could mainly be used as supplementary material for teaching and learning (Franco Yañez et al., 2014). Some MOOC critics have expressed their concerns about how MOOCs tend to homogenize and depersonalize education (Jona & Naidu, 2014). Some others claim that MOOC providers allow private corporations to influence the curriculum, and that some universities are moved by an international marketing interest with profit as their only expectation, rather than to provide free education.

Conole (2013) claims:

Arguably the origin of MOOCs was bottom-up; developed by individuals with a vision for promoting open educational practices and fostering connectivist learning approaches through use of social and participatory media. However the recent emergence of start-ups, like Udacity, and initiatives like FutureLearn suggest a shift to a more top down structured approach (p. 8).

Additionally, Conole (2013) argues that MOOCs’ lack a) constructive feedback, b) possibilities to personalize the learning environment, and c) strategies to promote creative thinking. Hayes (2015) claims that MOOCs do not offer qualified tutoring, or accurate strategies to promote students’ communication and engagement. Moreover, MOOCs’ massiveness and the cost of the certificates have some critics. On the first topic, Bartolomé and Steffens (2015) argue that having over one thousand students in a MOOC does not contribute to a positive pedagogical component. On the second topic, they question the free aspect of a MOOC because whilst the course is free, the certificates have a cost that not all learners are able or willing to pay. Finally, MOOCs’ high dropout rate is a major topic in the MOOCs’ debate that still needs exploration.
Arguments in favor of MOOCs point out that they a) provide the flexibility to learn anywhere at any time, b) are high-quality courses lectured by professors from the best universities of the world, and c) knowledge is free (Grainger, 2013; Bali, 2014; Franco Yáñez et al., 2014; Jona & Naidu, 2014; Hayes, 2015; Liu & McKelroy, 2015). These characteristics make MOOCs good professional development options for professional workers who want to improve their knowledge and skills (Liu & McKelroy, 2015).

Additional opinions claim that MOOCs can transform higher education by a) providing a different path to college, b) encouraging partnerships between higher education and private companies, and c) creating innovative accreditations that help MOOC students validate their knowledge. Moreover, MOOCs provide a large amount of data that can be used to understand how online teaching and learning works in a massive and open online environment to innovate in pedagogy and methodology (Yuan & Powell, 2013). This is something to keep in mind when considering their ultimate impact on Hispanic students.

**Conclusion.** Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been advertised as a disruptive educational model that will change the concept of higher education. By January 2017, almost 700 universities all over the world have offered more than 6000 MOOCs in many subjects. There are two main classifications of MOOCs: xMOOCs, that is influenced by an instruction-centered approach and cMOOCs that uses a more learners-centered approach. Arguments that favor learning from MOOCs observe that MOOCs are college-like courses that students can get for free or for a low-cost. Also that MOOCs provide flexibility, new accreditations that are accepted in diverse industries, and new paths that allow students to continue on to college or further their college career. Arguments against learning from MOOCs observe that MOOCs can be considered as supplemental material but not as courses for credits.
Also, that MOOCs do not promote student-student and student-teacher communication, and that MOOCs do not promote critical thinking or provide constructive feedback.

MOOC Learners’ Experience: Motivation, Engagement and Self-Efficacy

This literature review found that MOOC learning experience is linked to motivation, engagement and self-efficacy. Additionally, the literature review found that these three characteristics influence learners’ MOOC completion. Pursel et al. (2016) state that MOOC learners’ experience rests on the motivators that support their decision to enroll in a MOOC. Considering those motivators may guide designers to increase the array of instructional components that support MOOC learning experience. Additionally, understanding those motivators can bring insight to why learners decide to complete or not complete a MOOC. De Barba, Kennedy and Ainley (2015) based their exploration of MOOCs students’ motivation from Pintrich’s (2003) social cognitive perspective:

> Motivation is composed of distinct but interacting constructs; systems of beliefs that have different patterns of activation depending on contextual and personal factors. Hence, motivation is a dynamic state, and while an individual can bring to a MOOC a strong general motivation for learning that tends to remain stable over time, the MOOC context and content can alter or trigger changes in motivational states (state-level motivation). Five motivational constructs have featured prominently in recent research, namely, interest, achievement goals, value beliefs, self-efficacy and control beliefs (p. 219).

> Additionally, Xiong, Kornhaber, Suen, Pursel and Goins (2015) claim that MOOC learners’ motivation includes intrinsic and extrinsic motivational and social aspects. Intrinsic
motivations are based on the satisfaction that a task might provide in itself. Extrinsic motivation entails pursuing a task to get a reward, for example to get a credential. Social motivation refers to social interaction such as studying with friends or connecting with new students.

Moreover, Xiong et al. (2015) found that learners expressed four sometimes overlapping motivations to enroll in a MOOC: “a) to support lifelong learning or gain the subject matter understanding; b) for fun; c) for the convenience of online learning; and d) to experience online education” (p. 25). These motivations are mainly intrinsic motivations that entail a sort of satisfaction when performing a task; none of these motivators assure that a learner will complete a MOOC if the MOOC is not part of an ultimate goal.

**MOOC Learners’ Academic Engagement**

A learner’s behavior, psychological and sociocultural positing and experience influence her/his academic engagement in a MOOC. The notion of engagement includes the time and effort invested in studying for a course, active participation in collaborative learning, and the interaction with students and teachers, among other variables (Pursel et al., 2016; Walji et al., 2016) The greater the level of engagement, the greater the level of retention in e-learning (Walji et al., 2016).

Kizilcec, Piech and Shneider, (2013) found four patterns of learners’ engagement in xMOOCs:

- Completing - learners who completed the majority of assessments;
- Auditing - learners who did assessments infrequently if at all and engaged instead by watching video lectures;
• Disengaging - learners who did assessments at the beginning of the course but then had a marked decrease in engagement;

• Sampling: learners who watched video lectures for only one or two assessment periods (generally learners in this category watch just a single video) (p. 172).

Barak, Watted and Haick, (2015) delved into the first pattern of engagement (completing) and identified five types of MOOC completers according to their goals and motivations:

• Networkers. Participants who desire to be part of a community with similar interest;

• Problem-solvers. Students who find a solution to a specific problem;

• Benefactors. Students who learn in order to contribute to their country and society;

• Innovation-seekers. Wish to stay constantly updated and informed;

• Complementary-learners. University students who take MOOCs to expand their regular curriculum.

According to Walji et al. (2016) participants who embrace one or more of these learning goals are more likely to successfully complete a MOOC. In order to provide a better learning experience, this literature review suggests to MOOC designers and developers that they implement a combination of strategies that meet the varied needs of a great diversity of MOOC students who, according to their ages, culture and personal experience, have different learning approaches.

**MOOC Learners’ Experience and Self-Efficacy**
Self-efficacy is a self-regulation mechanism that impact “human thought, affect, motivation, and action” (Bandura, 1991, p. 257). Chung (2016) claims that self-regulation is a crucial element in achieving MOOC learning goals:

Self-regulation is crucial in the strategic use in the learning process and learning effectiveness […]. Learners not only take action control to improve the learning effectiveness, but also adopt various regulation strategies, e.g. cognitive strategies, motivation strategies and resource management strategies, in different situations to achieve their learning goal (p. 62).

Kaplan (2014) states that MOOCs instructional design, learning environment, tutoring or mentoring, and socialization with peers can help in the construct of learners’ self-regulation. However, Heutte, Kaplan, Fenouillet, Caron and Roselle (2014) question that MOOCs—as they are designed now—can promote or support learners’ self-regulation. Moreover, some researchers claim that MOOC students need strongly developed self-regulation skills and self-efficacy beliefs because during most of the MOOC learning process they will be practically on their own (Willis III et al., 2013; Heutte et al., 2014; Kaplan, 2014). According to Willis III et al. (2013) MOOC students need to “locate information through course navigation, share information with other students, and create digital artifacts by sharing their thoughts and knowledge with others” (p.8). To achieve those requirements, Shen, Cho, Tsai and Marra (2013) identified five self-efficacy abilities that must accompany students in an e-learning environment, such as MOOCs:

Self-efficacy to complete an online course, self-efficacy to interact socially with classmates, self-efficacy to handle tools in a CMS, self-efficacy to interact with instructors in an online course, and self-efficacy to interact with classmates for academic purposes (p. 16).
Hodges (2016) analyzed how MOOC design may or may not support learners’ self-efficacy. He found that enactive mastery experience is connected with the student’s familiarity with the course content, suggesting that this familiarity is an important part in MOOC success. Also, Hodges found that video lectures could support learner’s vicarious experience; however, he recognizes that video lecturers will not necessarily present a role model that fits the needs of all MOOC learners since they come from different countries and cultures. As a solution Hodges (2008; 2016) suggests including Pedagogical Agents for Learning (PAL). PAL, a simulated human-like interface, acts like a tutor or peer in that it provides positive and encouraging feedback during the video lecture process similar to the mentorship that students receive in college environment.

Additionally, due to the lack of teacher-student and student-student synchronous communication in MOOCs, Hodges (2008) suggests other channels to provide verbal persuasion between teachers and students such as e-mail notes, motivational messages, and audio feedback. Moreover, Hodges (2016) recommends providing persuasive feedback within the quizzes’ results to offer learners verbal persuasion that they do not receive in “yes or no” feedback.

In addition, Hodges (2016) and Willis III et al. (2013) claim that discussion forums must be designed in a way that students feel the necessity to interact among themselves. Shet et al. (2013) suggest that by monitoring and encouraging social interaction, learners can develop self-efficacy. By receiving feedback from learners or tutors, and observing peers success, learners can enhance vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and address students’ psychological states. However, Hodge (2016) suggests that the massive communication in MOOC discussion forums must be regulated:
Extensive knowledge of the learners’ demographics and preferences would need to be collected so that deliberate, and meaningful groupings of learners can be achieved. Discussion prompts, and possibly even orientation training about how to interact in the discussion forums, would be needed to help the learners understand the types of comments and feedback that may support the development of positive self-efficacy beliefs (p. 4).

Furthermore, Shen et al. (2013) claim that students who have low self-efficacy beliefs tend to feel anxiety in e-learning environments. They are more likely to feel social isolation, and need more support from instructors and peers (Shen et al., 2013). As a result, instructors need to strategize ways that generate more social presence from the beginning of the course. Social presence promotes learning and builds satisfaction (Wallace, 2003). It also builds camaraderie with other students (Thomas, Hebert, & Teras, 2014). Therefore, strategies that can establish social presence and a sense of belonging in the e-learning environment from the beginning of the course may support student’s psychological states. Discussion forums, social media, or e-mail where learners can form online communities to express their fears and concerns, and receive support from each other, may be good solutions to help students reduce any negative psychological arousal that affect their self-efficacy.

Finally, Willis III et al. (2013) claim that the more experience learners gain through studying from MOOCs, the greater the possibilities to enhance their self-efficacy:

Experience in MOOCs will help to enhance the self-efficacy in individuals with low self-efficacy and will possibly even take individuals whom already have a high level of self-efficacy and enhance it even more. Possibly one of the paradoxes of MOOCs are they are
dichotomous because individuals will either remain lurkers\(^1\) or will engage their self-efficacy and more fully participate in the community of learners (p. 9).

Willis III et al. (2013) and Hodges (2016) suggest nurturing self-efficacy within the MOOC instructional design to benefit learners’ experience. Benefits to enhancing learners’ self-efficacy may include increasing learners’ motivation and engagement, a higher quality of participation in the discussion forums, more student-to-student support, and a higher completion rate. Finally, Chung (2015) claims that the research on self-efficacy learning experience is still a new area of investigation that needs more examination and he suggests that it should adequately take into account different types of learners. This study responds to Chung’s (2015) suggestion and expects to respond to the question of how self-efficacy influences the learning experience of Hispanic learners living in the United States.

**MOOC Learners’ Experience and Self-Efficacy: Completers and Non-Completers**

One way to categorize and distinguish students from each other is to look at those who complete a MOOC and those who do not. Shen et al. (2013) claim that learners’ self-efficacy is a variable that may influence learners’ decision to complete a MOOC. Barak et al. (2016) found that completers showed high self-efficacy as evidenced by their abilities to finish a course and connect it to their career motivation. Non-completers showed low self-efficacy beliefs that their learning experience could help them improve professionally.

\(^1\) Lurker. Those who may interact with MOOC materials, but do not leave digital artifacts behind to evidence their participation.
Willis III et al. (2013) and Wang and Baker (2015) claim that MOOC learners’ self-efficacy is different from those who enroll in a traditional e-learning experience who primarily want to take a course for academic purposes. On the contrary, MOOC learners enroll in a course for reasons that do not necessarily include finishing the course and achieving a certificate. For example, Ferguson and Clow (2015) claim that many of the students who decide not to finish a MOOC audit the courses with the sole purpose of gaining additional academic knowledge, or to explore a specific University where they would like to continue their higher education.

Conole (2013); Chen and Chen (2015); Ferguson and Clow, (2015); Kizilcec and Halawa (2015); and Xiong et al. (2015) have extensively investigated the reasons why learners do not finish a MOOC. This researcher classified those reasons in two groups: those connected with learners’ self-efficacy, and those that have no connection with learners’ self-efficacy. Those that have a connection with self-efficacy are included in one of the four sources of influence.

Table 4

Reasons students do not complete a MOOC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Efficacy Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactive Mastery Experience:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confusing pedagogical material (i.e., ambiguous assignments and ambiguous course expectations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulty of the courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of computer literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of English academic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack or insufficient knowledge of the subject matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of self-learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vicarious Experience and Verbal Persuasion:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of focus on the discussion forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of mentoring or tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of interactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological States:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Frustration
- Lack of curiosity or enjoyment
- Lack of incentive
- Lack of motivation
- Workload

**No Self-Efficacy Reasons**
- Auditing
- Course free of charge and hidden cost
- Lack of economic benefits and job skills development
- Lack of penalty in leaving the course
- Lack of time
- Lack of clear goals and expectations

**Conclusion.** MOOCs are self-paced courses that demand self-regulations skills and strong self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy influences students’ academic strategies, and the control that they can take over demanding situations during the learning process. Self-efficacy may impact students’ motivation and agency. Motivation by itself does not assure that MOOC learners finish a MOOC if the motivation is not linked to an ultimate goal. The higher the goal, the more feasible is that a learner decides to finish the course. Determining the value of MOOCs based on the number of students who finish a MOOC and get a certificate is not an accurate measurement of their efficiency.

**Summary**

This literature review did not find any research that explored how Hispanics’ self-efficacy influences their learning experience in MOOCs. Therefore, to understand how self-efficacy is linked to Hispanics’ learning experience in MOOCs, this literature review explored Bandura’s self-efficacy theory and how it is connected to learners’ academic achievement, more importantly, in MOOC environments. Some of the theories and observations uncovered in this literature review include: 1) self-efficacy can help students to auto-regulate their learning experiences and exercise control over their academic decisions; 2) Hispanics MOOCs learning
experience may benefit if the instructional design and the learning environment include Hispanics’ culture and learning styles through the self-efficacy four sources of information (enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states); 3) self-efficacy plays an important role in Hispanics’ academic achievement and career choice; and 4) self-efficacy may be connected to Hispanics MOOCs completion rates.

The literature review also confirmed the need to explore how Hispanics’ self-efficacy influence their learning experience in MOOCs to understand whether or not MOOCs are an education alternative that might help Hispanics achieve their academic goals that in turn can lead them to transform their professional life to be competitive in the workforce. The methodology of the research design is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): “IPA aims to explore in detail participants’ personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience” (Smith, 2004). The nature of this research study focuses on the subjective views and meanings held by adult Hispanics students who enrolled in Massive Open Online Courses. By using IPA methodology, this researcher will be able to understand the experience of the adult Hispanics students through their own voices. By making sense of the participants making sense of the phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2003), this researcher will be able to enter in an in-depth analysis to respond the research question: How do adult Hispanics who have high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and e-learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs?
Chapter Three: Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. The literature review showed that research on self-efficacy with respect to learning experiences is an area of investigation that needs more examination. It also showed a gap in research regarding Hispanics self-efficacy beliefs and MOOC learning experiences. The researcher considered it most appropriate and effective to select a qualitative methodology to understand the Hispanic learning experiences to respond to the research question.

This chapter includes the research method and approach, the paradigm, and the interpretative phenomenology analysis description and rationale that informed this research. It also includes the criteria for participants’ selection and recruitment, the research procedure that includes a description of the data collection and data analysis, the criteria for quality qualitative research, and the limitations of the study.

Research Question

The research question which drove and informed this thesis was: How do adult Hispanics who have high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs?

Research Method and Approach

Qualitative Research Method

This research aimed to explore the self-efficacy and learning experience of adult Hispanics enrolled in MOOCs. The researcher used a qualitative research method. According to Winter (2000) “qualitative research concerns itself with the meanings and experiences of the 'whole' person, or localised culture” (p. 6). A qualitative method is needed when the exploration
of a phenomenon relies on the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2014). Ponterotto (2005) claims that a qualitative method involves “the collection, analysis, and interpretation of observations or data” (p. 128). The researcher acts like the instrument to collect these data through semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Pezalla et al., 2012). Smith (1996) claims that the researcher must work from a micro level perspective; exploring particular individual’s lived experiences of a particular phenomenon.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method helped gain understanding of the Hispanics’ beliefs, perceptions and experiences while enrolled in a MOOC. The researcher applied a double-hermeneutic process to explore the participant’s experience: the researcher made-sense of the participant’s making-sense of their own experience expressed in their own words (Smith & Osborne, 2003). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), “both participants’ and researchers’ interpretation of phenomena [are] taken into account in the process of analysis” (p. 361). A quantitative research method was not suitable for this research because “quantitative research attempts to fragment and delimit phenomena into measurable or 'common' categories that can be applied to all of the subjects or wider and similar situations” (p.6).

