The Discourse Among Community College Faculty Regarding the Integration of Massive Open Online Courses

By Jamin Bartolomeo

B.A. in Psychology, May 2003, McDaniel College
M.S. in Counseling Psychology, May 2005, Loyola University Maryland

A Dissertation Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

May 17, 2015

Dissertation directed by

Rick Jakeman
Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of the George Washington University certifies that Jamin Bartolomeo has passed the final examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of February 25, 2015. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

The Discourse Among Community College Faculty
Regarding the Integration of Massive Open Online Courses

Jamin Bartolomeo

Dissertation Research Committee:

Rick Jakeman, Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration, Dissertation Director

Jason E. Johnson, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, University of Washington, Committee Member

Michael Mills, Vice President of E-Learning, Innovation, and Teaching Excellence, Montgomery College, Committee Member

Dedication

For Halle.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee members: Dr. Rick Jakeman, Dr. Jason Johnson, and Dr. Michael Mills. Your expertise, critical analysis, and humor afforded me a wonderful learning opportunity that I will never forget.

Dr. Jakeman, I couldn't have made it to the finish line without you. Your encouragement and support as a teacher, a researcher, a colleague, and a friend were invaluable to me throughout this process. Your passion for excellence and enthusiasm were inspiring and motivational. I appreciate everything you did for me; I was very fortunate and honored to have you as my chair.

Dr. Johnson, starting this process would not have been as easy and seamless without your guidance. I appreciate your worldly views and for opening my eyes to research that goes beyond simply the numbers. Through our conversations, I learned a great deal about myself as a researcher and a person. My perspective on how people in society interact with one another through text and speech will be forever enhanced.

Dr. Mills, thank you for all of your support and expertise in the field of technology. Your dedication to students and to distance education was the influence behind me completing this work. I'm grateful for your expertise and critical analysis of the field.

Thank you to Dr. Julie Johnson and Dr. Bernhard Streitwieser for taking the time out of your busy schedules to participate as external readers. Thank you for your support.

I would also like to acknowledge my family, friends, and colleagues who supported me throughout this process. In each of your own ways, you helped to influence my work along this journey. Specifically, thanks goes to my parents, Vikki,

Burke, Joe, and Marie, and my siblings, Jason, Marisa, Shaun, and Sarah, who kept me on the straight and narrow. A special thanks goes out to my work family who provided constant support and encouragement along the way: Laura Gardner, James Hall, Erica Hepworth, Linda Hultengren, Tim Kirkner, Betsy Leonard, Julie Levinson, Andrea Milo, Katie Mount, Cory Newman, Jenny Polm, Samantha Veneruso, and Jennie Wells. I'd also like to thank my good friends Brian Martinenza and family and Kelly Norris for your loyalty and unswerving support throughout this process.

Finally, a huge thanks goes out to my classmates in Cohort 11: Jennifer Athay Adams, Mark Forrest, Amy Garrett, Shane Hammond, Melinda Hull, Amanda Kastern, Jim Tabano, Bryan Koval, Anita Navarro, and David Surratt. None of this would have been possible without each of you. It was an honor and a pleasure to work alongside such a dedicated and talented group of people. Each of you played a special role in my journey and for that I thank you.

Abstract of the Dissertation

The Discourse Among Community College Faculty
Regarding the Integration of Massive Open Online Courses

This study was designed to document the discourse of faculty in regards to the integration of massive open online courses (MOOCs) among the community college sector. The study examined what presuppositions faculty held about MOOCs and the significance of these notions for higher education. Additionally, the study reviewed the ways in which community college faculty made references to MOOCs in their everyday discourse.

Participants were selected from two Maryland institutions of higher education known for referencing MOOCs through their websites and publications. Participants comprised full-time and part-time instructional faculty who had worked at least two consecutive semesters in the community college sector in the three academic years prior to the focus group. Previous participation in a MOOC was not required for eligibility, but a basic understanding was recommended. Between the two institutions, four focus group interviews were held. Each focus group had four participants, for a total of 16 participants. Following each focus group interview, participants were contacted to participate in a one-on-one semistructured interview. Gee's tenets of discourse analysis were used to document the conversational discourse surrounding MOOCs as a way to understand where the discussions started, where they currently are, and what will be discussed in the future.