**Constructivist-Interpretivist Paradigm**

The researcher approached this research and analysis by using the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. Ponterotto (2005) argues that the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm holds that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual. The author further claims that reality is subjective and is influenced by the perceptions and experiences of the individual. Therefore, in constructivist-interpretivist research all participants are part of the construction of the truth as they participate actively in its interpretation (Butin, 2010).

The methodology that best supported this paradigm and the direction of this research
design was Smith’s (2004) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): “IPA aims to explore in detail participants’ personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience” (p.40).

The research study focused on the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences held by adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. By using IPA methodology, the researcher was able to understand the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics MOOC students expressed in their own voices. By making sense of the participants making sense of the phenomenon, a double hermeneutic process, (Smith & Osborn, 2003) the researcher was able to immerse himself in an in-depth analysis of the learners’ own experiences.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis’ (IPA) Theoretical Perspectives**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) supported the research question, the research method and the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm chosen for this study. IPA is a qualitative research approach that examines the process through which a person makes sense of a personal lived experience in a particular cultural and historical context. Its methodology focuses on the participants’ “experience, understandings, perceptions and views” (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), and acknowledges the importance of the researcher’s interpretative participation during the analysis process. Three theoretical perspectives inform IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

**Phenomenology.** According to Smith, et al. (2009) Edmund Husserl is considered the father of the philosophy of phenomenology; however, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre are equally considered major phenomenological philosophers. They all share a common view that people’s lives are influenced by their relationship with their world within a social, historical and
cultural context (Shinebourne, 2011).

For Husserl, phenomenology examines a particular human experience to identify and understand the essential components that make it unique in the way it occurs (Smith et al., 2009). In order to conduct a phenomenological study, the researcher needs to put aside all prior assumptions, judgments or suppositions about the phenomenon (experience) under investigation through a phenomenological reduction (also called bracketing or epoché). This process helps the researcher to put the “taken-for-granted world” in parenthesis to eliminate all possible prejudices that might affect the understanding of the essential components of the experience (Dowling, 2007; Smith et al., 2009; Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith 2012; Murray & Holmes, 2014).

Hermeneutics. Smith et al. (2009) claim that phenomenology looks for the meaning of an experience “which is perhaps hidden by the entity’s mode of appearing. In that case the proper model for seeking meaning is the interpretation of a text and for this reason Heidegger links phenomenology with hermeneutics” (p. 24). Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of someone's mental process and language when dealing with an experience in order to make meaning of it (Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Larkin et al. (2011) claim that for Heidegger, a person is always a person-in-context. In other words, we are part of a meaningful world and our being in the world (or what Heidegger calls *dasein* meaning “there being”) is “involved with some kind of meaningful context” (p. 106). Therefore, we can only be understood in relation to our world and our world can only be understood in relation to us (Larkin et al., 2011). For Heidegger, knowledge is contingent upon the interpretation of the world (Smith et al., 2009), which is shaped by language and culture and by our many relations with others (Larkin et al., 2011). Duke (1977) claims:
Interpretation involves constant movement back and forth, for it is always open to revision and supplementation. Since the life of the language and the life of the person form an infinite horizon, perfect understanding is an ideal which is ever approximated but never attained (p. 6).

In order to deepen one's interpretation, the hermeneutic theory argues the importance of the connection between the part and the whole. Smith et al. (2009) argue: “to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts” (p.28). This is called the hermeneutic cycle. Smith et al. (2009) illustrates this term as follows: to understand the meaning of a word it is necessary to analyze it in relation to the whole sentence. Similarly, to understand a sentence it is necessary to understand the meaning of the words in relation to the sentence. The part and the whole are intertwined and one does not make sense without the other. Interpretation is a non-linear process. It includes the intuition of the interpreter and the analysis of the universal and particular aspects of phenomenon and the moment when the interpretation occurs (Smith, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

**Idiography.** Idiography reveals individual traits and the subjective meaning given to particular events. This would indicate that despite sharing common traits among individuals the reaction to a same phenomenon is not necessarily the same (Runyan, 1983). An idiographic approach aims at describing and explaining phenomena (events, individuals, etc.) through an in-depth analysis of their particularity (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Smith et al., 2009; Robinson, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) state: “[t]he fundamental principle behind the idiographic approach is to explore every single case, before producing any general statements” (p.3). Therefore, idiography is linked to qualitative research in psychology because of its focus on studying individual personalities as unique and complex entities.
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Smith et al. (2009) claim that IPA is phenomenological because it aims at exploring people’s experience of a phenomenon. IPA is hermeneutical because the meaning, hidden in the appearance or surface of phenomena, must be revealed from an active process of interpretation between the participant and the researcher. Smith and Osborne (2003) assert: “a two-stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutic, is involved. The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants’ trying to make sense of their world” (p. 53). The researcher has to be sensitive to the participants’ particular ways of interpreting his/her experience through his/her own language, cultural views and relation to the world. Finally, IPA is idiographic because it aims at exploring a person’s particular experience and how he/she makes sense of that experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Smith et al. (2009) claim that in order to eschew interference from the researcher’s own conceptions of the world during the interpretation process, researchers need to bracket their own biases. In order to bracket the researcher’s presumptions, he/she must make them obvious in order to be able to suspend them during the interpretation process, not to eradicate them (Dowling, 2007; Larkin et al., 2011).

In addition, an IPA researcher must consider the social and cultural aspects of the participants because they contribute to determining the way the participants understand the world within their own historical period. Larkin et al. (2006) argue: “as analysts, we focus in upon the person-in-context […] we are interested in how they understand and make sense of their experiences in terms of their relatedness to, and their engagement with, those phenomena” (p.
Therefore, sensitivity to these aspects may help the researcher make sense of the participant’s making sense of a particular phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2011; Todorova, 2011).

One cultural aspect that contributes to the analysis of an IPA research is language. People’s language always shapes their interpretation of experience. In turn, language is shaped by historical, socio-cultural and linguistic context (Larkin et al., 2011; Shinebourn, 2011). IPA recognizes that the way people express themselves through language is intrinsically connected with the way they think as well as with their emotional state. This connection between thinking and feeling sometimes limits people from expressing themselves freely (Smith & Osborne, 2003). Therefore, IPA researchers must be sensitive to the way the participants communicate their ideas, not only through words, or through other figurative language (metaphors, metonymies, etc.), but also through gestures, hesitations, body language and other communication abilities that the participant may use to express their ideas (Murray & Holmes, 2014).

**Rationale for Selecting IPA**

The reason to apply interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in this research was that it provided an opportunity for adult Hispanic people living in the United States to voice their needs and concerns regarding their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experience in a MOOC environment. By exploring Hispanics’ experience through the interview process, the researcher expected to collect data that contributed to promote and validate the voice and the learning needs of the Hispanic community living in the United States. Also, the researcher reasoned that this study could provide information to MOOC designers and developers that could assist them to include a combination of strategies that meet the varied needs of the Hispanic MOOC students.
Additionally, IPA methodology helped this researcher make sense of Hispanics’ MOOC learning experience through a double hermeneutic (Smith & Osborn, 2003) process in which participants and researcher played an active role for the making sense process of the learners’ experience. Each participant provided his/her own learning experience within his/her social and cultural context (Shinebourn, 2011). The researcher identified how each experience was influenced by the participant’s own social and cultural context; examined common experiences and connections along emergent themes, and included themes that emerged from the interviews that were important to the participant’s experience that were not contemplated when the interview schedule was designed (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants

Criteria for Participant Selection and Research Site

Smith et al. (2009) claim that IPA studies require a fairly small homogeneous sample group. For this study, a sample group of seven students who defined themselves as adults (25 years old and older) and Hispanic, and who enrolled in Coursera MOOC English Composition I offered by Duke University accepted the invitation to participate and thus composed the targeted number and make-up of individuals in the sample. The researcher contacted the program evaluator at Duke University’s Center for Instructional Technology and sought written permission to conduct this research using their English Composition I MOOC (Appendix A). The university agreed to support the researcher in his investigation and invited students to participate once the researcher provided the Northeastern Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation required for this process at Duke University (Appendix B).
• The researcher invited potential participants through email in conformity with established Northeastern University procedures after IRB approval (Appendix C). The email described who I am, the purpose of the research and the interview process, and invited potential participants interested in learning more about the research to contact me via Skype, Google Hangout or other webcam video software. This first contact with participants was also expected to help the researcher measure the reliability of the software used and to suggest a back-up software in case the one selected by the participants failed.

• The researcher identified twenty possible participants who expressed their interest in participating in the study who met the following criteria: 1) adult (25 years and older) 2) Hispanic who 3) enrolled in Coursera MOOC English Composition I from Duke University. Seven persons accepted the invitation to participate in this study.

• The researcher sent these seven people a thank you e-mail for accepting the invitation with further instructions (Appendix D). The researcher also included the Informed Consent Document (Appendix E) to be read, signed and returned to the researcher.

• The researcher connected using Skype or Google Hangouts with individual prospective participants for a 45-90 minute semi-structured interviews based on the approved interview schedule (Appendix F).

• The interviews were recorded using Camtasia software and the Voice Recorder & Audio Editor app that served as a backup in case of any failures in the Camtasia recording.

• The researcher conducted follow up, semi-structured interviews to clarify emerging themes when appropriate.

• The researcher kept a journal to annotate impressions and relevant information from
participants during the interview that could inform the data analysis process.

A brief profile of each participant—under a pseudonym—provides the participants’ background and academic and professional experience. It also establishes the context of the findings discussed in chapter four.

Participant Profiles:

• Ana is 28 years old. She was born in the United States. Her Hispanic heritage background comes from her parents; her father is from Spain and her mother is from Portugal. She lives in Michigan (USA). She holds a bachelors’ degree. She is registered in a graduate program. She enrolled in EC1MOOC because she wanted to improve her writing skills. She finished EC1MOOC in 2017.

• Luz is 28 years old. She is from Mexico. She lived in Michigan (USA) for two years. She recently moved to Puebla (Mexico). She holds a bachelors’ degree. Her goal is to enroll in a graduate program abroad. At the time of the interview, she had finished four lessons of EC1MOOC and was interested in finishing the course. She enrolled in EC1MOOC because she wanted to improve her writing skills to fulfill her academic goal.

• Hada is 32 years old. She is from Guatemala. She lives in Oklahoma (USA). She holds a bachelors’ degree and is registered in a graduate program. She enrolled in EC1MOOC because she wanted to improve her writing skills to fulfill her graduate program demands. She dropped out from EC1MOOC due to time constraints.

• Gael is 34 years old. He is from Mexico. He lives in Oklahoma (USA). He holds a bachelors’ degree. He works at a forestry company. He enrolled in EC1MOOC because he needed to improve his writing skills for his job. He wants to become a Consulting
Utility Forester. He dropped out of the EC1MOOC due to job demands and time constraints.

- Berta is 35 years old. She is from Mexico. She lives in Virginia (USA). She moved to the United States with her family as a teenager and started high school in this country. She works as a leasing consultant. She holds a bachelors’ degree. She enrolled in EC1MOOC to improve her writing skills to fulfill her job demands. At the time of the interview she had not yet finished the course, but she was interested in completing it.

- David is 39 years old. He is from Colombia. He lives in Virginia (USA). He holds a masters’ degree. He works as an engineer. He is interested in finishing the EC1MOOC because he wants to improve his writing skills to comply with his job demands. He earned his bachelors’ and masters’ degrees in engineering in his country of origin.

- Edna is 56 years old. She is from Cuba and graduated from high school there. She subsequently moved to the Soviet Union and completed a five-year degree program that offered a simultaneous award of bachelor's and master's degrees. She moved to the United States where she earned a second Master’s degree and completed a Ph.D. in Science. She lives in California (USA). She works as a main supervisor in a laboratory. She enrolled in EC1MOOC because she wanted to improve her writing skills to fulfill her job demands. She is still registered in the EC1MOOC. She hasn’t been able to finish the course due to time constraints.

**Procedures**

**Data Collection**

This research used semi-structured face-to-face interviews as an IPA flexible data collection instrument. Smith and Osborn (2003) claim that “[t]his form of interviewing allows
the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants’ responses and the investigator is able to probe interesting and important areas which arise” (p.57). According to Smith, Flowers and Larking (2009) semi-structured face-to-face interviews “are easily managed, allowing a rapport to be developed and giving participants the space to think, speak and be heard. They are therefore well-suited to in-depth and personal discussion” (p. 57). The interview should be guided by an interview schedule, rather than directed by it. By using semi-structured interviews: a) there is an attempt to establish rapport with the respondent, b) the ordering of questions is less important, c) the interviewer is freer to probe interesting areas that arise, and d) the interview can follow the respondent’s interests or concerns (Smith et al., 2009).

According to Pietkiewic and Smith (2012) “in qualitative research, data is usually collected in naturalistic settings (at home, school, hospital)” (p. 362). The openness and online characteristics of MOOCs allow learners to study wherever they wish, (home, office, park, etc.) Therefore, the research participants chose the place where they felt most comfortable for the interview process and the researcher contacted them via Google Hangouts or Skype according to the participants’ preferences.

Data Analysis

According to Smith et al. (2009) IPA analysis includes five steps. The first step involves entering in the participant’s world by engaging with the data. In this case, the data was represented by a transcript of the interview transcribed verbatim by Rev.com professional transcription service to capture the participant’s voice and expressions. An iterative process was applied; reading and re-reading the data, taking notes of particular recollections and observations during the interview. This process also gave the researcher the opportunity to recognize and
identify possible personal biases, to bracket them and put them aside during the analysis process. The second step involved examining and taking notes on the participant’s linguistic expressions (key words, figures of speech, tones, pauses, etc.). This process helped the researcher understand how the participant related and made meaning of the explored experience. At this stage, the researcher took more interpretative notes that guided him to make sense of the participant’s making sense of her/his world, and coding of information started at a very basic level. Step three involved looking for emergent themes. The initial details discovered in the analysis were grouped to form themes that reflected the participant’s ideas and the researcher's interpretation of them. In step four, the researcher looked for connections along emergent themes. The themes studied in depth depended on the research question guiding this research. However, those themes that represented something important in the experience of the participants, although not previously contemplated in the research schedule, were also included.

The researcher analyzed the remaining cases in the same way that the researcher did with the first case. Smith et al. (2009) report that one difficult challenge that the researcher might encounter is to be influenced by the analysis of the first case. Therefore, the researcher, to the extent possible, bracketed the ideas that emerged from that case in order to stick to the idiographic analysis. Step five involved looking for patterns across cases, themes and super-ordinated themes that supported the interpretation of information, not only in its particularity, but also as a whole.

To code the information gathered from the transcripts, the researcher used MAXQDA 12.3.1. This software allowed the researcher to organize and categorize all data collected from interviews in themes and sub-themes and helped mix the participants’ information when the researcher needed to find common themes across the interviews.
Writing The Analysis

Smith et al. (2009) claim that the interpretation of data must communicate what the researcher learned along the way, and the presentation must be written in such a way that the reader can understand what the data means. In order to do that, this researcher translated the themes into a narrative account (Smith & Osborne, 2003). Themes were descriptive and examples used the participants’ own words, followed by analytic comments and interpretative commentary from the researcher (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

Criteria for Quality Qualitative Research

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols for this study included IRB permission and procedures to protect the rights of the participants. An informed consent document (Appendix E) was provided to the participant that described: a) the guaranteed confidentiality for those who participated in this study, b) that participation in this research was voluntarily, c) the reasons why the participant was selected to participate in this study, d) an assurance that the research did not entail any risk for the participant, e) that the participant was not going to receive any kind of remuneration for participating in this research, and f) that the participant could terminate his/her participation at any time during the interview process.

Additionally, all audios and transcripts were password protected, stored in a personal cloud server and accessed only by the researcher. Video and audio interviews were performed from the personal computer of the researcher and recorded in Camtasia and the Voice Recorder & Audio Editor app that was used as backup in case of Camtasia failure. All backup recordings were transferred to and stored in a personal cloud server. Participants’ confidentiality was protected. They were referenced with a personal pseudonym. Participants’ background was
presented with their respective pseudonym in the section “Participant’s selection criteria”. All video, audio, written data, and files signed by the participants were stored following Northeastern University protocols and will be destroyed three years after completion of the research.

Trustworthiness

The researcher followed Smith et al. ‘s (2009) criteria to assess trustworthiness to the IPA research analysis. Smith et al. (2009) grounded their criteria in Yardley’s (2000) four principles of assessing quality: 1) sensitivity to context, 2) commitment and rigor, 3) transparency and coherence, and 4) impact and importance. The manner in which the researcher applied Yardley’s principles is as follows:

Sensitivity to context. The researcher was sensitive to the participant’s individuality, including social, cultural and linguistic characteristics during the interview process, and recognized the possibility that participants may have difficulties in expressing themselves clearly and freely. The researcher’s sensitivity was also critical when interpreting the participant’s making sense of the experience, and when writing the report. The researcher took seriously his responsibility that the voices of the participants were heard. Smith et al. (2009) claim that the report must include a “considerable number of verbatim extracts from the participants’ material to support the argument being made, thus giving participants a voice in the project and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made” (p. 180).

Commitment and rigor. Smith et al. (2009) claim that in order to answer the research question, the researcher must be rigorous when designing the interview schedule and when selecting the study's sample size and the participant profile. Therefore, the researcher requested three educational specialists to make critical observations and suggestions regarding the
interview schedule and the selection of criteria in the selection of students to participate in the study. The researcher also showed commitment to the participants during the interview so they felt that their voices were heard (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) warn of the importance of being careful with the interpretative analysis process and recommends that the researcher includes each participant’s quotations and specific examples, and to have an equilibrium in sharing the participants’ voices.

**Transparency and coherence.** According to Smith et al. (2009) “[t]ransparency refers to how clearly the stages of the research process are described in the write-up of the study” (p. 181). The researcher included a description of how participants were selected, the data collection and analysis process. In order to comply with the coherence criteria, the researcher clearly stated how the theoretical approach informed the research, and was careful when writing the report so that a reader would find it coherent and clear.

**Impact and importance.** Yardley (2000) claims that the results of research must provide information that is interesting, important and/or useful to the reader to test its validity. The researcher explored particular experiences of adult Hispanics learning from MOOCs and it is expected that the information obtained from this research can be transferable to designing MOOC teaching and learning strategies for the Hispanic community.

**Internal Audit**

The researcher kept the files of the study in a time-driven order so that an accurate sequence of the study is documented and can be tracked. Smith et al. (2009) suggest the following trail: a) initial notes on the research question, b) the research proposal, c) interview schedule, d) audio tapes, e) annotated transcripts, f) tables of themes and other devices, g) draft reports, and h) final report. The researcher followed Smith et al. (2009) trail and he adjusted it
according to the information stored.

**Self-reflexivity and Transparency**

The first MOOC that the researcher enrolled in was "English Composition I: Achieving Expertise" from Duke University. As a first-time Hispanic MOOC student, the researcher did not know what to expect from the course. After twelve weeks of studying from this MOOC the researcher concluded that the MOOC gave him the confidence and knowledge that no other English course had provided him in the past (Talavera-Franco, 2015). As a result of the researcher’s personal MOOC learning experience, he was convinced that MOOCs could be an educational tool to support education for adult Hispanics. However, the input from other Hispanic MOOC students was needed to learn from their experiences and to contribute to the discussion on how to improve MOOC design to increase Hispanic’s academic opportunities.

The researcher was aware that his biases resulted from his own experience as a MOOC student, his Hispanic background and educational interests. However, the researcher bracketed his own preconceptions and presumptions to suspend them during the research process (Larkin et al., 2011) so his biases did not interfere with the analysis process. The researcher worked objectively with the data, so the text derived from the participants’ interviews spoke for itself. Also, the researcher was very committed ensuring that the themes emerged directly from the participants’ experience and own truth, and not from the researcher’s personal experience.

**Limitations**

This study was focused on adult Hispanics enrolled in English Composition I MOOC from Duke University. Following IPA guidelines, this study used a group of seven participants who defined themselves as adult Hispanics who have a high school degree or some college. The nature of the group and its small size permitted the researcher to focus on each participant’s lived
experience, rather than making generalizations over a whole Hispanic population who study MOOCs. However, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) asserted that “comparing multiple IPA studies on a particular problem may provide insights into universal patterns or mechanisms” (p. 364). This researcher expects that this study will contribute to that end.

One limitation of the study is that the students' experiences were explored through an xMOOC in which cognitive-behaviorism pedagogical approach differs from the learner-centered and connectivism approach that influences cMOOCs— in which the learners’ experience may vary. Another limitation was the challenge that the researcher had to conduct face-to-face interviews in which each took place in a setting that relied on video conferencing technologies during the interview process. MOOC learners study on their own, and they do not necessarily live in the same city nor do they attend to a brick-and-mortar institution. Therefore, learners who agreed to participate in the interview process were located in different states of the U.S. Also, the researcher was living in Athens Greece at the time of the interviews so all participants had to agree to communicate with the researcher using different video-conferencing technologies such as Skype and Google Hangouts. These factors may have limited Hispanic learners’ participation. The reason for using one or more of these video-conferencing technologies was because they helped to visually capture and record participants’ emotions and behaviors, facial expressions and body language, and gave the interviewer the possibility to create a friendly, more personal, atmosphere needed in an IPA process.

**Conclusion**

This study needed a qualitative method to explore the learning experiences of adult Hispanics who enrolled in a MOOC. The researcher used a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm because he needed to explore the reality that was constructed in the mind of the participants. The
researcher chose IPA to examine the process through which a person makes-sense of his/her lived experience while studying a MOOC. IPA helped the researcher to make sense of the participants’ making sense of their experiences during the interpretation process and to find themes, and look for connections on those themes in order to do an analysis based on participant data.

The chapter explored interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and explained the criteria for participants’ selection, the data collection and data analysis process, the analysis method, the criteria to assess trustworthiness to the IPA research analysis, the researcher’s potential biases, and the ethical protocols for protecting human subjects.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). To fulfill the purpose of this study, this researcher employed an interpretative methodology analysis (IPA) to explore participants’ learning experience from an English Composition 1 MOOC (EC1MOOC) at Duke University. The analysis of the interview transcripts yielded four superordinate themes and fifteen sub-themes. The information collected in these superordinate themes describes how participants made sense of the following: 1) past learning experiences, 2) their beliefs about how their Hispanic-origin cultural knowledge supported their learning skills., 3) the events that have influenced their academic development and 4) their application of the EC1MOOC learning experience in everyday life.

Table 4 includes both the superordinate and sub-themes that this researcher uncovered during the analysis process. It also makes clear which students’ interviews revealed each of the specific themes.

Table 4

*Identification of Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Themes</th>
<th>Berta</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Edna</th>
<th>Luz</th>
<th>Hada</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Gael</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prior Learning Experiences That Shaped Students’ Academic Development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Learning Approaches (Collectivism and Individualism)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Tutoring</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Learning Strategies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Prior Learning Experiences That Shaped Students’ Academic Development

Students who enroll in MOOCs need to cope with the challenges of an e-learning environment. They often need to have the ability to take control of how, when, what and where to study, develop help-seeking and research skills and be active participants in a community of learners. The first overarching theme of this study unveiled how participants’ prior learning experiences shaped their academic development and how that influences their abilities to learn from MOOCs. The qualitative research conducted revealed three specific areas of commonality across participants. First, the participants differed in opinions and comfort levels with respect to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Cultural Background</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Hispanic Social, Cultural and Family Heritage</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Hispanic and Mainstream US Learning Similarities and Differences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Experiences and Attitudes that Influence Students’ Academic Performance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Motivations and Goals</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Student’s Beliefs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Role Models</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Stress &amp; Anxiety</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Time Management Skills</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English Composition I MOOC Learning Experience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 English Composition I MOOC instructional tools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Video Lectures and quizzes embedded in videos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4.2.1. Quizzes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4.2.2. Readings</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4.2.3 Writing Assignments and Peer Review</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4.2.4 Discussion Forums</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 How EC1MOOC has Benefited Students</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>4.4 Students’ suggestions to Improve EC1MOOC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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learning from a collectivist or individualist approach. Their preference had an impact on
decisions about taking advantage of various learning options and their value. These preferences
resulted from the influence of prior learning experiences but also in the influence of their family
and environment. Second, participants’ help-seeking abilities impacted self-regulated skills that
could aid them become self-sufficient learners. Third, participants’ learning strategies
contributed to their ability to become active participants and to remain engaged in their learning
process. Therefore, the three subthemes discussed in this section are: 1) learning approaches
(collectivist and individualist), 2) tutoring, and 3) learning strategies.

Learning Approaches (Collectivism and Individualism)

From past learning experiences, participants developed a particular approach to learning
that influenced their decisions to be active or passive participants in certain aspects of the
EC1MOOC. Edna articulated her preference for individual instruction. Her past educational
experiences in three different countries did help her expand her learning experiences and
perspectives, while it also shaped her individualistic learning approach. She states: “When we
are in the classroom, sometimes, other people have other um, questions that for me they are not a
problem. But I should be patient and wait for them. In online, it’s only about me [laughs].”

Edna’s remarks reveal that she prefers to be an independent student and also that she is
not very patient with students gaining knowledge of the subject matter. For her, e-learning
represents a means of controlling her study time by managing her efforts and time in an
autonomous way. Therefore, Edna does not favor participating in discussion forums. She added,
“The opinion they gave, the opinion were [sic] not so original and creative, so I wasn't interested
in what they say because it wasn't interesting [laughs].” It is clear that Edna’s self-regulation
skills influenced her behavior when she felt that activities took away her independence.
Similarly, David prefers a more individualistic approach due to his learning experiences as a college student. He explained that he studied engineering and that his career demands that he be focused on technical work rather than projects that involve the exchanging of ideas with other peers. David noted:

I have been a study [sic] electronics and it's not just like, I mean like writing or something uh, literature. I haven't studied that [...] it's not like that, like you have to share your ideas. Usually you have to do something and it's working or it's not. It's as simple as that.

Making sense of David’s remarks, the researcher understands that David’s past experiences have influenced his self-regulator skills and strategies to take control, organize and execute given tasks taking full responsibility of the given assignment.

Four participants revealed their preference for a more collectivist approach to learning. They like both a sense of belonging to a community of learners where they can have one-to-one communication with peers and professors, and a shared responsibility for learning among participants. Hada mentioned that in her country social interaction is an essential part of their culture. Therefore, her family, friends and classmates played an important role in her learning process. Additionally, Hada’s family contributed to the building of her self-efficacious beliefs:

[Classmates] make me feel confident, because when I interact with them, I see that we are all in this learning process. So, I don't know everything but they either [sic]. So I feel like we can compliment each other because I, maybe I understand something. And they understand others. And we get to these discussions that really helps, helps us.
Hada’s remarks highlighted how collaborative learning helped her build confidence and knowledge. However, when the researcher asked her if she felt the same when participating in discussion forums, she answered negatively. She felt that discussion forums did not give her the experience that she was participating in real discussions and that communicating with other students online did not imply to belong to a community. Clearly, Hada felt more comfortable taking classes in a classroom because the classroom represented a safe space where she could interact with her classmates in real life, and all students were equal and used their prior experiences and knowledge for the construction of new knowledge. In online discussion forums, Hada felt isolated from her classmates and far away from their immediate reach and the collaboration that helps her master the new knowledge.

Berta also expressed her preference to learn from others. In fact, learning from the experience of other classmates when she moved to the United States built her confidence and helped her reduce the stress that she was feeling trying to learn English at the same time that she was trying to understand the content of the regular courses:

I think I overcome it [sic]. It was by myself, putting myself out there. I started, yeah, I started hanging out with people who didn't speak Spanish so they could teach me not just the language, but the culture of the United States as well.

Berta established a social presence in her community. She learned to build self-efficacy beliefs that helped her reduce anxiety, evaluated what she needed to learn and motivated her to develop a course of action to belong to her community.

**Tutoring**
Some participants have developed more help-seeking skills than others. For example, Berta came to live in the United States from Mexico when she was in high school. She remembered that the transition from the Mexican educational system to the USA educational system and from the Spanish language to the English language was very difficult, but proudly claimed that she overcame these challenges with hard work. Berta remembered that one of the most important supports that she received was the intervention of an ESL tutor who took her under his wing: “I started going with him a lot because he speaks Spanish. He was the person at ESL. I started going to, uh, after classes, weekends.” Berta took control of her study time by increasing the hours of study the English language that in turn helped her to build her language skills and confidence as a student. With the support of that tutor Berta could finish high school and start college.

However, she was afraid of not being prepared for college when she received her first grade from her first written assignment. She related, “actually, the professor told me that that paper wasn't college. It was more like an elementary paper, not even high school.” Berta explained that she did not let her disappointment stop her. Instead, her drive for improvement made her get closer to that professor who ended up tutoring her three times a week: “so, I will use her tutoring and I will use the English department. And that really, that's the strategy that I find, I just practice a lot. I have to work very hard. I will have to come home, and then I'm probably will have to study for three hours.”

Berta’s prior high school tutoring experience helped her understand the need to seek personalized instruction in college if she wanted to be successful in this new learning experience. Additionally she was able to build her own strategies as independent learner and adapt to her new environment and use it for her own benefit.
Luz also has looked for tutoring services to fill in her academic gaps to continue with her graduate education. While studying in college, she did not take a class or receive instruction about how to write an essay in Spanish or English. She claimed that she needs that knowledge now because her academic goal is to pass the International English Language Testing System (IETLS) to be accepted in an overseas graduate program. Luz explained that on her first attempt to pass the IETLS she did not get a passing score so she decided to look for tutoring services:

Six in my speaking, then six in my reading, six in my listening, and my writing were, was the worse [sic] because I got five. So, when I saw my quiz results, so then I say, I starting a plan. Like, I really need to focus on my writing [...] So, I started to go with this tutor, and he was helping me with my writing.

Luz’s proactive decision to hire a tutor implied that she expected to fulfill her need to receive the necessary academic knowledge to be able to improve her score. She foresees that after reaching that goal, there will be a real possibility that she will be accepted in a college abroad.

When the researcher asked Gael about his experiences with tutoring services, he expressed frustration about his failed attempts to learn English from these services. Gael said that he started learning English in high school and continued up to college. He explained that during those years he developed writing and reading skills but he feels that he is far from reaching his speaking goals. In fact, during the interview he had a lot of difficulty expressing himself accurately in English; sometimes the researcher had to translate the question into Spanish for him and participate constantly and cautiously in the double hermeneutic process of making sense of the participant’s making sense of the phenomenon.
Gael’s self-regulation skills and commitment with his own learning process help him not to be shy when he needs to find help from others. Gael explained that to improve his oral English skills, he hired various English language tutors in Mexico before he came to live in the United States. The tutors disappointed him because “no tenían el nivel ni el compromiso llevar, este, enseñar” (they didn’t have the knowledge or commitment to bring, to teach). Gael’s expectation once he arrived to the United States was to hire better tutors to help him improve his communication skills. However, the tutor’s high cost per hour and the difficulty Gael had in matching his schedule with the tutor’s made him abandon his desire to hire a tutor. Instead, he decided to enroll in ESL classes in a community college. Despite his disappointing experiences with tutorial services, he has not lost confidence that tutoring services will help him someday improve his speaking skills more rapidly.

Participants’ experience with tutoring services differed, yet all seemed to have positive opinions. To the participants, tutors represented cultural agents, language instructors, academic guides or learning strategies that contribute to forge them as independent learners.

**Learning Strategies**

Each participant has developed self-efficacious and self-regulating skills during past learning experiences that have helped them construct different sets of strategies that support their academic performance. One of those skills is the ability to control the environment where they study. Some prefer to study in a quiet setting such as libraries or in spaces at their homes or offices where they feel comfortable and can claim study time of their own. Berta described herself as a “very distracted person” so external stimuli distract her from her studies. She likes to study at home; however, she sometimes prefers to go to a coffee shop. In order for her to avoid distracting stimuli, she listens to the music of her choice: “if I'm in a Barnes & Noble that's how
I find out that I need, uh, I took my music with me. Everything else, I was listening everybody's conversations.”

As a mother, Berta also has had to learn how to control her environment at home and has developed certain skills that help her be attentive of her little son while she studies: “So, uh, usually I do it [study] early in the morning before my son wakes up. And sometimes during the day when he plays around, I can still focus, because as, as when, when he calls me, then of course I do hear him.” Berta’s self-efficacious and self-regulatory skills learned in the past permit her to fulfill her roles as a mother and a student. Her persistence drives her to evaluate her situations to find the best course of action to execute her academic task.

Participants’ learning experiences in the past also have helped them build strategies to overcome difficult challenges. Ana is a native English speaker who had a hearing problem as a baby that caused her to be deaf in one ear. Therefore, she developed her own strategies to overcome this disability. In a written note, she stated:

As for learning, I learned to compensate. I was placed where the teacher faced my left ear. My mom helped me with my studies. I got some assistance until second grade, and stayed after school or before school to get help from teachers.

As Ana grew older, she developed a personal perspective that allowed her to use her disability to her own advantage:

I was—in my eyes—blessed to live in a world that is quiet compared to everyone else's world. It was relaxing but it caused me to be a great selective listener (unintentionally). I have kind of have accepted it [the disability] as part of my charm.
Ana’s sense-making of her learning experiences and strategies to overcome her disability bring to light the importance of the role that her family and sensitive teachers played in her development of self-efficacy beliefs for academic achievement. Her confidence built from past experiences also helped her turn her disability in something positive and see it as part “of her charm.”

Gael’s experiences could be related to Luz’s, not because he has a disability, but because he has limited vocabulary in English that represent a challenge for him. His lack of English speaking skills frustrates him because—he explained—he cannot demonstrate the level of knowledge that he has in his professional field as he can when he speaks Spanish. To overcome the challenges that the lack of fluency in English represents, Gael’s strategy is to be honest with people, especially with the clients of the company he works for. Gael explained that when he does not understand a person, he asks him/her to speak more slowly or to use other words that he may understand: “say people I didn’t understand what you mean, they try, they learn more oh, slow, they try they said other words I can understand um, and sometimes, um, I can respond.” Gael’s sense-making of the phenomenon helped this researcher to understand that his lack of English fluency frustrates him because he knows that he has the knowledge to fulfill the tasks that his job demands but he cannot demonstrate it to the fullest. Yet, his frustration does not stop him from executing his job. Gael remarks show that he has built strong self-efficacy beliefs that guided him to build strategies to exercise control over challenging situations, and to calculate his weaknesses to overcome them with honesty and persistence.

David’s learning experiences have nurtured him with skills to build optimistic scenarios when facing difficult challenges and fulfill learning and career goals through specific strategies.
He likes to follow the Feynman technique of “read, simplify and explain.” This strategy has helped him evaluate his performance as a professor and become more skillful in his career:

I become a teacher in a university. So when you try to explain, when you are a professor and when you prepare to get difficult questions, you start to, to learn even, more. It's, I mean you are with a purpose, looking like that. It's not just reading, it… it's, that is more, uh I don't know, the level of understanding is different.

Making meaning of David’s remarks, the researcher believes that David’s strategy gives him a purpose to his actions and help him find the intrinsic motivation of teaching and learning that is translated into his own satisfaction for learning.

Hada and Edna self-regulator strategies in e-learning favored the use of video lectures. Both participants described themselves as “visual persons.” Therefore, they believe that video lectures best support their learning process. Videos offered them the flexibility to listen to the lectures as many times as necessary, contribute to their attentiveness by taking notes, and helped them retain information more easily. Hada claimed that she enjoys watching videos and rewinds them as many times as needed. When she listens to a non-native English speaker speaking English with an accent that is difficult to understand, Hada reads the captions that are included in the videos. Additionally, Hada takes colored notes and makes summaries of the video lectures. Moreover, she improves her learning by looking for additional material: “I like to read other books or articles about this topic to have a broader view [and] look for examples in real life […] That is how I understand better.”