Faculty viewed characteristics of MOOCs with polarizing perceptions: they either agreed or disagreed with various aspects of MOOCs and rarely discussed middle ground

options. Most faculty members had a basic awareness of MOOCs, but few (6 of the 16) participants reported first-hand experience. Participants reported a need to learn more about MOOCs in order to move the conversation into the direction of acceptance and acknowledgment among the community college sector. As the result of participants' limited experiences with MOOCs, most of their presuppositions and everyday discourse was based on their teaching experiences and comparisons to current traditional teaching models. MOOCs were viewed as more of a supplement to higher education than a standalone learning forum.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have received a large amount of publicity from the media, private institutions, academics, and the technology and business sectors. MOOCs provide free online access to higher education courses, in a variety of fields, for as many users as possible. MOOCs have two fundamental components: (a) courses are open access, which means that anyone with Internet access may participate for free, and (b) courses are created using online platforms that can accommodate large numbers of users (hundreds of thousands). Typically, MOOCs are facilitated by a content expert, where class information is conveyed using pretaped lectures and instructional videos, which can last from 8 to 12 minutes. Some MOOCs provide quizzes and exams to assess users' understanding of material before moving on to another topic. Communication among users is mostly electronic, and teaching assistants and content experts may oversee discussion boards when applicable (Pappano, 2012). For most courses, there are no initial tuition fees, nor does a user need to apply through an admissions process, as required by most institutions of higher education. The only requirement to gain entry to course content is to have access to the Internet.

MOOCs were founded on the idea that education should be open and that "knowledge should be shared freely, and the desire to learn should be met without demographic, economic, and geographical constraints" (Yuan & Powell, 2013, p. 6). Since the year 2000, given the advances in technology to provide open access to information, the notion that education should be available to as many people as possible has rapidly developed (Yuan & Powell, 2013). In 2002, the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology made this statement a reality by creating a program called OpenCourseWare, an online environment that freely shared and dispersed higher education content (Yuan & Powell, 2013). Later, persuaded by this movement, creators adopted tenets of OpenCourseWare programs, and MOOCs were born.

In the fall of 2011, the first unofficial MOOC was unveiled when Stanford University opened access to its online course, "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence." The course saw enrollment in the hundreds of thousands, which was considered a major accomplishment at the time (Pérez-Peña, 2012). Based on this success at Stanford University, a new, separate online platform, called Coursera, evolved. Coursera was developed to support several open online courses with as many user enrollments as possible. The mission of Coursera was to provide a "world-class education" and to "empower people with education that will improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they live in" (Coursera, 2015a, para. 2). As of March 2015, Coursera had partnered with 116 institutions and had a following of over 11.7 million users (Coursera, 2015b). Shortly after the launch of Coursera, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard teamed up to create another new MOOC platform. This program was called edX, and its mission was to partner with other institutions of higher education to provide various MOOCs across the curriculum. Other MOOC programs such as Udemy and Udacity, which are not affiliated with institutions of higher education, were also formed.

As of fall 2012, discussions regarding MOOCs among the community college sector increased (Bradley, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). Similar to MOOCs, community colleges are a specialized segment that embraces open access education and has large

enrollments (Fifield, 2013). The American Association of Community Colleges (2015) reiterated the role of community colleges in higher education:

> Community colleges are a vital part of the postsecondary education delivery system. They serve almost half of the undergraduate students in the United States, providing open access to postsecondary education, preparing students for transfer to 4-year institutions, providing workforce development and skills training, and offering noncredit programs ranging from English as a second language to skills retraining to community enrichment programs or cultural activities. (para. 2)

Community colleges also have mission statements that place students and teaching at the focal point of their existence. Given these commonalities among MOOCs and community colleges, some people questioned how the two could coexist or work together, if at all (Bradley, 2012). According to Fifield (2013):

> MOOCs are unlikely to completely reinvent community college education or, for that matter, any other sector of higher education, as their most ardent proponents have argued. On the other hand, they have in their early use, demonstrated enough potential in expanding access and learning options to be considered more than a fad as critics of MOOCs have warned. (p. 1)

As of June 2014, a limited number of community colleges have adopted the use of MOOCs at their institution. Additionally, few community colleges have received private funding to create MOOCs that offer student-paced online orientations and remedial education, and few schools have adopted a fiscally maintainable model to support the MOOC infrastructure (Hollands & Tirthali, 2014).