Edna also looks for videos on the Internet for more information. She explains that she pauses the video as often as she wishes to take notes on small sections of the video. She then
thinks about what she has seen and written. She states that she likes to “go slowly and focus more in [sic] fragments of the video.” When she feels overwhelmed, she stops watching videos and relaxes: “Maybe I am so tired, need to relax or I need to look at that eh, topic from a distance.”

The use of video lectures enhanced participants’ engagement in a course and they changed from passive to active participants in the learning process. Also, the lack of participation with lecturers and other peers in accessible and immediate back-and-forth communication helped participants develop research strategies and independent learning skills that support their learning experience in given e-learning environments.

**Conclusion.** Participants in this study showed that prior learning experiences have shaped their academic development. Those who prefer a more individualistic approach agree that they like to have control on their learning tasks. They also prefer to be able to decide what, how, where and when to study without affecting or being affected by other students’ decisions. Those who preferred a more collectivist approach manifested their need to belong to a community of learners where they can have one-to-one communication with peers and where they all can contribute to the construction of knowledge.

Participants also agreed that in order to achieve their academic goals and become independent learners, they needed first to build help-seeking skills that help them find academic help from tutors and peers. Finally, participants’ past learning experiences help them develop specific learning strategies for specific needs that have contributed to achieve their academic goals.

**Cultural Background**
One’s academic performance is often influenced by one’s culture. The second overarching theme unveiled how the participants’ cultural background impacts their academic achievement. Research revealed two specific areas of commonality across participants. First, most of the participants in this study agreed that their Hispanic social and cultural heritage influenced the way they make their academic and professional decisions, and that family support has been crucial to the construction of their own self-efficacy beliefs. Second, participants’ learning experience in their own countries varied. Those experiences helped them build self-regulation skills to control their academic performance and obtain positive results. Therefore, the two subthemes discussed in this superordinate theme are: 1) Hispanic social, cultural and family heritage, and 2) Hispanic and mainstream US cultural learning similarities and differences.

**Hispanic Social, Cultural and Family Heritage**

Participants agreed that family plays an important role for academic and social growth and for the construction of self-efficacy beliefs. Hada’s high self-efficacy beliefs were built as a child thanks to her mother. Her mother told her: "Oh, you can do everything that you want.” Those words became a statement that helped Hada believe in her own capabilities to achieve her goals. Hada also have received similar encouragement and motivation from other members of her family: “They really help me a lot, because they are always cheering me up. They, they are, like, very happy, like, my uncles, my aunts, my grandfather.” Hada projected satisfaction when she shared with the researcher that despite many difficulties that she faced in her country, she is now fulfilling her dream of getting a masters degree in the United States:

The path that I have walked to get in here, to get this opportunity, it may be different from what the students of this country needed to do […] I had a lot of
limitations and I needed to do a lot of sacrifices to be here. So I don't take anything for granted.

Hada attends as many school activities as she can and meets many people as a way to regulate her own learning experience and make it more successful. She explained that she developed strong social skills as part of her cultural heritage and those skills allow her to connect with peers born and raised in the United States whose culture—she claimed—make them prone to “keep a distance.”

Similarly, Luz claimed that she developed her social skills in her country of origin. However, she did not know how strong those skills were until she had to use them when she moved to the United States and felt the need to communicate with other people:

When I was living in Mexico, I was kind of friendly, but not at all. But, when I went overseas, when I went [sic] USA, I was kind of not alone, but I was, I have to be, like, open. Like, open mind. Like, I don't know this person, but I need help, so I need to ask.

Making sense of Luz’s comment, the researcher understands that she had low self-efficacy believes when she first came to live in the United States. However, her optimism in facing her new life experience, her need to communicate with others, and her help-seeking skills improved her self-efficacy beliefs to the point that—she explained—she has joined a virtual community of Mexicans living abroad who are pursuing their own educational interests to learn from them.

Ana’s education at home was influenced by three cultures: those of Spain, Portugal and the United States. Ana was born in the United States but her father is from Spain and her mother is from Portugal. She explained that when she was a child, her parents’ cultures were strongly
practiced in her house. She remembers fondly how women transfer their culture and gender roles to their daughters through activities such as arts and crafts, cooking and dancing “which was kind of cool.” She remembers that she enjoyed the constant family reunions at home. Those family gatherings contributed to the development of her ethnic identity and social skills that influenced her attitude and behavior. She has special memories of cooking with the family:

Helping the family was pretty huge, so when it came to, like, making tamales in the, in the, for, like, Christmas or something like that or, you know, like a, like, bigger meals for, you know, vast majority of family, that was a huge aspect. Um, anything food related was pretty up there.

Family support, unity, respect for elders, moral values and religion also played important roles in Ana’s education: “When it comes to, like, more, like, moral values, like religion, we were raised Catholic. That was kind of, like, a, I would say, like, the moral aspects of Christianity was pretty much up there as well.”

On the other hand, Ana also faced racism. Ana explained that she was raised in a small town where there was good acceptance for members of social groups that were considered minorities, “where everyone is very close and, like, friendly”, but when she started high school, she and her family moved to “a smaller, primarily Caucasian population, where everyone was a little bit on the, like, racist side and—I would say—old Southern views [laughs].” This experience made her face for the first time her ethnic and cultural differences, but also made her embraced them:

Everyone was always very curious because I'm. I'm not just one. I'm multiple things, so everyone's like, you know, like, ‘You look Spanish, but like, you have some other traits.’
And I'm like, ‘Yeah, I'm not just—you know—I'm not just, like, Hispanic or, you know, any insert, you know, Mexican or anything. I'm a lot of things.’ So, I always kind of enjoyed being that, like, I guess mutt.

Ana’s Hispanic heritage enriched her view of the world and helped her understand the segregation and rejection that members of minority groups face every day in the United States. These experiences also helped her build social skills, self-confidence and a better understanding of the society she lives in.

**Hispanic And Mainstream US Cultural Learning Similarities and Differences**

Participants’ cultural heritage and past experiences studying in their country of origin help them build skills to exercise control over their learning experiences in the United States. David described the United States teaching approach as very structured and “straight forward” in comparison with the one that is used in Colombia:

The Hispanic people try to use to talk about uh, your family or how to say ‘How are you?’ and to start to talking [sic] a lot of stuff before to get to the point. Instead, in the United States professors are direct and to the point.

From David’s comment, the researcher infers that he refers to a more personal approach to students before starting classes, which David implies, is a common behavior among Colombian teachers. His remarks suggest that he attended a select college where faculty has a similar teaching approach to that of the United States:

I studied technical, um, we were very, pretty similar to the standard here in the United States. Actually, we have all the books in English, and our professors studied here. So for
me, it wasn't, different at all. I mean it [education] was, it was just compared to that [The United States] structure.

Although the professors’ behavioral approach is different in Colombia and in the United States, David believes that he received a quality education comparable to the one in the United States. Moreover, since he received the “same quality of education” imparted in the United States, the researcher understands that David’s schooling experience positively influenced his academic and work transition to the United States.

Hada strongly criticized the teaching approach that characterized her education in Guatemala. She acknowledged that she had good teachers in her undergraduate program. She states, “if not I wouldn’t be here.” However, she sensed that she had professors who were not fond of teaching and who were working as professors “in order to survive” meaning that they were teaching as a way to have a job and earn some income, but not for their interest of teaching:

They don't care about teaching and I had some classes where my professors just went there to the class. I had this professor who [...] just want write [sic] to write in the blackboard. Like, writing, writing, without even saying a word [...] so he was, like, uh, someone that didn't care too much.

Hada’s graduate student experience in the United States is different from that of her country of origin. She feels thankful for the university where she is in a graduate program because it has helped her develop self-esteem. She believes that the university offers her a positive environment where she is respected and valued as a student. While attending college in her country, she felt “underestimated”. She explained that in order to get what she needed from the university, even submitting paper work to different offices, she had to have a very humble
attitude; otherwise, she was ignored: “you were always, like this, like, ah… like, begging.”

When she came to the United States for her masters program her self-efficacy beliefs were low. She thought that she was going to be looked down on by her professors and classmates because she came from an “underdeveloped” country. She feared people would think: “‘she's from Guatemala. Well, what does she know?’ But no, not at all. I mean, here you, they value you. They, you're, your diploma really worth. It's really worth something. And they respect you for that.” Hada’s learning experience in the United States, along with her awareness of the cultural and gender discrimination experienced in her own country, improved her self-esteem and gave her a comprehensive view of her strengths and weaknesses as a Hispanic woman that helped her reduce the stress experienced when she first started her graduate program.

Edna studied in three different countries: Cuba, the Soviet Union and the United States. Hence, she has experienced different teaching and learning approaches and has nurtured her divergent learning styles from them. Edna used her memories of how teachers explained mathematical concepts in the three different countries. According to Edna, in Cuba teachers were more friendly than in other countries, but she believes that their teaching method was not designed to help student to reason or analyze what they were doing:

[The professors] used to give a theory, a very short theory about factor, eh, how do you say? Integration, for instance […] and immediately we start performing exercises […] In Cuba they change only the number, the value. But the function stayed the same.

Edna’s perception of the Soviet Union teachers’ behavior was that they were not as friendly as the teachers in Cuba. However, she also felt that they were very respectful of the students and they were interested in their academic improvement. Edna believes that their teaching methodology is focused on student’s reasoning:
They got a whole theory of the topic. Then they start giving exercises. The first exercise is with numbers but then they, em, how to say? Increase the rigor of this exercise. They don't change the value, they change the function and the function became more complex with time and in that way, you get very deep. And that’s a difference from Latin way of teaching I think and Russian. They push you to think.

Edna did not mention any particular difference in teachers’ behavior in the United States, but her perception of the teachers’ methodology is that it is:

Superficial. You get, um, wide spec of the topic, of the different subject that you should take in their career but you don't go deep. [...] They leave that to your decision. It's up to you to go deep or not.

This researcher understands that Edna’s learning experience nurtured by three different cultures has influenced her behavior and attitude toward her schooling. The researcher believes that Edna’s construction of knowledge takes what serves her best from each culture.

**Conclusion.** The research concluded that most of the participants in this study connected their culture and family with the development of their own self-efficacy beliefs, ethnic identity, and social skills. Additionally, participants concurred that their own cultural background, or the exposure to other cultures, impacted their academic achievement. Those who had the opportunity to study abroad criticized their own countries’ teaching approach. Yet, they all gained self-regulatory skills from past learning experiences that—along with their cultural and family heritage—help them continue with their academic goals.

**Experiences and Attitudes that Influence Students’ Academic Performance**
Participants’ academic performance is influenced by diverse experiences and attitudes. Research revealed five areas of commonality across participants that uncovered which experiences and attitudes influenced participants’ performance in past learning experiences and in English Composition 1 Massive Open Online Course (EC1MOOC). First, participants agreed that they registered in EC1MOOC due to a desire to fulfill a professional or academic goal. However, most of them agreed that EC1MOOC was the means, not the final goal, so finishing the course was not important. Second, participants’ self-efficacy beliefs in their ability to comply with all the requirements of the EC1MOOC was important when they enrolled in the course, but did not necessarily impact their performance during the course. Third, some participants believed that their academic and professional goals were influenced by family members, professors or bosses who became role models. Fourth, participants agreed that negative emotions such as stress and anxiety affect their professional and academic performance. All participants agreed that they have developed strategies to control those emotional arousals when they emerge. Particularly important is that two of the participants mentioned having felt stress when studying EC1MOOC. Yet, they controlled the stressful experience by finding strategies to better their academic performance.

Finally, all participants agreed that it was difficult for them to control their study time. Since EC1MOOC was a means to reach an academic or professional goal but not the goal itself, some of the participants have dropped out or plan to allocate time in the future to continue with this course when their academic, professional or personal life allows them. Therefore, the five subthemes explored in this overarching theme are: 1) motivations and goals, 2) students’ beliefs, 3) role models, 4) stress and anxiety, and 5) time management skills.

Motivations and Goals
All participants expressed a specific goal that motivated them to enroll in EC1MOOC. Three participants enrolled because they want to improve their writing skills and gain the theoretical knowledge to be able to write academic papers for their graduate programs. Luz’ ultimate goal is to be accepted in a masters program abroad but she is aware that her academic writing skills need improvement. Luz’s high level of motivation to reach her goal influenced her decision to find resources to improve her writing skills. Therefore, she enrolled in EC1MOOC: “if you want to become better, you have to practice. You cannot, like, just stay at your home and just hoping. Like, just watching videos or watching movies is going to help you.” Luz decided to regulate her learning experience so she chose to essentially ignore the course schedule. Instead, she is working on the course at her own pace and she is determined to finish it.

Ana is the only participant who had finished EC1MOOC at the time of the interview. She is studying in a graduate program and would like to enroll in a Ph.D. program in the future. She knows the limitations of her current writing skills and she is eager to improve them: “being in a Master's, um, my organization and structure was getting kind of iffy and rusty. [Even] I knew, like, the rules applied to English, it was still tricky for me to still write.” Ana’s intrinsic motivation to improve her writing skills and her self-regulator skills helped her maintain focus on the EC1MOOC without neglecting her graduate studies: “I like to learn. So, I didn't have a problem spending a few hours, like, a week doing it.” Ana demonstrated time management skills that helped her to respond to her academic responsibilities in a timely manner.

Four participants enrolled in EC1MOOC because they wanted to strengthen their writing skills. Their goal was to be more efficient in their jobs. Edna is aware that as an immigrant she has the responsibility to connect not only with the people she works with but with the society as a whole. Therefore, she wants to elevate her English language skills: “I am a professional, and I
am living here in the United States. I think that I have to get to the high level my English, uh, skills, eh, oral and writing.” Since her motivation to enroll in EC1MOOC was to improve her writing skills, she was no interested in getting the course certificate. Therefore, Edna registered to audit the course. Her self-regulating skills helped her decide what course elements she needed to improve her English language skills. Therefore, Edna only participated in the assignments that she considered necessary to achieve her goal. At the time of the interview, Edna already had dropped out of the course. Yet, she believed that the lessons and activities that she participated in were enough to meet in her academic needs.

David’s intrinsic motivation was to improve his writing skills to excel in his job and be able to attain better positions in the future. He has realized that his speaking skills are not as strong as he thought they were when he moved to the United States. He believes that improving his writing skills ultimately will help him to improve his speaking skills. David remembers his first assignment in his new job in the United States:

“that was pretty, pretty stressful because uh, I haven't fe-, I mean I wasn't confident at all. Just try to give a lecture in English […] I have to study a lot. I have to practice to, I have to create a PowerPoint and sit down to 2 am and repeat after it to think in an advanced way what they are going to ask. And try to make a strategy to follow exactly what I have to do.”

At the time of the interview, he was still registered in EC1MOOC and was confident that he would finish it. For him, finishing EC1MOOC is a strong goal. He explained that when he sets goals, he is determined to reach them and confident that he will succeed in this effort.
From the participants’ remarks about their goals and motivations to enroll in EC1MOOC the researcher understood that EC1MOOC helped participants reach their academic and professional goals, but completing the course was not a goal itself. The researcher understands that EC1MOOC was a means for participants to acquire writing skills and knowledge of the English language according to their own particular needs.

**Students’ Beliefs**

All participants described having strong self-efficacy beliefs that would help them comply with the technological requirements of EC1MOOC. Some expressed low self-efficacy beliefs in their academic skills. Yet, they were optimistic that they would be able to manage their learning experience. However, those beliefs did not influence their decision to finish the course. Gael believed that he had the necessary technological skills to navigate the course. At this point in the conversation, Gael trusted me more than he had at the beginning of the interview. He showed this by speaking in Spanish or code-switching when he had difficulty expressing himself in English. I understood that this means that he cared more about my understanding his meaning than sounding polished in English. He implied during our conversation that even though he had never taken a course such as English Composition I MOOC before, he was sure that he was going to be able to finish it as long as he followed the same strategies that he uses to learn topics related to his career: “Me meto a investigar en línea, en las librerías busco mis libros” (I research online; I go to bookstores and look for books). However, he did not finish the course because he is studying to earn the commercial Driver License required for his job:

“I need focus because I need studying this book [Driver License manual]. I… no me puedo enfocar, estudiar, y tomar el curso [EC1MOOC] porque me perdería totalmente” (I can’t focus, study, and take the [EC1MOOC] course because I would be completely lost).
Although Gael’s beliefs in his abilities to master the course were strong, his job demands took him away from finishing the course.

When Luz first enrolled in the course, she believed that she had the technological skills needed to navigate through it. However, she was not sure that she was going to be able to comply with the academic requirements:

I was kind of hesitating to take this course. Because, I think, maybe it will be so hard to read or to understand this paragraph or this explanation of the videos. And then, when it started to, when I started to going up [sic], uh I just realized that the things that in this course were telling me, I knew them.

Luz’s belief that she had a good understanding of the course grew as she started finding similarities between English and Spanish words throughout the readings. As Luz progressed through the course, her belief in her abilities grew. Now, the only things that cause her to worry that she will not be able to finish the course are her personal and family responsibilities. Yet, she believes that being aware of her improvements in her writing skills will strongly influence her decision to finish the course.

When Hada started EC1MOOC, she believed that she had the necessary abilities to meet all the requirements of the course. She believed that she was going “to have a lot of mistakes” in her assignments, yet, she was not discouraged from trying. Her first assignment “I am a writer” determined her interest in the course: “I think that [it] gave me a little confidence like, ‘Yeah, sure. I am a writer’ […] Because in the, in the essays, you, you need to write also about yourself.” That first assignment also helped her to build self-confidence and to calculate how successful she could be during the course. However, she decided to drop out the course. She
explained that the demands of her graduate program did not leave her enough time to continue with EC1MOOC.

**Role Models**

Role models set examples and encourage students’ behavior. Most participants agreed that some of their academic decisions are due to the influence that they received from role models in their lives. Luz’s academic role models were her thesis advisor and two former bosses. What she admires the most about her thesis advisor is that he got his Ph.D. abroad. Both former bosses were ambassadors whom she “admires” in part because of the political positions they held in different countries along with the possibility to travel and live in different nations that their jobs provided. The influence of these role models is clearly seen in her desire to undertake a graduate program abroad. In relation to the English language, Luz expressed her admiration for a friend from Colombia whose English language skills were “kind-of perfect”:

If you were, like, talking in English with that person, you wouldn't know that she wasn't from there [The United States]. So, maybe she was kind of my role model. Like, I really want to talk like her, without accent.

Luz’s commitment to improving her English skills motivated her to enroll in EC1MOOC. She understands that gaining English language proficiency will give her the possibility to fulfill her dream of enrolling in a graduate program abroad.

Hada’s role models are her parents. Her decision to study economics in college was in great measure because when her father was young, he studied the same career in Guatemala, but he could not complete it because “those were difficult times in Guatemala.” So Hada’s decision to study economics was a continuation of her father’s dream, and she was eager to accomplish it.
Hada described her father as a very disciplined man and a hard working and loving father, characteristics that she tries to emulate. From her mother, Hada appreciates that she did not educate her and her sister to follow traditional women’s societal roles of wife and mother. On the contrary, her mother encouraged her to pursue her dreams: “you can do everything that you want” including—Hada explained—the traditional women role if that is what she desires. Hada also was influenced by her mother’s religiosity that guides her with her spiritual life. Hada’s parents helped her build self-confidence skills and persistence that now she uses to accomplish her academic goals.

Similarly to Hada, Berta situates her mother as her role model. She explained that she admires her mother because when she moved to the United States, her mother was able to get a job. When facing challenging situations, Berta always thinks about her mother’s experience, compares her situation with the one her mother faced in the United States when she first arrived and gets the necessary strength to achieve her goals: “I can make it too. It might be a struggle, but I can make it [laughs].” Berta’s second role model is a friend who studied psychology with her. Her friend was older than Berta and although Berta did not say it directly, she implied in her conversation that she thought that her friend was not going to finishing her bachelors’ degree. When her friend graduated, she became a role model for Berta: "If she can make it, I can make it.” Berta’s expression “If she can make it, I can make it” reinforces her own beliefs in her capabilities to accomplish challenging situations.

**Stress and Anxiety**

Few participants revealed that they experienced stress or anxiety while studying EC1MOOC. For example, Berta felt very anxious when she realized that in order to be successful in EC1MOOC she first needed to clarify some grammar rules. She felt frustrated
when she started to consider taking a grammar course along with the EC1MOOC. Instead, she decided to go back to her grammar books and try to make sense of the grammar that she was not sure of: “I think it's just figure it out. That's the only way that you can deal stress with [sic]. It's like, ‘Okay, you don't know what it is. Well, go and find the answer and figure it out, and fix it.’” Berta’s self-regulate skills guided her to select the strategies that she needed to manage her emotional arousal caused by the demands of the course and improved her abilities to manage the demanding tasks.

Although most of the participants agreed that their participation in the course did not cause them any emotional discomfort, most of them agreed that stress and anxiety are factors that have a negative effect when pursuing their goals. Gael admitted that feeling stress is a major negative factor that blocks him from accomplishing something: “I can say that eighty percent [affects me].” In order for him to get rid of the stress, he claims that he thinks about the problem over and over again until he finds a solution: “I think, and think, and think, and little bit um, I think about the ‘resolve’ [solve] problem in my situation”.

Additionally, Gael feels frustration about his speaking skills. He knows that if he had to respond to the questions his customers ask him in Spanish, he would be able to give good information because he knows the subject matter. However, due to the fact that his English speaking skills are limited, he faces stressful moments in his job every day that he needs to handle the best way he can. From Gael’s remarks, the researcher understands that despite the frustration that he experiences for not being able to express himself in English the way he would like to, Gael’s problem-solving skills act as anxiety regulators that help him out from the negative emotional triggers.
Another participant who constantly uses his problem-solving skills is David. He is used to finding different solutions to manage his stress according to the situation. He shared with this researcher that when he moved to the United States to work in the company where he presently is employed, he faced a stressful situation that he had to handle very carefully. He recalls that he had to prepare a presentation in English for his boss and coworkers. This was going to be the first time that he had to make a presentation in English so he was very nervous. In order to reduce the stress, he had to invest hours in the preparation of a media presentation and to practice his oral skills. On top of this, he had to drive in the snow and he had not had this kind of driving experiences before. David proudly laughed when he remembered this situation claiming that he successfully made the presentation and established good relationships with his boss and coworkers from that moment on. David’s self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulator skills influenced his motivation and actions and helped him alter a negative experience and convert it in a positive performance.

**Time Management Skills**

The researcher found that lacking or having low time management skills was one of the strongest factors that explained why participants have not finished EC1MOOC. Of all participants in this study, Ana was the only one who had completed EC1MOOC when the research was conducted. Despite Ana’s busy schedule doing her master program, she finished the course last year: “When there's, like, something I want to learn or something I want to know, it's not hard for me to keep engaged. I think I had, like, segments of time that I was free to do the course.” However, she recognized how difficult it is to manage time to accomplish different tasks: “Yeah, time is of the essence, and I don't exactly have time always [laughs].” However, from Ana’s remarks this researcher understands that Ana’s deep interest in learning the subject
matter helped her to remain engaged in the course and her high time management skills helped her to fulfill all her responsibilities.

The rest of the participants are still working on EC1MOOC or have dropped out. Some participants who are still enrolled did not mention whether or not they plan to finish the course. When the researcher asked them the reason why they have not finished the course, five out of the six participants who have not finished the course gave the same reason: lack of time.

Edna had the strongest opinion about saving time of all the participants in the study. Edna dropped out from the EC1MOOC. Due to her job obligations, she claimed that she did not have enough time to set a regular schedule to take the course so she studied it whenever time permitted. During the interview, Edna continued to refer to the time factor on several occasions as evidenced in the following quotes: “the time is not enough to follow, to continue the course in a, um, fluent, fluently way”, “I don't like to go to the forum, and I don't know. I need to save time, and I don't use forum, in any groups”, “Because my issue is to save time. If something's adding me, so- eh, adding, any value, I continue it.” At the end of our conversation Edna began to reconsider the possibility of continuing the course.

David started the course two months before he participated in this study. He showed more confidence that he would eventually finish the course in comparison to the rest of the participants. Although David has a full time job and is married, he does not feel that any of these circumstances prevent him from completing the course. However, he cannot allocate time for the course easily. Yet, David’s self-regulatory skills and time management skills have helped him decide when and how to continue the course and take advantage of the fact that the course does not have deadlines to submit the assignments. He just wants to go at his own pace: “I’m taking
my time to finish. I mean, I'm trying to follow the, the structure. Not to rush or, taking um, several weeks in one week or something like that. I'm just taking one.”

Although Edna had the strongest opinions about saving time of all the students in the study, time management was a general topic of concern among them and the main factor given for not finishing the course.

**Conclusion.** This researcher concluded that all participants enrolled in EC1MOOC because they believed that the course could help them fulfill an academic or professional goal, and not because the course was the goal itself. Some participants’ academic or professional goals were influenced by a person or a family member who became a role model or by an individual who acted as a motivator. Additionally, participants’ self-efficacy beliefs in complying with the technological and academic demands of the course determined their decision to enroll in the course, but did not define their performance or conclusion of the course. Moreover, participants’ emotional state while taking the course was not a factor that determined their participation in the course. Finally, the research revealed that time management was the main factor that influenced participants’ performance. Those participants who dropped out claimed that it was impossible for them to include the course in their present schedule. Edna’s comments about the importance of allocating time to do things that matter to her summarize the feelings that most of the participants have regarding time management. Hence, it was revealed that participants needed more skills to learn how to prioritize their time in order to be able to allocate time for activities of their interest.

**English Composition I MOOC Learning Experience**

Participants’ English Composition I MOOC learning experiences varied according to their interests, needs, and abilities and comfort to study in an e-learning situation. All of the
participants felt comfortable navigating the course but not all believed that it was necessary to use all the instructional tools offered in the course. Also, participants’ opinions in regards to the activities and assignments varied. Most of the participants agreed that the activities and class assignments are important to improve their writing English skills; however, not all were active participants. Moreover, some of the participants expressed their need to communicate one-to-one with peers and professors. For them, the e-learning experience had little appeal as a learning environment to meet their communications needs. All participants, regardless of their involvement in the course, agreed that they obtained the knowledge and skills that they were looking for to improve their writing skills. Nevertheless, they shared suggestions of ways to improve the course’s instructional design. The information obtained from the interviews is divided in three subthemes: 1) EC1MOOC instructional tools, 2) How EC1MOOC has benefited students, and 3) Students’ suggestions to improve EC1MOOC.

**EC1MOOC Instructional Tools**

The instructional design of MOOCs offers students a variety of tools to support their learning experience. English Composition I included: video lectures, quizzes, discussion forums, readings, audios, pre recorded webinars, and peer review. Each participant’s interest in using these tools depended on how prior learning experiences influenced their use and the relevance that each one of them has for every student. Also, the participants’ decisions varied according to their perception of their interest and needs at the time. Participants shared their experience in the use of 1) videos lectures, 2) readings, 3) writing assignments and peer review, and 4) discussion forums.

**Videos lectures.** Of all EC1MOOC instructional tools, participants expressed their preference for video lectures. When the researcher mentioned all the instructional components of
the course to Edna and asked her which ones she preferred, her response was straightforward: “the video. I love the way this lady, the instructor, introduced the topic.” Edna is a person who values her time so much that she stops participating or undertaking any activity that she feels is taking time away from her. She claims, “If something's adding me any value, I continue it. If not, I go, eh, strictly by the videos and the exercises.” Additionally, Edna mentioned that she uses the caption tool displayed in the videos because it helps her to go faster. Making sense of Edna’s remarks, this researcher understands that Edna’s involvement in any activity of the course depends on the time that it demands, meaning that if an activity or assessment requires more time than the one she is willing to allocate, she will not be interested in participating.

Hada mentioned that videos were her favorite instructional tool. She described the videos as: “very illustrative. I really prefer videos where I am seeing the person, that, and, I'm watching the expressions.” This researcher believes that Hada is more comfortable when she is involved in face-to-face interactions with faculty, so videos gives her the feeling of having a personal connection with the lecturer. Hada’s opinion about the caption system of the video is different from Edna’s. For Hada, the videos were very clear so she did not need to read the captions to understand them. According to Hada’s perception, the teacher used “very common words.” However, she recognizes that the caption tool may be useful “for a person who has, less, uh, less skills. Less listening skills. It would be good.”

For Berta watching the video lectures was sufficient for what she wanted to get from the course: “it's very, it's very clear. It's very to the point.” She described how much she enjoyed learning from a brainstorming strategy that the lecturer provided in one of her lectures: “it's a strategy of brainstorming, how to get from an idea to deconstruct and to what you really want to say.” Also, Berta’s preference to learn from the video lectures has to fit with her strategies of
learning while her son plays or sleeps. Videos are easy to pause and rewind as many times as needed, so Berta takes advantage of this benefit to keep engaged even when she is surrounded by external stimuli.

From the participants’ responses, this researcher understands that the use of video lectures and an English and Spanish captioning system depend on the participants’ learning experiences and needs.

**Readings.** Some participants agreed that the readings included in the course help them improve their understanding of the subject matter. Hada was the most positive about the reading material. During the interview, she claimed that she needed to be able to write better essays for her graduate program and implied that she felt weak in this skill. Her need was fulfilled to a great extent thanks to the readings. “[Readings] were helpful to know how to, how was their composition, like, introductory part, the body part.” The readings expanded her knowledge received from the video lectures and helped her understand more about the elements and the structure of an essay to improve her writing skills.

David believed that the course readings helped him expand his knowledge of the subject. He claimed: “The readings are pretty good. And so far I, I've found it very, very interesting.” David remembered that he read some articles in the course that he labeled as “critical readings.” During the interview he did not give specific examples about these articles, but made clear his preference for reading material that helps him develop critical thinking. The researcher believes that David’s enthusiasm for the readings is because of the gratification that he has received in past learning experiences as a student. He claimed that he has: “earned several scholarship in my Colombia. Several uh, uh, prize uh, in conference” meaning that he is a person who enjoys studying, reading and who uses his analytical skills to learn.
Edna said that the readings were “good” but her low tone of voice and energy when she mentioned this word implied more of an “ok” than “good”. As we continued our conversation, Edna mentioned: “Other times, again I think that the topic I don't very have an idea about this kind of, of topic and they are trying to explain or to develop and I don't continue.” As Edna has expressed before, she does not like to spend too much of her time in activities to which she is not committed. Therefore her need for “saving time” is reflected in the reading material that she chooses to actually read. Participants’ opinions about the reading material in EC1MOOC helps the researcher understand that the variety of reading material in the course is designed to fill the information gap and needs of diverse students.

**Writing assignments and peer review.** Although all participants recognized the importance of the writing assignments and the peer review tool, only one participant discussed submitting writing assignments and receiving peer review. At the time of the interview, David had completed four writing assignments. He explained the first writing assignment:

You have to write well how, how you see as a writer. That is the first assignment. And then you have to make a, you have to read a chapter of a book. And then you have to make a critical assignment. I mean you have to write about what is the main argument of the author.

David seems satisfied with the writing assignments. However, he is disappointed by the peer review system. He feels that instead of peer reviewing, students should receive feedback from a tutor, instructor or a more qualified person “because sometimes it's just somebody who actually is still learning English so the feedback is not that good.” The researcher believes that David’s comment indicates that he does not want to face an experience similar to the ESL volunteers system where the written papers that he submitted were poorly analyzed: “So, they
correct that thing [spelling], but not the whole thing of it. Not the composition or the, how it's structured.” David is aware of the high standard of proficiency he wants to reach, and wants criticism to help him reach that level.

Gael completed four of the course lessons before he dropped out. Although he did not specify how many writing and peer review assignments he participated in, whenever the researcher asked him which instructional components he worked on the most, he always said “reading and writing”. When Gael talked about his writing assignments, he struggled to express himself in English, as is evident in this example: “they, um, eh, asked about, you are writing about this, this topic, and this ‘topical’ because I have in write, write, writing.” The researcher inferred from this comment that Gael is trying to explain that the course asked students to write about different topics. When he highlights “I have in write, write, writing” the researcher deduced that Gael participated in more than one writing assignment during the time he was enrolled in the course, although he did not mention that he submitted any assignment to the peer review system.

Berta recognized the importance of the writing assignments: “It's top of the homework that you practice what you learn.” However, she did not submit any of the writing assignments to the peer review system: “I start doing my own, but I don't go out there and put it for someone else or I talk to someone else, and things like that. But I have it for my own.” As our conversation continued, she felt embarrassed for acknowledging her lack of interest in submitting her assignments to the peer review process. The researcher interprets her attitude and actions as meaning that Berta did not really work on the assignments. Instead, the researcher believes that Berta limited her participation to doing exercises or maybe taking notes, but that
she did not really work on any written assignment as she admitted in her last comment on the matter: “The more that I know that I haven't done a single one. I was like, ‘Oh, shit’ [laughing].”

Ana did not remember if she did any assignment or if she collaborated in the peer review system: “it's been a while since I've taken that class.” Later on, she justified her lack of participation in the assignments as follows: “Um, so unfortunately, I did the free version of it, so I don't, I don't know if we did the assignments. I'm a little rusty on how the free, like, doing it for free versus paying for the course is.” When the researcher explained that she could participate in all course activities whether she had the free or the paid version, she smiled with embarrassment and said that she was not aware of that: “No, I wasn't. I did not know you can actually do that [participate in assignments].” Although Ana claimed that she did not know about the possibility of participating in the course by doing the assignments or participating in the discussion forum, the hesitant way she chose her words and the low tone of voice that she used when she spoke on this occasion, make the researcher believe that Ana did not thoroughly explore the instructions and options of the course, and therefore, she only participated in the e-learning experiences that interested her.

**Discussion forums.** Luz enjoyed participating in the discussion forums and thinks that they are an important part of the instructional model:

Because when I'm not sure about the things that they are saying, previously I just look at the comments, and then I have, like, a kind of idea [...] I usually do because I think it's important to review what did you learn previously, and then what, what else the rest of the people learned. So maybe you need something important. And then when you post, and then you read the, uh, comments, now you can realize something that was missing in your paragraph or in your understanding. So yeah, it's important, the discussion.
Although Luz expressed positive thoughts about the discussion forums, she acknowledged feeling more comfortable when she has “a real interaction between the learners.” Therefore, the researcher thinks that Luz’s participation in the discussion forums could increase if she could participate in real-time discussions. Gael thinks that discussion forums are good for students to get involved in the topic and exchange ideas: “I think the, it’s good option because you need, um, because you, I can, on, “involucrar” (get involved) in the, on the students and intercam- ‘intercambiar ideas’ (exchange ideas).” However, Gael never participated in the discussion forums. Although he did not specify the reason why, the researcher inferred that his lack of participation could be attributed to the fact that Gael has expressed that his English skills are low. Taking part in the discussion forums require certain academic writing skills in English that Gael does not have. However, his response implies that at least he read some of the post on the forums and learned from them, although he did not participate directly.

Ana gave two reasons why she did not participate in the discussion forums: lack of time and her decision to take the free version of the course. However, as the interview evolved, she revealed that she is a person who likes to have personal communication with peers instead of online communication: “Uh, I guess you could say I'm more old school where, like, I really miss the concept of knocking on your neighbor's door and, like, talking to people [laughs]. Or, like, a phone call versus, like, a text message.” The researcher believes that Ana’s last remarks about the topic provided the intrinsic reasons why she was not an active participant in the discussion forums.