However, subtle conversations regarding how to approach MOOC business models and accrediting options had begun (Bradley, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). As of January 2013, a consistent model for how MOOCs would produce revenue had not been adopted, but the most popular method was to charge users a fee for obtaining a certificate of completion (Yuan & Powell, 2013). Potential revenue options that institutions and

universities had considered included (a) selling users' information to advertisers or interested companies; (b) charging users for supplemental course material and resources such as access to a course discussion board or having an assignment graded by a nonpeer; (c) increasing advertising availability on MOOC platforms; (d) requiring users to pay for credentialing tests; and (e) selling parts of the courses to businesses and other institutions for use as internal professional development (Educause, 2012). For most institutions, while understanding how to charge students who completed MOOCs was a difficult task, the question of how to award and transfer credit was the most prominent discussion of the two.

Many college officials questioned the logistics of how MOOC credit would be documented. For example, some questioned if MOOCs would be designated as a new category on transcripts or if they would be denoted as transfer credit. Additionally, some asked how credits would transfer between institutions and if institutions offering credit-bearing MOOCs would provide students with official transcripts. In February 2013, the American Council on Education evaluated the credentials of the current MOOC offerings and supported the awarding and transfer of college credit for the following five courses: "Pre-Calculus' and 'Algebra' from the University of California at Irvine; 'Introduction to Genetics and Evolution' from Duke University; 'Bioelectricity: A Quantitative Approach' from Duke University; and 'Calculus: Single Variable' from the University of Pennsylvania" (Lederman, 2013, p. 1). This step of accreditation was a major advancement for MOOCs; however, it became clear that 4-year institutions were the primary adopters of this technology. As a result, this disparity in MOOC usage prompted conversations about the role community colleges would play.

Statement of the Problem

Many supporters believe that MOOCs can provide higher education a unique opportunity to extend learning beyond the physical classroom in a self-paced, risk-free environment (Pérez-Peña, 2012). There are also challengers who view MOOCs as the destruction of the traditional college (Carlson & Blumenstyk, 2012). Many are still undecided about the role of MOOCs and yearn to learn more in order to move the conversations into a direction of acceptance and acknowledgment (Bradley, 2012; Marguerite, 2012; Pappano, 2012; Whissemore, 2012; Yuan & Powell, 2013). As a result of these uncertainties, this study evaluated what faculty thought of MOOCs and how they referenced them in their everyday discourse. By analyzing these discussions, the study revealed the various perceptions faculty had of MOOCs, how those perceptions influenced other faculty, and the implications of MOOCs for the future of the community college sector.

Uncertainty and controversy surrounding the integration of new ideas and innovations is not new in higher education. In the past, some of these debates have included the introduction of the computer in the classroom, changes to curriculum alignment, and the use of assessment techniques in the classroom. In these instances, parallel one-sided discussions ensued, and faculty questioned whether these "improvements" were helpful or damaging. Today, these cyclical debates continue to take place as MOOCs are constantly evaluated for their worth.

Also, given recent legislation adopted by the state of Maryland, known as the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013 (CCRCCA), academics have begun to ponder how to meet newer standards for college-bound and

degree-seeking students. Specifically for community colleges, the legislation called for institutions to work with high schools to create transition courses that help seniors become college bound or prepared for the workforce. For students already enrolled at the community college, institutions were required to create incentives for students to earn an associate's degree before transferring to a 4-year institution (CCRCCA, 2013). As a result, community colleges began debating how to meet these new regulations and looked towards alternative educational methods, like MOOCs, to support these initiatives (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2013). These mandates, in conjunction with the cyclical nature of questioning new technology, created polarizing debates, which this research studied.

Supporters of MOOCs

Supporters of MOOCs assert that these new initiatives will redefine and enhance the traditional college classroom experience. No longer will a person need to apply for admission, pay tuition, board, or fees, or be required to have certain test scores to gain access to a postsecondary academic education (Barseghian, 2012; Pérez-Peña, 2012; Schwartz, 2012). MOOCs were created to be available to all people who have Internet access, and as a result, provide a level playing field when it comes to obtaining educational resources (Coursera, 2015b). For example, a student from the University of Maryland discussed how MOOCs could provide new opportunities for students. He stated:

> We no longer need to have personal contact with teachers to absorb much of the material, and you can rest assured universities have taken notice. There is definitely a broader array of options available to students who wish to forgo the commute to class altogether in exchange for online classes that essentially provide

> the same content that professors regurgitate to students in lecture. (Young, 2011, p. 4)

While some students appreciate the ability to have a more liberal approach to learning and accessing information, contenders agree that getting an education requires a more direct approach through the facilitation of an expert in the field.