How EC1MOOC Has Benefited Students

Whether they finished the course or not, all participants agreed that it has benefited their professional career and moved them towards their educational goals. Gael underlined that this
course has helped him improve his reading and writing abilities. Finishing the course will give him the sense of reaching a goal: “Yo lo sentiría como una meta cumplida” (I would feel like it is a goal I accomplished). Ana thinks that the course helped her improve her writing skills; however, she recognizes that if she does not continue practicing, she will soon lose what she has gained: “I'm one of those people, you know, if you don't keep practicing, you kinda lose it, person […] I definitely say, in a way, I do feel better.”

Luz said that the course has helped her understand the way an essay should be structured and various citation techniques. She is interested in continuing to study through the course because she is aware that she will need the skills that are emphasized in the course in order to write essays when she starts her graduate program:

It's going to be a Master's Degree; it's not like a [sic] Undergraduate or any kind of a school. It's just Master's and we are talking about huge difference, a huge difference between the writing assessments that I used to have in the university, and now in the Master's.

The comments of the participants are unanimous that the course has provided them academic and instructional tools to improve their writing skills, regardless of whether they finished the course or not.

**Students’ Suggestions To Improve EC1MOOC**

The participants shared suggestions on ways to improve the EC1MOOC instructional design based on their own experience and needs. A summary of the suggestions is in table 5.

Table 5
**Summary of suggestions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructor-Student Feedback</td>
<td>Gael</td>
<td>Use Skype for real time communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Student Feedback</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Have a pool of English teachers, tutors, or teacher assistants who provide comments in the peer review assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Include tutors for the peer review assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>Include student-instructor communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Writing Assignments</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Determine the actual English level of each student, so each student can receive an assignment according to his/her real level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edna</td>
<td>Include real-life examples, so student can learn how to apply the learning material in real-life situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Include deadlines for the writing assignments so students can feel pressure to finish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Quiz scores should count towards the final grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar tool</td>
<td>Hada</td>
<td>Determine the most common grammar mistakes that Hispanics make in written assignments. Visualizing those mistakes may help other Hispanics not to make the same mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berta</td>
<td>Include English grammar sections divided by proficiency levels to help beginning, intermediate and advanced English language learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion.** EC1MOOC is designed to help students improve their written academic skills through different instructional tools such as video lectures, readings, writing assignments and peer review, and discussion forums. A meaningful finding was that participants were more interested in learning from the video lectures and readings and less involved in participating in the assignments directly designed to help them improve their academic writing skills such as writing short essays. Additionally, the peer review system was criticized as a form of self-regulation and audit process because the same people who are taking the course are participating in the peer reviews and in the discontented assessment of one research participant it is undertaken by students whose English academic skills may not be similar but inferior to the student who they will evaluate. This researcher saw that the participants were keenly aware of
their own English language challenges, and wanted to improve their skills, not have some kind of social interaction with writing peers. Finally, despite the fact that most of the students were not active participants in the writing assignments, all agreed that the course has helped them improve their writing academic skills to a certain degree.

Conclusion

Chapter four explored participants’ learning experiences in English Composition 1 MOOC (EC1MOOC) at Duke University. The research question that informed the interviews was: How do adult Hispanics who have high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs? The analysis of the interviews yielded four superordinate themes and fifteen sub-themes that described how participants made sense of 1) past learning experiences, 2) their beliefs about how their Hispanic background has nurtured their learning skills, 3) the events that have influenced their academic development and 4) their application of the EC1MOOC learning experience in real life.

The analysis of the first superordinate theme indicated that participants differed about self-regulated learning. Whereas some participants claimed their preference to monitor and control their learning practices, others expressed that it was difficult to achieve that self-discipline. Students who expressed their preference toward self-regulation were consistent with their preference to have a more individualistic approach for learning. On the other hand, not all participants who expressed their preference for a collectivist approach expressed difficulty when facing self-regulated activities. Additionally, all participants agreed that they have developed specific strategies in order to continue their education in their adult life, and the majority of them
agreed that tutoring services could fill in the gaps of the teaching experience that informal learning does not offer.

The analysis of the second overarching theme unveiled that participants’ Hispanic heritage and family positively impacted their academic and professional decisions. Participants revealed that their families influenced their mental and emotional states. Their families provided reassurance that helped participants build self-confidence and motivation. Through family get-togethers and cultural rituals and events, they learned to build social skills and resilience. One participant learned to cope with the discrimination that members of the Hispanic community face every day in the United States.

Most participants had the opportunity to study both in their country of origin and in the United States so they have a broadened perspective of the pros and cons of both educational systems. Some of the educational flaws in their countries of origin found in this analysis point towards: lack of developing critical reasoning in students, curricula gaps, lack of teaching interest and academic preparation in faculty, and gender discrimination. Yet, the analysis of their responses indicated that those flaws helped participants built strategies to be successful students in the United States.

The analysis of the third overarching theme unveiled that goals, self-efficacy or emotional arousals did not determine participants’ decision to finish the course. Time management seems to be the main factor that influenced participants’ decision to drop out the course or to study the course at a slower pace than the course requires. The general consensus among participants was that they could not include ECIMOOC in their busy schedules no matter how beneficial they thought the course was for their academic and professional goals.
Finally, the analysis of the fourth overarching theme brought to light the finding that although the course aims to improve the academic writing skills of participants, they seemed more interested in learning from the video lectures and readings rather than participating in activities that involved writing, such as writing assignments, peer review and discussion forums. Particularly significant was the discovery that participants who claimed to have a preference for a collectivist approach to learning--which involves learning from others--were not active participants in the discussion forums. The analysis unveiled that students prefer a more personal one-to-one interaction between students rather than maintaining the communication that discussion forums entail. Additionally, the peer review system was criticized as an audit process. One student revealed that the lack of interest in participating in the peer review process stemmed from the recognition that peer reviewers are the same students who are in the course and it is reasonable to assume that they may not have the knowledge to provide valuable and constructive academic information in their remarks.

Although most of the students are not actively participating in the course, only a few decided to drop out. They all agreed that the course has helped them improve their writing skills and some intend to continue with the course when time permits.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. Self-efficacy learning experience is an area of investigation that needs further analysis and a focus on diverse learners is needed (Chung, 2015). This study responds to those needs and focuses on the experience of adult Hispanic learners.

The methodology used for this study was Smith’s (2014) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This methodology best responded to the need of this study that aimed to understand the personal lived experiences of the Hispanics adults in their particular cultural and historical context expressed in their own voices (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA methodology and Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory informed the research design of this study. Four themes were identified: 1) prior learning experiences that shaped students’ academic development, 2) students’ cultural background, 3) events that influence students’ academic performance, and 4) English composition I MOOC learning experiences.

This chapter discusses each of these themes as it relates to the existing literature to determine how the themes’ findings support and expand or refute previous research. Subsequently, a discussion of the implications of these findings will be presented that includes recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research.

**Prior Learning Experiences That Shaped Students’ Academic Development**

This first finding of the study uses the lens of Bandura’s (1997) enactive mastery experiences to understand how participants’ prior successful learning experiences influenced their academic growth and contributed to the development of their self-efficacy beliefs. Although
none of the participants narrated a specific experience when explaining how they achieved academic success in dealing with a particular task, they all conveyed that the sum of experiences derived from past learning experiences contributed to the development of their self-efficacy beliefs—that in turn—supported their academic achievement.

Participants’ prior academic successes were linked to a particular learning approach. The collectivist approach was identified as the most suitable and the individualistic approach less reported. Those participants whose prior learning experiences were connected with a collectivist approach expressed that their Latin American culture and background influenced their social skills and learning preferences. This finding was consistent with participants who received K-20 in their country of origin and with those who continued high school and college in the United States. Testimonies revealed that immediate, face-to-face social interaction with peers and faculty was an important factor for participants in their efforts to be successful in their academic endeavors. Receiving immediate feedback, getting involved in a collaborative learning environment, and comparing and evaluating their learning process with their peers helped them use better judgment with respect to their efforts, gain confidence when facing academic challenges and build self-efficacy beliefs that in turn, kept them motivated and engaged. These findings are consistent with the works of Bandura (1977); Stajkovic & Luthans (2002); Luszczynska & Schwarzer (2005) with respect to self-efficacy, and with the works of Cox et al. (1991); Vandelo and Cohen (1991); Gudykuns (1998); Bandura (2002b) and Alders (2011) in their studies of the collectivist approach and culture. Additionally, for those participants who moved to the United States, social interaction helped them to transition easily to their new country and school environment by claiming social presence in both at school and in the society, and by developing help-seeking skills with tutors and faculty that helped them reduce negative
psychological arousal such as stress and anxiety. This in turn strengthened their self-efficacy beliefs. It is important to notice that those who did not have a positive experience with tutoring services in the past were still confident that those services could help them achieve their academic goals in the future. These findings are consistent with Usher & Pajares (2008); Jabbarifar (2011); and van Dinther et al. (2011) who claim that help-seeking skills are associated with strong self-efficacy beliefs, and with the work of Wallace (2003), and Thomas, Hebert, and Teras (2014) who claim that social presence stimulates learning and builds satisfaction and camaraderie.

With respect to consideration of the learning environment, a significant finding was that participants experienced successful learning experiences in physical environments such as classrooms because they represented a safe space where participants developed self-efficacy beliefs from each other’s learning skills and academic experiences. When the learning environment was essentially nondescript and determined by each individual, as in e-learning, participants showed less self-regulating and personal agency skills and their academic achievement changed. Testimonies revealed that the lack of proximate peers and instructors’ interaction and a collaborative environment in e-learning made them feel isolated. This finding is consistent with the work of Wallace (2003), and Thomas, Hebert and Teras (2014), and advances the work of Shen at al. (2013) who claim that those who feel isolation in an e-learning environment tend to have low self-efficacy. Participants who preferred a more collectivist approach had a high level of self-efficacy; yet, cultural conducts influenced their isolating feeling and behavior.

Having just discussed the findings about the participants’ connection between the collectivist approach and the construct of self-efficacy let us now turn our attention to those
participants who preferred a more individualistic approach to learning. These participants showed high self-regulating and self-efficacy skills and a preference for an e-learning environment where they could regulate their learning process and rely less on activities that involve collaborative learning. Testimonies revealed that this preference was shaped by the United States individualistic academic instruction methodology that they experienced as college students. This finding illuminates the work of Bandura (2002b) who states that schools in the United States promote a more individualistic culture.

While it is true that e-learning demands strong self-regulation skills it does not mean that participants who favored brick-and-mortar environments lack these skills. On the contrary, all participants in this study developed self-regulating skills that have helped them elaborate strategies to take control of their academic demands. For example, participants who claimed that they did not feel comfortable in e-learning environments revealed that their self-regulatory skills helped them develop e-learning strategies to cope with the e-learning requirements. Also, participants’ self-regulating skills helped them turn negative, challenging and disadvantaging situations into positive scenarios. Additionally, participants revealed the important role that their self-efficacy beliefs and family played in this process. These experienced range from the physical—a hearing problem, to racism, language barriers and work challenges.

Regardless of what learning approached participants favored, findings showed that participants’ academic achievements were supported by their self-efficacy believes. This finding was consistent with Banduras (2002b) who claimed that “a high sense of personal efficacy is just as important to group-directedness as to self-directedness” (p. 273) and with Orange and Ramalho’s (2013) research on Hispanic adolescents.
In summary, this first finding reveals that participants’ past learning experiences in institutions helped them develop self-efficacy beliefs, self-regulating skills and help-seeking skills that in turn helped them build strategies that supported their academic achievements. A participant’s collectivist or individualist learning approach was influenced by the predominant culture from which teaching and instruction was designed showing a difference in preferences of those who received their education from a Hispanic cultural perspective from those who received their education based on U.S. academic models. Most of the findings were consistent with the existing literature and illuminate and advance the imperative that research focus on the growing and diversifying ways that e-learning is configured and delivered. It also advances the need to consider how cultural conducts influence behaviors in MOOCs.

**Cultural Background**

This second finding is focused on participants’ cultural background. Smith and Ayers (2006) claim that culture is the sum of the experiences, values, customs, beliefs and behaviors shared by a society that influence individuals’ attitudes. Participants in this study were born and raised in different Latin American countries including Cuba, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico, as well as the United States. Their country of origin and its language and culture, along with ongoing customs, attitudes and traditions at home made them identify as members of the Hispanic community. Bandura (2002b) claimed that Hispanics are a diverse group; yet, it is a group that “imposes homogeneity on intra-ethnic diversity” (p.275).

Participants’ testimonies provided evidence that their Hispanic family, social environment and cultural heritage influenced their self-efficacy beliefs. Female participants were more likely to speak about their cultural background than males. According to their narratives, they learned traditions, values and attitudes in their home country that strengthened the well-
being of their families, influenced personality, ethnic identity, academic achievement and self-efficacy. This finding was similar to that of participants who were born in the United States whose parents are of Latin American origin. These participants revealed that their parents passed on their cultural background and family values to them. Significant transfers include respect for elders, family unity and loyalty, religion, and gender roles. Cultural activities and constant family gatherings at home were the main sites of these exchanges. Participants revealed that those events contributed to their development of social skills, enriched their view of the world, and helped them develop strong ethnic and racial identity that helped them build self-confidence and cope with negative situations and attitudes such as racism and xenophobia. This is consistent with the work of Bandura (2002b); Yosso (2005); Gushue (2006); Smith and Ayers (2006); Ojeda, et al. (2012); De Freitas and Bravo, Jr., (2012); Orange and Ramalho, (2013); Phan (2013); Kelley, et al. (2015); and Mejia-Smith and Gushue (2017) who argue that ethnic identity influences Hispanic self-efficacy.

Females who moved to the United States to continue their graduate education agreed that without the support that they received from their families, they would have not been able to face the challenges that came with studying abroad. Some of them highlighted the verbal encouragement that they received from their parents and other family members. This verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1989b; 1994) helped them improve their own assessments of their own competences and influenced their career choice and strengthened the determination they brought to the challenges that awaited them. According to their testimonies, family verbal bolstering became an inner voice of strength and motivation when they faced academic demands. This finding supports Bandura’s (1989b; 1994) research about the construct of self-efficacy through verbal persuasion.
However, not all Hispanic female participants who moved abroad to continue their graduate education showed high self-efficacy beliefs. Some participants revealed that past learning experiences they encountered while studying college in their country of origin lowered their self-efficacy beliefs. Gender-role stereotypes and academic expectations seemed to be instrumental in lowering their sense of self-efficacy. For example, testimonies revealed that when participants started their graduate program in the United States their own biases constructed in their country of origin made them believe that they were going to be looked down due to their gender or their nationality. These beliefs caused negative psychological arousal (Bandura, 1997) such as stress and anxiety that weakened their attitudes and behaviors when facing the requirements of their new life challenges in the United States. However, the day-to-day experiences on campus reduced the negative psychological arousals as they experienced respect from their peers and faculty. The positive learning experiences through their connections and communication with peers and faculty, and their new college environment helped participants realize that their low self-efficacy beliefs were the result of their own cultural biases. Once participants recognized their internalized cultural biases they were able to demystify them and began to experience a more realistic view of their strengths and weaknesses that supported their self-efficacy beliefs. This advanced the work of Stajkovic and Luthans (2002) who observed that self-efficacy expectation is a subjective perception rather than an objective reality.

Finally, participants who had the opportunity to receive post-college education in a country different than their country of origin agreed that their cultural background influenced their learning behavior toward schooling and toward their relationships with peers and faculty. Most importantly, they learned that contact with other cultures positively impacted their learning experiences. Participants recognized that their social skills, taught and valued in their cultural
background, were assets that helped them navigate different educational systems. They also learned that having the experience of studying in different countries enriched their learning skills and supported self-regulation that benefitted their own learning experience.

In summary, participants’ Hispanic background and family influenced their self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievements. Similarities were found in participants who were born and raised in a Latin American country and those who were born in the United States whose parents identify themselves as Hispanics. Female participants were more likely to share their cultural background and family experience than male participants. Banduras’ verbal persuasion and psychological states were explored from participant’s responses. Those participants who received verbal persuasion from their families showed high levels of self-efficacy. These findings do not contradict information in the literature review, and the literature review provides a good starting point for these issues. Additionally, this study sheds light on the need for more in-depth and differentiated research about the growing population in the United States of who falls under the giant umbrella of “Hispanics”, and the most effective way to raise their education levels through e-learning in general and MOOCs in particular.

In some cases, participants’ own biases contributed to the lowering of their self-efficacy beliefs. Those who experienced negative psychological arousals showed low self-efficacy beliefs due to past learning experiences in their country of origin. Their self-efficacy beliefs became stronger as they challenged and diffused the biases of others, as well as their own. This finding expands the knowledge about the connection existing in the construct of self-efficacy beliefs and one’s gender and ethnical biases.

Experiences and Attitudes that Influence Students’ Academic Performance
This third finding explored the relation between EC1MOOC participants and Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory including the four sources of information: enactive mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states. This section also analyses participants’ goals, motivations and engagement, and how these factors influenced their participation as audit students in the EC1MOOC.

Participants’ self-efficacy beliefs influenced their decisions to enroll in EC1MOOC. Enactive mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997) gave them evidence of their own technological and English academic skills that in turn informed them of how efficacious they could expect to be in the course before they decided to enroll. It is significant that those participants who expressed that e-learning was their less favorite learning environment, as well as those participants who were hesitant about their English academic skills were optimistic about the learning possibilities that the course offered. They also believed that they could fulfill the course requirements. These findings were consistent with Shunk (1991) and Shea and Bidjerano’s (2011) studies about students evaluating their own self-efficacy beliefs before starting a new learning experience and pondering the possible results as well as their own competences. It expands and supports former studies while introducing new populations and learning modalities.