Challengers of MOOCs

Challengers claim that MOOCs are uncontrolled forums where students are unrealistically expected to teach themselves about a subject about which they have no expertise. Opponents believe that the absence of a classroom and the lack of the physical presence of a teacher deprive students of an enriching postsecondary educational experience (Oblinger, 2012). For a student to learn, the instructor must be actively present and involved in the facilitation of learning. The instructor must also be able to provide an environment that supports insightful discussion and application, all of which MOOCs cannot guarantee (Oblinger, 2012). A professor at the University of Virginia stated:

> To champion something as trivial as MOOCs in place of established higher education is to ignore the day-care centers, the hospitals, the public health clinics, the teacher-training institutes, the athletic facilities, and all of the other ways that universities enhance communities, energize cities, spread wealth, and enlighten citizens. Not only is it not about the classroom, it is certainly not just about the direct delivery of information into people's lives. If that's all universities did, then publishing and libraries would have crushed universities a long time ago. (Carlson & Blumenstyk, 2012, p. 1)

Some challengers suggest that just because the material is available online does not mean that it can be learned in that particular format (Carlson & Blumenstyk, 2012). Some state that the openness of online learning gives students too much freedom and can

create communication barriers; too much information can be confusing and intimidating (Moule, 2006).

Among many MOOCs, specifically within Coursera, peer-to-peer assessment is a major component for obtaining feedback and gauging progress (Bui, 2012). Based on this peer assessment model, challengers question the validity of courses where students' grades are solely based upon other students' subjective review. In a weblog of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a user described the effect of MOOCs:

> Colleges play a role in ensuring that information is accurate and grounded in empirical research. The current model of teaching in college, which emphasizes a balance of both practice and research, allows students to think critically while being held to a standard of quality. The MOOC model does not ensure that such quality checks remain in place for student learning. Rather than investing in MOOCs and crowd-learning, colleges should devote their efforts in developing technological tools that can support faculty and existing students. Systems like MOOCs would facilitate a rush to quantity rather than quality, while offering few practical solutions to the broader issues facing colleges. (Bui, 2012, p. 1)

Another faculty member cited a major problem to subjective evaluation, stating:

> Without substantive evaluation procedures, granting course credit would be a disservice to both our traditional students and those enrolled in our MOOC. This means that ACE [American Council on Education] accreditation would not be appropriate for our course. We are, however, open to the idea that a student might present work done as part of a MOOC to an evaluation committee at a particular college, and we are happy to encourage students to pursue that option. But that process would be outside our purview. (Head, 2013, p. 1)

Aside from the changing look and function that MOOCs have brought, many ask how institutions of higher education could expect to make money so that the ventures do not become a financial pit (Mangan, 2012). Others question the sustainability of a program that offers a free education, when many schools rely on tuition to fund their faculty for these exact resources.

Through these dialogues, new ideas emerged, were vetted, and ultimately had an influence on what others perceived of MOOCs. As MOOCs have grown and expanded over time, specifically as they began to penetrate the realm of community colleges, comprehending what community college faculty thought about MOOCs was integral in understanding its future.

Research Questions

Since the creation of MOOCs, numerous articles, weblogs, and editorials have documented both support and criticism of the online platform. From a preliminary review of these discussions, there were several salient points of view: (a) MOOCs are good, and by sharing knowledge, everyone benefits; (b) the idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic and noble, but if they do not generate money, it is difficult to determine why institutions of higher education, which rely on tuition as a main source of funding, would support these initiatives; (c) MOOCs are seen as well known but not well understood; and (d) MOOCs and similar programs are coming online too quickly without consideration of their ramifications (Bradley, 2012; Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012; Marguerite, 2012; Pappano, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). To address these various issues, this research utilized discourse analysis as a theory and method to (a) document the discussions surrounding MOOCs and how community college faculty react to the impending result on the community college; (b) examine the presuppositions as a result of these discussions; and (c) discuss the implications of MOOC growth and prevalence within community colleges. The study had two main research questions:

- What presuppositions do faculty hold about MOOCs and their significance for higher education in general as well as the community college sector in particular?