It should be noted that those participants who struggled at the beginning of the course due to its academic requirements gained confidence as the course progressed, either because the first assignment was the instrument to evaluate possible academic demands and success, or because they started to implement academic strategies, namely looking for English academic terminology and grammar in books or on the Internet, as the course progressed. This finding illuminates Bandura and Locke’s (2003) study about the capacity of a person to become a self-regulator agent of change and adaptation with specific situations and strategies.
Goals and Motivations

All participants had a specific goal to achieve when they decided to enroll in EC1MOOC. The two main goals that participants hoped to attain were refining English academic skills for academic purposes and improving English communication skills to gain access to better job positions. Hodges (2008) claims that goals can be classified as proximal and distal. Both participants, those who are enrolled or want to enroll in a Masters program and need to refine their English academic writing, and those whose day-to-day job challenges demand the improvement of their English skills to boost their careers admitted that their goals are more distal and only attainable through much work. While this echoed Hodges’ (2008) research about distal goals, this study somewhat problematizes the clear distinction between proximal and distal goals as in the real lives of participants, proximal and distal goals overlap.

Enrolling in EC1MOOC was a means to accomplish those goals, but completing the course was not a goal in itself. Therefore, all participants registered in EC1MOOC as auditing students with the sole purpose of gaining academic and practical knowledge. Auditing the course influenced their level of engagement and motivation in the course but did not have a negative effect in their self-efficacy beliefs. Xiong, et al. (2015) classified motivation in two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic and claimed those motivations determine students’ course participation and accomplishment. Testimonies revealed that participants’ intrinsic motivations impacted their decisions on what course assignments to work on or what instructional tools they found more rewarding according to their learning needs. For example, some of the participants who were enrolled in graduate programs revealed that just the idea of completing EC1MOOC writing or readings assignments represented an intrinsic motivation. Yet, this incentive diminished as they started to face the challenges and demands of their graduate programs. Similarly, participants
whose internal reward was to polish their English language skills to improve their day-to-day job assignments also diminished their participation in the course as their daily professional demands increased. These findings supported Xiong et al.’s (2015) conclusions that intrinsic motivations in MOOC students are not enough to complete a MOOC. Also, these findings were consistent with Bandura’s (1982) claim about the importance of setting sub goals to reinvigorate motivations when challenges appear, and with Clow’s (2015) findings about the relation between MOOC auditing students and course completion.

A significant difference in participants’ behavior was revealed in those who, despite their decision to enroll in the course for auditing purposes, had the intention to finish it. For those participants, the course became a goal itself; yet, they did not expect to gain any external recognition, namely a MOOC certificate, upon completion. Those participants who finished the course at the time of the interview or whose purpose was to finish it within the next months revealed high levels of motivation, engagement and commitment that—despite job and family responsibilities—supported their learning experience. This finding illuminates the work of Bandura (2002b); Usher and Pajares, (2008); and Shea and Bidjerano, (2010) about students’ engagement, motivation and performance through bringing diverse cultural and linguistic variables into the conversation.

**Vicarious Experiences and Verbal Persuasion**

Most of the participants agreed that family members and figures of respect such as former bosses, and peers, acted as role models that influenced their academic decisions. Bandura (1997) explained that the vicarious experiences and verbal persuasions that participants experienced and observed from their role models served as important sources of information that helped them build self-efficacy and influenced their academic decisions and behaviors.
Insights that participants gained from vicarious experiences covered a wide range of circumstances and aspirations. They include the desire to earn a graduate degree abroad as a way to imitate a former boss’s professional experience, studying the same professional career that a father was unable to finish when he was young due to economic difficulties and, developing fortitude when facing challenging situations as a way to emulate a mother’s tenacity and determination to build a better life when moving to the United States.

Role models’ verbal persuasion was an important source of information that participants were able to use to build self-efficacy. Participants’ testimonies highlighted the decisive role that the positive opinions and beliefs that they received from parents or family members played in influencing their academic decisions. Self-confidence and academic persistence were built through those verbal reinforcements that acted as determinants in their pursuit of academic achievement. Vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion as related in participants’ testimonies supported the work of Bandura (1989b); Bandura (1994); Bandura (1997); Hodges (2008); Moos and Azevedo (2009); Jabbarifar (2011); and DeFreitas and Bravo (2012).

Although not all participants in this study claimed receiving the influence of a role model for their academic or professional decisions, those participants who did supported Bandura’s (1994) findings about the influence that role models have in the formation of identity. While the findings of the study did not directly contradict findings of previous research, it suggested a reexamination of the inferences of words that include role model and family members, as extended and blended families, as well as families who live in more than one country bring new opportunities and challenges to research.

**Psychological States**
All participants in this study agreed that experiencing any kind of negative emotion as a result of an academic experiences such as nervousness, anxiety, or stress alter their behavior and performance. Yet, evidence revealed that participants have developed problem-solving skills and self-regulating skills that serve as negative emotional relievers that in turn help them evaluate their competences, find solutions to the obstacles they encounter in their learning experiences and guide them toward achieving their academic goals. This finding supports the research of Bandura (1997); Usher and Pajares (2008), and Phan (2013) regarding the influence of positive and negative psychological states on academic performances. While it is slowly becoming more acceptable to discuss mental health issues, and there is less of a stigma in mental illness in the United States, this is not always the case in other countries and cultures and this reticence is also worthy of further study.

Testimonies revealed that few participants experienced stress or anxiety as a direct result of the academic demands of EC1MOOC. Those who did agreed that these negative emotional experiences made them reconsider their participation in the course with mixed feelings about whether they should continue or drop out. Evidence revealed that by reacting positively to the course demands, participants could implement a set of strategies—mostly delving into English grammar concepts in books, and in English as a second language grammar online resources that helped them find solutions to the EC1MOOC challenges. The better the results they achieved from their strategies, the more self-confidence they gained. This supports Bandura’s (1997) research about the relation between negative psychological states and academic achievement.

It is important to mention that although stressful situations during the EC1MOOC experience had participants considering whether or not to drop out, they all agreed that their final decision of dropping out of the course was the result of other external factors such as personal
and life demands, or diminishing engagement, rather than a direct result from the negative emotional states that they experienced at the beginning of the course.

**Engagement and Time Management**

Pursuel et al. (2016) and Walji et al. (2016) claim that the concept of engagement includes, among other variables, the allocation of time invested in accomplishing a project. Walji et al. (2016) emphasize that the greater the level of engagement, the deeper the commitment. Most participants’ testimonies revealed that their engagement in the course was low; therefore, their effort and commitment easily weakened when academic, professional and social responsibilities impinged on the time that they allocated for studying EC1MOOC. Evidence revealed a linked between auditing the course, engagement, and time management skills. This very particular finding illuminates previous research. All participants enrolled in the course as auditing students. As such, they could decide which assignments to work on and what instructional tools to use, namely readings, videos, discussion forums, etc. Auditing the course also gave them flexibility in their study time decisions including when and how many hours to allocate to the course. However, this flexibility seems to have had a negative effect on their study time. Although the course includes due dates for assignments, and participation in discussion forums, these due dates only apply to students who want to receive a certificate at the end of the course. Auditing students can observe those due dates, but it is optional.

Most of the participants who decided to drop out of the course or who had not being able to finish the course at the time of this study, did not know how to manage that flexibility of time. Some of those who engaged at the beginning of the course decreased their engaging attitude as their academic, professional or social responsibilities demanded their attention. These findings
support Kizilcec, et al.’s (2013) research about the different classification of MOOC learners according to their level of engagement.

Those participants, who audited all or most of the course, took advantage of the flexibility of participating in assignments and using instructional tools and knew how to allocate the necessary time to stay engaged and motivated regardless of other personal obligations. This finding advances new discussions about how to motivate auditing MOOC students to include the commitment to finish the course through intrinsic motivation.

In summary, participants’ decisions to enroll in EC1MOOC were influenced by their enactive mastery experiences that informed them how successful they could be were they to take the course, and also by specific academic or professional goals. Many of those goals were influenced by the vicarious experiences or verbal persuasions that they received from a role model in the past. The emergence of negative emotional states such as stress during the course did not influence participants’ decision to drop out of the course. Rather, their role as auditing students influenced their decline of commitment and engagement in the course that in turn, weakened their interest, and negatively influenced their decisions about time allocation for the course. Findings advance new discussions about MOOC auditing students and MOOC students’ intrinsic motivation and goals, and points to the need for more culturally grounded research to serve and better understand Hispanic populations.

**English Composition I MOOC Learning Experience**

Chapter two examined the two main classifications of MOOCs: cMOOCs and xMOOCs. Very briefly, cMOOCs encourage a learner-centered pedagogy where socialization is fundamental to share and construct new knowledge through social media platforms. xMOOCs
are more instructor-centered; hence, it is expected that instructors deliver knowledge through videos, readings, and other online pedagogical tools, but not necessarily through social interaction. English Composition I MOOC (EC1MOOC) rests in the xMOOC category. This fourth finding of the study analyzed the learning experience of participants through the various EC1MOOC instructional components.

**Video Lectures**

Video lectures were the leading instructional components of the course. Findings revealed that participants who favored a more immediate face-to-face communication with lecturers mentioned that the use of video lectures significantly satisfied their need to get to know the lecturer. The video gave them the opportunity to see the lecturer’s expressions, and listen to her tone of voice, that contributed to building trust. However, the participants’ experiences support Hodges (2016) that the video lecture did not offer a vicarious experience since they did not identify with the lecturer ethnically nor culturally.

Additionally, video lectures favored the need of those students who prefer to control both the way they receive information and knowledge, and the allocation of time for their studies. Videos’ rewind and fast-forward capabilities gave participants the opportunity to locate information needed in an agile way. Moreover, testimonies revealed that the use of the English and Spanish captioning tool supported those students whose time was constrained by other personal or professional obligations to locate information in a timely manner. Captioning software was also identified as a good tool that can benefit English Language learners who struggle to understand the video lectures. This information supports Bandura and Lock’s (2013) findings about self-regulation.
Discussion Forums

Testimonies revealed a disassociation between participants’ cultural background and discussion forums. As mentioned in the cultural background section, the Hispanic culture favors social interaction. However, very few participants took part in the discussion forums. Testimonies revealed that those participants who favored a more face-to-face learning approach were more reluctant to use the discussion forums due to its asynchronous characteristic. These participants prefer real-time discussion forums where participants could interact live.

Other factors that influenced participants’ lack of engagement with the forums range from low self-efficacy beliefs in their writing skills, their own biases about peers’ opinions and knowledge about the topic discussed, and the time-consuming nature of discussion forums. These findings support Hodges (2016); and Willis III et al. (2013) research about the need to design discussion forums to create in participants the need to contribute. They also advance the research of Shet et al. s’ (2013) research that suggest monitoring social interaction, and with Wallace (2003) and Thomas, et al. (2014) with respect to building discussion forums to promote social presence and camaraderie.

Peer Review

Participants who submitted their essays to be graded by other peers revealed that they did not feel comfortable with having a peer reviewing their work and providing feedback. The main reason for this reluctance was that participants felt that peers did not have the knowledge to review and grade the assigned essays. Participants believed that experts such as teachers or TA’s should be in charge of reviewing and grading their written assignments. Those participants, who began by submitting their essays to the peer review system, showed a decrease in their
participation due to those reasons mentioned. Although Hodges (2016) suggests that vicarious experiences could be built through peer reviewing, the learners’ experiences in this study showed a failure in this effort. To that extent in practice, the finding contradicts Hodges’ suggestions.

**Writing Assignments**

A significant finding was that even though the EC1MOOC is designed to teach students to write academic essays, very few students acknowledged that they actually did the writing assignments, even though all participants agreed that the writing assignments were a must do. However, when the researcher asked participants the reason for their lack of participation, the responses were vague, ranging from lacking of time, or lack of interest, to confusion about what assignments to participate in as an audit student. This last explanation revealed the importance of improving the way to provide course instructions with respect to specific assignments to students. It also suggests that more analysis is needed to determine and understand the disparity between what participants knew must happen and what they actually did.

**Reading Material**

Participants expressed mixed opinions about the reading material. Participants who favored them believed that the readings were a good way to scaffold the course information in order to gain content knowledge. They also believed that some of the material was challenging, and helped them develop critical thinking. Participants who did not favor some of the readings explained that they felt that sometimes the reading material was very specialized and beyond their interest. This finding supports Bandura and Locke’s (2003) findings about self-regulation.

All participants agreed that EC1MOOC helped them fill some of the gaps that they had in writing English compositions. They also shared their views about the EC1MOOC instructional
components. They perceived that the course might be of more benefit to the Hispanic community if the course included: instructor-student feedback, assignments that consider students’ English level of proficiency, grammar tools and the inclusion of quiz scores in figuring the final grade.

In summary, EC1MOOC is classified as an xMOOC. Students explored their learning experience using different instructional components. All participants felt comfortable learning from the video lectures. Videos helped participants to apply their self-regulating skills, but they did not offer vicarious experiences. Additionally, findings revealed that, in the participants’ opinion, discussion forums and peer review were not suitable for their learning experience. Reasons ranged from low self-efficacy beliefs in their writing skills, to biases, to the fact that they were very time-consuming. A significant finding was that most of the participants did not engage in the writing assignments due to lack of time, interest or confusion. Participants were selective of the reading material they actually paid attention to, and the quizzes of the course were of less importance. These findings brought to the spotlight the need of research about Bandura’s self-efficacy four sources of information and their application in MOOCs’ pedagogical components. In general, the findings of this research support and illuminate the existing literature. The critical concern is that there are still needs of a more focused and culturally explicit research constructed and executed in culturally sensitive ways. Therefore, it will be important to look at these findings as a whole, to develop experiences that better fit the needs of the participants and the cultures they represent.

Conclusion

The research question that informed this qualitative study was: “How do adult Hispanics who have a high school degree or some college preparation describe their self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences and skills with respect to their participation in MOOCs?” The
combination of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and Bandura’s self-efficacy theory guided the exploration of the participants’ experiences and the research analysis of the study.

All four findings were supported by the literature review. Analysis of this study confirmed that participants’ decision in enrolling in EC1MOOC was informed by their self-efficacy beliefs that in turn were developed by Bandura’s four sources of information: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological states. These self-efficacy beliefs helped them gain confidence in the pursuit of their academic goals in past academic experiences, that in turn, served as references to evaluate their learning performance in EC1MOOC before they enrolled. Although their own evaluation of their academic and technological skills gave them confidence in their capacity to participate in the course, their decision to enroll as audit students was one factor that affected participants’ persistence and engagement in the course.

Registering as auditing students meant that none of the participants intended to comply with all the requirements with respect to the assignments of the course, or get a certificate of accomplishment. Instead, all participants wanted to benefit from the academic knowledge that the course offered by deciding what educational tools to use and what assignments to participate in. The course was not a goal itself; it was a means to achieve a greater goal—namely academic or professional advancement. Therefore, participants showed different levels of motivation and engagement along the course according to their interests and needs. Their motivation and engagement also diminished when participants struggled to manage the time allocated to the course when they faced personal and academic demands.
Weakness in their time management abilities acted against participants’ self-efficacy beliefs. Most of the participants could not develop strategies that helped them overcome the exigencies of other personal activities, so interrupting their participation in the course or dropping out, were general attitudes found among the participants. Yet, the reasons expressed by those who, despite other personal demands, continued in the course were that they felt motivated to continue learning from the MOOC and decided to take the most out of it.

Furthermore, cultural background influenced participants EC1MOOC learning performances and experiences. Most of the participants’ learning preferences favored a more personal interaction with peers and instructors. Since participants found no face-to-face communication with peers and lecturer, and the only communication channel that they found were the discussion forums that do not provide real-life communication, they felt discouraged from using this communication tool and most of them avoided participating. Finally, this analysis found that participants’ own biases about their own cultural, academic and gender roles affected their self-efficacy beliefs. Yet, the analysis also showed that by controlling biases, participants could improve their self-efficacy beliefs. The next section offers recommendations for practice that are intended to support MOOC designers and Institutions in the including of Hispanic learning needs according to their culture and self-efficacy beliefs, and reinforcing Hispanics’ motivation and engagement as part of the MOOC designers’ goals.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The analysis of this study expands the recommendations of Bandura (1997); Dick, Carey and Carey (2005); Hodges (2016); and Jackson (2002) regarding the inclusion of Bandura’s four sources of information in e-learning experiences, and formulates new recommendations for practice in EC1MOOC in particular, and MOOCs in general. The recommendations—that
include the needs of the Hispanic community enrolled in MOOCs—are divided in four specific areas: a) designing MOOCs considering Bandura’s self-efficacy four sources of information, b) supporting audit students, c) enhancing time management skills, and d) implementing MOOC study groups.

**Designing MOOCs considering Bandura’s self-efficacy four sources of information.** Recommendations to improve self-efficacy four sources of information in a MOOC are listed below:

- **Enactive mastery experiences.** Carey and Carey (2005) recommended the designing of e-learning experiences start with low-level skill activities and progressively increase the complexity in small portions of academic knowledge and concepts, so students can experience success in their e-learning experience from the beginning. This study agreed with this research and includes recommendations to use gamified experiences, such as badges that serve as rewards to recognize students’ improvement in their skills when they pass the quizzes, or after participating in peer review assignments.

- **Vicarious experience.** Hodges (2016) claimed that the use of Pedagogical Agents for Learning (PALs) that simulate a tutoring experience could enhance students’ vicarious experiences. Also, Hodges (2016) argued that discussion forums could enhance students’ vicarious experience as they learn from peers’ success along the course. However, EC1MOOC showed that not all Hispanic students felt comfortable participating in discussion forums. This study showed participants’ need to a more one-to-one approach. Therefore, it is recommended that EC1MOOC in particular, and MOOCs in general, include and reinforce the use of live chats and Google Hangouts with Hispanic students who were successful in the course(s) in the past. These students might become “MOOCs
motivators” who could share their experiences and strategies along the course. MOOCs providers could offer incentives such as scholarships for their certificate programs to those interested in participating as “MOOC motivators.”