- In what ways do community college faculty employ references to MOOCs in their everyday discourse?

The goal of this study was to document the discussions among community college faculty to understand what was being said in order to understand the power MOOCs could have in the future.

Statement of Potential Significance

Given the integration of MOOCs, users with Internet access have a new perspective of higher education. Users now have the ability to acquire higher education course content without having to step inside a physical classroom. Users who take advantage of MOOCs are able to learn online at their own pace and potentially earn certificates of completion and even course credit. Users also have the ability to withdraw from a course without fear of financial repercussions or the fear of having a punitive mark recorded on their transcripts. Faculty, however, view MOOCs in a different manner.

With the expansion of MOOCs among 4-year institutions, and the impending integration at community colleges, discourse about the future of higher education has been very polarizing: many academics support aspects of the online initiative, while others question it (Bui, 2012; Head, 2013). For example, some faculty approve of using MOOCs as a means to provide learners with as much time and information as possible for which to learn, while others note that too much freedom, the lack of consistency, and the absence of a content expert could be damaging. As a result of these types of issues, documenting the discourse is important, as faculty are the gatekeepers of course content and curriculum alignment. By detailing these discussions, this research revealed faculty

perceptions of these initiatives, including how they came to these conclusions and how they talked about MOOCs in their everyday discourse.

Ultimately, having an understanding of the faculty perception will help influence how college-affiliated employees, such as administrators, board of trustee members, policymakers, and politicians, make decisions in the future. Since faculty play an integral role in providing classroom instruction, investors in higher education who are interested in MOOCs may gain insight from understanding the results of this research and be able to use the information to align their educational models to these faculty perceptions.

Theoretical Foundation

This research was guided by Gee's (2005) theory and method of discourse analysis. Because the theory and method are intertwined, it was advantageous to use both to detail the MOOC discussions. Gee (2005) posited that language "gets its meaning from the games or practices within which it is used. These games or practices are ways of saying, doing, and being" (p. 5). Ultimately, to utilize discourse analysis as a theory means to subscribe to the understanding that the values of words are "integrally linked to social and cultural groups in ways that transcend individual minds" (Gee, 1999, p. 40). Thus, communication among people affects what other people do, think, and say in society.

In order to understand these meanings, Gee (2005) cited the importance of using discourse analysis as a method. He referred to the use of his "seven areas of reality," or building blocks, as one of several analytical tools (p. 17). Engaging this discourse means moving beyond the superficiality of describing what participants say. Discourse analysis as a method allows researchers to document the written or verbal statements in

conjunction with these analytical tools to create themes about stated feelings among many participants. From exploring the emphasis of a single word, to making connections between phrases, to evaluating the identity that people portray, discourse analysis helps examine why and how participants say what they do.

Summary of Methodology

Because of the newness of MOOCs and this study's aim to understand the dialogue and perceptions of community college faculty, this research utilized a qualitative design to collect data. Qualitative research takes a multipronged approach, using "interpretive" and "naturalistic" techniques to study behavior, events, and/or phenomena that take place in their natural setting (Creswell, 2003, p. 15).

The two sites that were studied were community colleges located in the state of Maryland. The institutions were selected based on their current use of open educational resources as referenced through their websites and publications. The institutions are fully accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to offer programs of learning and to award the associate in arts degree and certificate of proficiency. Within each institution, participants were selected among instructional faculty members. To be eligible for the study, potential participants were required to have been employed as a full-time or part-time faculty member for at least two consecutive semesters in the community college sector within three academic years of the initial focus group (i.e., since January 2011). Additionally, it was recommended that they have a basic understanding of MOOCs and the conversations surrounding the phenomenon.

Invitations for the study were emailed to all potential participants at each institution on the student researcher's behalf. Additionally, flyers were mailed to all potential participants through intercampus mail as a secondary means of communication. The target was to recruit a minimum of 12 participants and a maximum of 24 participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interested participants were selected for the study based on their responses to a preinterview questionnaire.

To document the discussions, this research used focus group interviews and semistructured one-on-one interviews. Using focus group interviews allowed the researcher to create and ask a series of carefully worded questions, such that each group was provided with a consistent interview experience. A total of four different groups, comprising four participants each, was interviewed. During the first part of the interview, each group was asked the same initial set of questions related to general characteristics of MOOCs. During the second part of the interview, the researcher asked questions, from a precreated list, based on responses from the group. One to two weeks following the focus group interview, participants were invited to take part in a semistructured one-on-one interview. The goal of this interview was to have each participant review and confirm accuracy of the focus group transcripts and to answer questions related to that participant's experience.

Following all interviews, discussions were transcribed and coded into various categories. Using computer software, the researcher applied an open coding technique to organize and connect statements made by participants. After several rounds of coding, categories were created and connected to one another to formulate themes. These themes, in conjunction with Gee's (2005) theory of discourse analysis, were essential in

understanding and documenting the major discussion points of the interviews as well as answering the research questions. The findings of these themes were presented in narrative form using thick, rich descriptions and direct quotations.

Limitations

Various limitations were associated with conducting the focus groups. Specifically, the outcome of the group was unpredictable, and a skilled moderator was required to maintain decorum and move the group through the questions. An unskilled moderator could have risked allowing verbose participants to dominate the conversation or let tangential topics be discussed at length. Focus groups also could have enabled an artificial "group think" where everybody agreed with the socially acceptable answer. Because these focus groups were composed of faculty from the same institution, it is possible that responses from participants were embellished due a need to conform to the group. Additionally, in the absence of having a solid knowledge of MOOCs, participants could have simply agreed with those who understood the concept rather than stating they did not know the information.

Assumptions

In every research design, the researcher must make several assumptions about the topic and the nature of the methodology to create a strong and supportive study. For this study, there were five assumptions regarding the topic, participants, the methodology, and the site selection.

The first assumption was that the topic of MOOCs was not a fad and will likely pervade institutions of higher education across the nation over the next decade. While

the feel and look of MOOCs will change due to accrediting rules, copyright, and the demands of the population, the understanding was that MOOCs have a growing potential and will likely continue to be a prominent topic of discussion.

The second assumption was that community college faculty were able to articulate their feelings and thoughts about MOOCs. Despite its relatively new status in higher education and its emerging debut in the community college sector, this researcher assumed that enough discussion has taken place that faculty would be able to converse about the subject. Because the institutions that were studied advertised their use of open educational resources, it was assumed that faculty from those institutions cared about the issue and would be interested in talking about the topic. Additionally, it was assumed that faculty would be able to speak candidly about the topic and not fear retaliation from their superiors. It was assumed that there was no political pressure coming from the administration, and as a result, faculty would be open and honest about their feelings regarding MOOC initiatives.

In regards to the methodology of the study, the researcher also made assumptions about the way data were collected and evaluated. It was assumed that using focus group interviews and semistructured one-on-one interviews would yield the most robust and revealing data. While a number of methods were considered, because the goal was to document the discussions of faculty and understand how their words influenced others, in-person interviews were deemed the most appropriate tools. Additionally, because the research questions focused on the meanings of words and how they influenced what others think, say, and do, Gee's theory of discourse analysis was assumed to be the best framework for which to tell the story.

Finally, this research assumed that the sites selected were a good fit for the study. Based on demographics of the selected sites and given the commitment to open educational resources as advertised among their publications and website, it was assumed that open source education was a priority and, thus, worthy of study.

Overall, these assumptions were integral in creating the final research design. Without acknowledging these assumptions, it would have been difficult to understand the fundamentals of the study and the thought processes of the researcher.

Summary

MOOCs are a new educational platform that provides users the ability to obtain higher education material over the Internet. Unlike traditional in-person classes, MOOCs allow students to learn on their own time by watching short videos and completing assignments. Because most MOOCs are free of charge, students can withdraw at any time without financial penalty or a mark on their permanent transcript. For a small fee, some courses even allow students to earn certificates of completion and transferable credit upon completion of specific assignments. Through the use of qualitative techniques, as well as discourse analysis as a theory and method, this study documented the faculty discussions regarding MOOCs to gain a better understanding of how these conversations affected others and the future of community colleges.

Definition of Key Terms

Digital divide. The disparity of resources among different populations of people.

Wilhelm and Theirer (2000) described the digital divide as "unequal access to

computers and the Internet that breaks along familiar socioeconomic fault lines, such as income, education, race and age" (p. 40).

Massive open online course (MOOC). The online platform that delivers learning material to any person who wants to take a course and has Internet access. A MOOC differs from a traditional online course in that it is usually free, does not offer credit, and features huge enrollment. Some MOOCs provide "certificates of completion" or course credit upon successfully passing course assignments and paying a small fee.