- **Verbal persuasion.** Jackson (2002) suggests using e-mail notes, motivational messages, and audio feedback to elevate participants’ self-confidence along a course but this may not be enough for the Hispanic community. This study recommends enhancing the figure of “MOOCs motivators” proposed above by including the participation of lecturers or TAs through online communication platforms such as Google Hangouts, Skype or other platform that suits the learner’s experience. When EC1MOOC was first launched, the course included Google Hangouts with 5 to 10 students to analyze their work with the lecturer and peers. EC1MOOC now is self-paced, meaning that immediate one-to-one communication with participants is not offered. The recommendation of this study is that MOOCs providers adjust the courses to the students’ needs and to that end, hire lecturers, TA’s, and tutors to help students from different cultures such as Hispanics to understand the content of the course. Additionally, verbal persuasion could improve also by reinforcing social interaction through social media such as Facebook, or twitter groups administered by bilingual Hispanic learners who have successfully finished the course.

- **Psychological state.** Analysis of this study agreed with Bandura’s (1977) recommendations about avoiding the inclusion of complex assignments at the beginning of the course to prevent students’ negative emotional reactions. Following the participants’ own suggestions, this study recommends the inclusion of additional material in the course, such as English grammar sections divided by English proficiency levels, to help students to find all the information needed in the course and avoid the stress caused
by leaving the course in order to look for grammar material on the web or other academic resources.

**Supporting auditing students.** A large number of EC1MOOC students registered as audit students. Some of the audit participants in this study were confused about the extent that they could participate in the activities and assignments of the course, because they were auditors. This study recommends sending introductory “welcoming” videos to all new students personal e-mails explaining their participation role along the course and other concerns that students may have before starting the course.

**Enhancing time management strategies.** Time management was linked to motivation and engagement in this study. Therefore, it is recommended to include time management strategies in MOOCs through vicarious experiences or verbal persuasion to help students to keep engaged in the courses. These strategies could be carried out by including motivational videos from former Hispanic success students who share their own strategies on managing time and personal obligations along the course. Also, it is recommended that students receive emails that offer easy and accessible reading material about time management, and follow-up personalized e-mails to those students who stopped their weekly participation.

**Publishing and conferences.** Findings of this research may be published in e-learning journals and presented in different conferences such as Open edX Conference 2019, The Open Educational Global Conference 2019, or the MOOC-Maker Conference 2019.

**Implementation of the findings.** EC1MOOC was one of the first MOOCs that Duke University launched in 2013. Since its inception, the Institution has explored modifications to the course to make it more appealing to the users. The support that this researcher received from
the Learning Innovation department of Duke University to conduct the interviews made possible this research. It also confirms their interest in designing and conducting new research that helps them improve EC1MOOC and other MOOCs. This researcher is committed to sharing these findings with the Institution to provide relevant information that could guide them to improve EC1MOOC and create new MOOCs. Their commitment to serving their Hispanic students will be well served by this research.

Also, these findings will be shared with the Distance Education Department at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM). This researcher exchanged e-mails with the department head to inform her of the project and she expressed her interest in reading the findings. UNAM serves thousands of Hispanic students around the world registered in MOOCs and the findings of this research could help the University design strategies for its target audience.

MOOCs providers have explored different solutions to support students’ success and achievement. The recommendations intend to contribute to the discussion of such solutions that might benefit MOOC students, particularly, the Hispanic community living in the United States. The next section explores recommendations for future research that might help expand current knowledge.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The lack of research in regards to adult Hispanic self-efficacy beliefs and MOOCs learning experiences adds relevance to this study. It revealed the need to include culturally sensitive strategies to enhance students’ self-efficacy through Bandura’s (1977) four sources of
information in the designing of MOOCs in innovative ways that may positively influence students’ participation and increase motivation, engagement and time management skills.

This study also revealed that there are still areas of research that could be addressed in order to continue understanding Hispanic and other ethnic groups’ performance and needs in MOOCs learning experiences. Recommendations for future research include demographic research, and social interaction research.

**Demographic research.** I believe that this study could be extended to Hispanics self-efficacy and MOOCs learning experiences with a spotlight on gender and age to understand possible differences in behaviors according to these variables. Also, I suggest that there be future research with Hispanics who reside in their country of origin to understand possible differences in students’ approaches and performances of MOOCs. Additionally, conducting research on monolingual Spanish-speaking Hispanics could provide valuable information to understand their learning experiences in Spanish speaking MOOCs and compare results of that study with these results. Finally, since people from all over the world are accessing MOOCs, I suggest that there be research on MOOC students’ learning experiences who reside in emerging nations to understand best practices that help them have successful educational outcomes.

**Social interaction and rewarding system research.** This study showed that Hispanic students’ need a one-to-one experience with lecturers and peers. Therefore, I recommend that there be research on how MOOC students’ self-efficacy beliefs change when connecting with lecturers and peers through live webcam discussion forums and chats. Also, it is recommended that research be conducted about MOOCs participants in discussion forums according to their ethnicity and country of origin. Additionally, there is an opportunity for significant research that
includes discussion groups composed of Hispanic students to understand their participation or reluctance to participate in particular kinds of groups.

Currently, MOOC providers encourage the formation of social media groups on Facebook and Twitter so students could experience a more informal conversation among themselves and experience motivation through their own learning experiences. Therefore, I recommend that there be research to understand students’ behaviors in these groups that are quantified by ethnicity, country of origin, age and gender variables. A further suggestion is to conduct research that includes Hispanic students’ participation in the courses’ social media groups as compared to their participation in the courses’ discussion groups, and evaluate to what degree these groups complement each other. Moreover, it is recommended that research be conducted about best practices of including enactive mastery experiences in e-learning, and the use of gamified experiences, such as the inclusion of badges and rewards, to understand participants experience as they complete quizzes, and participate in discussion forums and peer review assignments.

**Quantitative research.** I recommend that one way to best use the results of this study would be to add a quantitative study to understand how Hispanic self-efficacy might relate to MOOC learning experiences by determining the relationship between specific independent and dependent variables such as self-efficacy four sources of information, time management, and engagement.

By increasing research that considers self-efficacy beliefs, MOOC learning experiences and Hispanics and other ethnical groups, MOOC designers will have more tools to significantly expand the number of people who consider MOOCs as a viable learning experience and also
continue to improve the learning experiences to all those who find in MOOCs a good option to
improve their quality of life by gaining academic and professional skills.
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MOOCproje.html.


http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol4/iss3/4


Appendix A
Research Site Permission Request

Month, day, 2017

Dear [State Director, Department of Human Resources],

My name is Ramón Talavera-Franco and I am a graduate student at Northeastern University in the Doctorate of Education program. I am in the early stages of my dissertation research on adult Hispanics enrolled in English Composition I MOOC. I am writing to request your permission to contact potential participants for this research.

The purpose of my qualitative research study is to explore the self-efficacy beliefs and learning experiences of adult Hispanics who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in one of Duke University’s English Composition I MOOC in the last two years. I’m interested in understanding what strategies could be incorporated to support adult Hispanics when designing a MOOC and believe that my research may contribute to this knowledge.

I would like you to help me identify over 16 possible participants who meet the following criteria:

1) Adult (25 years and older)
2) Live in the United States
3) Identify themselves as “Hispanic” or “Latino/a”
4) High school graduate or some college experience (no college completed)
5) Enrolled in Coursera MOOC English Composition I designed by Duke University in the last two years.

I will narrow down the number of potential participants from 16 to 6 -10 who will be selected to participate in the study. The back-up group will help me complete my study even if one or more of the participants withdraws from the study.

The interviews will be conducted using Skype or Google Hangout, or any other webcam software that allows video conferencing that is convenient to the participant. I have attached the email that I would need Duke University to send to potential participants as well as the informed consent form I would ask participants to sign. I would like to inform you that my research is under the supervision of Dr. Joseph McNabb, a faculty member of Northeastern University, serving as Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions about this research, you are welcome to contact me at talavera-XXX-XXX-XXXX. Additionally, you may reach Dr. Joseph McNabb at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for considering this request.

Best regards,

Ramón Talavera-Franco
Attachments: Participant Introductory Email
Informed Consent Document
Appendix B
Notification of IRB Action

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: December 19, 2017  IRB #: CPS17-11-09
Principal Investigator(s): Joseph McNabb
                                 Ramon Talavera-Franco
Department: Doctor of Education Program
                  College of Professional Studies
Address: 20 Belvidere
            Northeastern University
Title of Project: Exploring the Learning Experiences of Adult Hispanic in
                  MOOCs through Self-Efficacy Theory
Participating Sites: Duke University Approval forthcoming

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form
Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2018

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when
   recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
   information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must
   be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month
   prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any
   other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix C
Introductory Participant Email

Dear [Hispanic Student],

My name is Ramón Talavera-Franco and I am a graduate student at Northeastern University in the Doctorate of Education program. I am currently working on my thesis on adult Hispanics who have enrolled in English Composition I MOOC from Duke University administered by Coursera.

The purpose of this research is to explore the learning experiences of adult Hispanics enrolled in English Composition I MOOC. My goal is to better understand what strategies MOOC designers could incorporate into MOOC pedagogy and design to support adult Hispanics.

As part of this research, I plan to conduct 45-90 minutes semi-structured interviews to 8–10 adult Hispanics who live in the United States, who are 25 years or older, who have a high school degree or some college experience, and who were enrolled in English Composition I MOOC in the last two years.

If you are interested in collaborating in this study please let me know. If you are selected as a possible participant of this research, I will send you a follow up email to give you more information on how to participate. It is important to mention that your participation will be voluntary and that there is no compensation to participate in this study.

You are welcome to ask any questions you may have about the process. If you would like to volunteer for this study, please to contact me through my email: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate. I am looking forward for your participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Ramón Talavera-Franco
Appendix D
Selected Participant Email

Dear [Hispanic Student],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research that explores the learning experiences of adult Hispanics enrolled in English Composition I MOOC. I am including a consent form that clearly identifies what you would agree to, if you still wish to participate. I would ask you to sign and return the consent form, though you should feel free to contact me with any questions before you sign the form.

I would also like to connect with you via Skype or Google Hangout to have a preliminary 15 minutes interview so you can ask any questions you may have about the process. The reason to use webcam software instead of connecting via phone call is because I will be living in Athens Greece by the time of the interview. However, if you want to contact me by phone, my phone number in Athens, Greece is +30 603-700-7337. Please let me know how do you prefer to connect when you send me the consent form signed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, or decide to withdraw at any time, you may do so without any consequences. To withdraw from the research, you can email me and I will remove you from the study.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or, contact Dr. Joseph, McNabb, a faculty member of Northeastern University, serving as Principal Investigator at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this study. I look forward to connecting with at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Ramón Talavera-Franco
Appendix E
Signed Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Investigator Name: Principal Investigator - Dr. Joseph McNabb
Student Researcher – Ramón Talavera-Franco
Title of Project: Exploring the Learning Experiences of Adult Hispanic in MOOCs
Through Self-Efficacy Theory

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, and I, the student researcher, will also review it with you through phone call, Skype or Google Hangout communication if you decide to participate. You may ask me any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you can contact me and let me know if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because your experience learning from English Composition MOOC from Duke University will provide important information regarding what strategies best suit the needs of adult Hispanics while learning through a MOOC.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the learning beliefs and experiences of adult Hispanics who live in the United States, who have a high school diploma or some college experiences enrolled in MOOCs. The study will provide qualitative data that can be analyzed to support adult Hispanics learning needs when studying through MOOCs.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, I will conduct and record a preliminary 15 minutes interview using Skype or Google Hangout to learn more about you and to answer any questions you may have.

You will participate in a video-recorded 45-90 minutes face-to-face interview using Skype or Google Hangout to talk about your experience studying English Composition MOOC from Duke University.

You will participate in one follow-up communication if needed.
**Where will this take place and how much time will it take?**

Individual interviews will take approximately 45-90 minutes. Interviews will be video recorded. As this interview does not require us to meet in the same location, you will decide the best place where you want to communicate with me using your own computer or tablet via Skype or Google Hangout. At the time of the interview, I will be living in Athens, Greece so we will have to agree on a schedule that best works for both of us.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There are no known significant risks associated with your participation.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help MOOC designers to include pedagogical strategies that benefit the learning process of adult Hispanics.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this study will be confidential and protected by a pseudonym that only I will know. I will be the only person who will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any other individual as being of this project. The data collected for this study, including video conferencing recordings, will be kept by me and will not be shared with others. All video conferencing records will be destroyed following the completion of the research.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly and ethically. Only people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board are permitted to see this information.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**

If you do not want to participate, you have the option not to take part on this study and do not have to sign this form.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

There are no known risks involved in being a participant in this study.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time.
Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact me, Ramón Talavera-Franco, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by phone in Athens, Greece XXX-XXX-XXXX or my Skype number XXXXXX. You also can contact my advisor Dr. Joseph McNabb at XXX-XXX-XXXX or by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: XXX-XXX-XXXX. Tel: XXX-XXX-XX-XXX, Email: XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There is no cost to participate in this study.

I agree to take part in this research.

__________________________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part Date

__________________________________________
Printed name of person above

__________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent Date

__________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix F
Interview Schedule

Demographic and Educational Background

• What do you do?

• What is your country of origin?
  
  Prompt: What is your family country of origin?

• What language(s) do you speak at home?

• What social and cultural characteristics define you as Hispanic?

• How do you feel that your educational experience, or your view of yourself as a student is different from other students because you are Hispanic? Please describe.
  
  Prompt: As a Hispanic living in the United States, what cultural factors (family, environment, learning approaches, etc.) do you think influence you positively or negatively as a student in the United States? Please describe.

• Have you had the opportunity to study in your (your family) country of origin? Could you describe the difference that you experienced in the school system?
  
  Prompt: What grade were you in? What language were the courses taught?

• What is the highest degree or education level you have attained?

Student Background on English Composition I MOOC

• What motivated you to register for English Composition I MOOC?
  
  Prompt: Did you take this course for professional, educational or other specific reasons? Please explain.

• Could you tell me whether or not it was important for you to finish English Composition I MOOC and why?
  
  Prompt: If you didn’t finish the course please describe the reason(s).

Pedagogical Learning experience

• What instructional components from English Composition I MOOC (videos, assignments, readings, discussion forums, Google Hangouts, etc.) do you think fit your learning approach or style? Why?
  
  Prompt: How comfortable did you feel with the instructional components of English Composition I MOOC? Please describe.
Self-efficacy

- Think about something that you are confident that you do well. How did you get to be confident about it?
  
  *Prompt: Is there a conscious process that you follow to become confident in your ability to do something?*

- Before starting the course, how strong were your beliefs that you could comply with the requirements of the course? Please explain.
  
  *Prompt: Could you describe how confident you were about being able to perform the different MOOC tasks effectively?*

- Have these beliefs changed while you were taking the course? How?

- Could you describe your experiences and learning strategies when dealing with challenging material?

Enactive Mastery Experience

- Did prior learning experiences help you in the course? Could you give examples?

- Could you describe your technological skills (computer, internet, email, chats, etc) before starting this course?
  
  *Prompt: Could you describe what skills helped you to take this course?*

Verbal persuasion

- Could you describe your communication experience with the instructor and with other students and how they affected your learning experience in the course?
  
  *Prompt: If you didn’t have communication with instructor or other students, could you describe how you clarified any doubt during the course?*

Vicarious experience

- How do you describe a role model? Did you have any role models in the course or in learning English in general? Please describe.
  
  *Prompt: Are role models important for you? Please describe.*

- How do you feel the interaction (if any) with your instructor or peers influenced your learning experience in this course?
  
  *Prompt: How important was for you to interact with instructor or peers during a course?*

- How did students contribute to your learning in this course? Please describe.
Prompt: How important is for you to learn from other students? Please describe.

Psychological stages

- Did you feel stress or anxiety during English Composition I? How does stress/anxiety affect you as student? Please describe.
  
  Prompt: What obstacles did you face during the course and how you overcome them? Please describe.

- Could you describe any barrier that stopped you from completing English Composition I? Please explain.

Environment

- Could you describe your learning environment? What do you like or not like of that environment? What would you change?

Goals

- Do you think that your knowledge of the English language improved after taking this course? Could you describe how?
  
  Prompt: How satisfactory do you feel your command of English is after taking English Composition I?

- Could you describe if English Composition I helped you in your current job? If so, how?
  
  Prompt: Do you think this course will help you in your professional life?

- What are your career goals and how far are you from reaching them?

Motivation

- Can you describe what factors motivated you to continue with the course?
  
  Prompt: What kept you motivated during the course?

Closing

- Are you planning to take another MOOC? What subject?

- Would you like to add anything?
### Appendix G

**Audit Trail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Luz: “When I was living in Mexico, I was kind of friendly […] But, when I went overseas, when I went [sic] USA, I was kind of not alone, but I was, I have to be, like, open. Like, open mind. Like, I don't know this person, but I need help, so I need to ask.”</th>
<th>She did not consider herself very friendly when she lived in Mexico</th>
<th>Low self-efficacy beliefs when she moved to the United States.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David: “I have been a study [sic] electronics and it's not just like, I mean like writing or something uh, literature. I haven't studied that […] it's not like that, like you have to share your ideas. Usually you have to do something and it's working or it's not. It's as simple as that.”</td>
<td>Experience studying electronics involved developing projects rather than writing essays.</td>
<td>Past learning experiences influenced his self-regulator skills and strategies to organize and execute projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna: “I am a professional, and I am living here in the United States. I think that I have to get to the high level my English, uh, skills, eh, oral and writing.”</td>
<td>She was aware of her language skill limitations and wanted to improve them</td>
<td>As immigrant she felt the responsibility to connect professionally and socially with the community she belongs to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hada: “I think that [the first assignment] gave me a little confidence like, ‘Yeah, sure. I am a writer’ […] Because in the, in the essays, you, you need to write also about yourself.”</td>
<td>She gained confidence in her abilities after completing first writing assignment.</td>
<td>Built self-efficacy beliefs and considered possible success in the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>