Net generation student. Students who were born between 1982 and 1997. These students are visually adept and are more likely to intertwine audio and visual media naturally (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006). These users enjoy immediate feedback and have the skills to be able to move from real-world applications to virtual environments seamlessly, but prefer electronic media to physical media (Carlson, 2005).

Online distance learning. Courses that are usually offered through a college portal or website that a student must log in to access. A subset of the category "distance learning," classes are usually exclusively online or in a blended format in which a student completes some of the course via the Internet and the other portion inside a classroom. Courses that are offered exclusively online are typically structured like a traditional in-person course, but allow the user to interface with the course content and other users via the electronic online portal. Programs such as Blackboard, LEARN, and WebCT are the most popular forums for online

distance learning courses. However, some institutions may use a system they created in house.

Open educational resources. The sharing of educational content via the Internet whereby users can freely access, use, and reshare the information with others. Information to be shared includes, but is not limited to, course material, assignments, videos, presentations, lectures, tests, and books.

Telecourse. A type of distance learning education where course content can be broadcast to multiple locations using televisions. Broadcasts of information are typically live, and students communicate with the instructor and other students by speaking through microphones and a network of cameras.

User/participant. Any person who has access to the Internet and enrolls in a MOOC.

Web 2.0/social media sites. Programs or sites found on the Internet that aim to support groups of people who share similar interests (Dohn, 2009). These programs or sites can vary in size and purpose, ranging from sharing one's personal thoughts with friends to exchanging information with like-minded individuals. Sites like these allow users to share their ideas, life happenings, and events with their personal social supports (Alexander & Levine, 2008).

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) is a new educational phenomenon that has only begun to be understood by 2-year institutions of higher education. While some 4-year colleges and universities have created their own MOOCs or partnered with private companies to provide free online courses, few community colleges have adopted such models. At the heart of these community colleges are the faculty who work with students and play a key role in curriculum development. Unlike most private colleges and 4-year institutions where faculty are required to conduct research, the primary role of faculty at most community colleges is to teach. As a result, because some of the basic tenets of MOOCs mimic the role of what faculty do in the classroom, and given the speed by which MOOCs are being integrated, it was important to understand how this new platform would converge with the role of the community college.

Unlike the format of most literature reviews, where the researcher is charged with the task of critiquing several scholarly articles, revealing strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the literature to reinforce the need to study the topic, the organization of this literature review is different. Given the infancy of the topic at hand and the paucity of literature available, this review uses a historical approach to support the research questions and conceptual framework. The first part of the chapter provides an overview of MOOCs among higher education, including a description of the basic concepts, a description of the major players, and an outline of the arguments both for and against the integration of MOOCs within higher education as referenced in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In

the second part of the chapter, the history of computer-based programs, beginning in the 1970s, is outlined in order to accurately understand the foundations of technology in higher education. Finally, because this research sought to document the perceptions of community college faculty, who, in most colleges and universities, are the keepers of the curriculum, the intertwined evolution of technology and curriculum is detailed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between MOOCs and adult learning theory as well as student development theory and a review of the researcher's conceptual framework guiding the methodology of the study. Critiques in this chapter were documented in the form of strengths and weakness as related to faculty perception of MOOCs, curriculum discussion, learning theories, and discourse analysis.

Massive Open Online Courses

A MOOC is an online educational platform that provides the dissemination of content to large numbers of users who have access to the Internet. The fundamental design of a MOOC affords users the ability to watch videos, access assignments, utilize resources, and connect with fellow users and instructors. Some MOOCs require users to complete tests and quizzes that can be automatically graded, while others rely on peer-reviewed feedback from other current users. Most MOOCs are free but do not provide transferable credit to other institutions. Some institutions do provide users the ability to obtain a "certificate of completion" by completing a final exam or standardized assignments, but this credential is not transferable as college-level credit. Recently, the American Council on Education accredited five MOOCs for which users can earn transferable credit. These courses require that students pay a fee and successfully complete assignments and exams before being awarded credit.

Several companies, organizations, and institutions support MOOCs and open-source education to users. As of January 2013, Coursera, Udacity, and edX were the three leading organizations to provide online platforms for MOOCs.

In March 2012, a program called Coursera was launched with the intention to partner with institutions of higher education to allow users access to college course content (Coursera, 2013). As of March 2015, Coursera was working with 116 universities, colleges, and other institutions around the world and featured courses in the arts, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, education, energy and earth sciences, engineering, food and nutrition, health and society, humanities, information technology, law, mathematics, medicine, physical and earth sciences, physics, social sciences, statistics, and teacher professional development (Coursera, 2015b). Pedagogically, Coursera has attributed its success to three foundations: mastery learning, peer assessment, and active learning (Coursera, 2013). Creators of the learning platform believed that for users to learn, there must be a multitude of opportunities for them to demonstrate their understanding of course material and receive immediate feedback for topics they do not understand. One way to provide feedback is through peer review. Students enrolled in these courses are taught how to use rubrics to evaluate and assess others' work. Once students have been trained properly, it is hoped that given the large amount of peer reviewers in any given course, there would be enough feedback by reviewers to provide accurate evaluations of all students (Coursera, 2013).

The second organization, Udacity, also provides a medium for which to host MOOCs. Like Coursera, access to educational content is free and courses are designed to be self-paced and allow users to utilize online videos and quizzes. Udacity provides

offerings that are focused on topics related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) (Udacity, 2013). Udacity was founded on the principle that the system of higher education is "broken with increasingly higher costs for both students and our society at large . . . [and] education is no longer a one-time event but a lifelong experience" (Udacity, About Us section, para. 2, 2013). Founders of the program believe that education is a right of all people and, through its program, users can be afforded the ability to enhance their academic and employment opportunities.

Finally, in summer 2012, Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology worked to create a collaborative MOOC organization called edX. Similar to Coursera and Udacity, this effort provides unlimited access to an online environment, where users can view recorded class demonstrations, complete assignments and tests, and connect with other students (Mangan, 2012).

Critique of MOOCs

Supporters of online initiatives have viewed MOOCs as an experience that will change the face of higher education for the better (Shirky, 2012). For this group, MOOCs could affect the future of course delivery, making educational content truly free to anyone who has a desire to learn and has access to the Internet (Yuan & Powell, 2013). Additionally, the integration of MOOCs would help address the issue of fiscal cuts and help to reduce the cost of a postsecondary education (Pérez-Peña, 2012; Yuan & Powell, 2013). The openness of MOOCs was seen as a vehicle that created opportunities to increase access to higher education content and provide a space where colleges and universities could explore new models of pedagogy. The "digital footprint" of users could potentially be used to gain insight as to what students are interested in taking, how

long students persist among various courses, and success and attrition rates (Yuan & Powell, 2013, p. 7). The dynamics of MOOCs could allow a large number of users into an educational realm formerly blocked by tuition, applications, test scores, and dedication of at least 4 years of sitting in a classroom (Whissemore, 2012). With MOOCs, a new learning experience was created, one that fosters cooperative and educational prospects for students and faculty to connect and discuss course materials online. Additionally, because participants' educational backgrounds could vary, the diversity of experiences that could be brought to discussions allows a richer learning environment.

For the number of academics who support MOOCs, there are an equal number who challenge whether MOOCs are able to provide an approach comparable in quality to in-person courses. Compared with traditional formats, most MOOCs are loosely structured and self-directed, requiring the user to be responsible for his or her own progress and pace; as a result, challengers question whether this format will be a good fit for everyone (Carlson & Blumenstyk, 2012; Pappano, 2012). Due to the lack of preassessments or prerequisites, some have questioned how students could be adequately prepared for the course.

Another major challenge of MOOCs is the question of whether online technology could effectively process the large demand for information that unlimited course enrollments allow. Users' ability to download information could differ based on bandwidth and the speed of provider, both of which can affect the amount of information that can be downloaded or streamed (Educause, 2011).

Navigation of MOOCs requires a certain level of digital know-how, which also raises questions about equality of access (Yuan & Powell, 2013). Participants who may

not be digitally literate or have access to the Internet could be less likely to take advantage of these online resources. Some researchers have stated that despite the amount of available technology, there is still a large disparity of computer and Internet access that is being overlooked (Smith & Casserly, 2006). In 2010, the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunication and Information Administration reported that nearly 55% of Latino and Hispanic persons compared to 32% of Whites in the United States did not have access to the Internet. Access to the Internet that was available was usually very low and inconsistent (Smith & Casserly, 2006). While some researchers have suggested that time would solve this access problem, even if worldwide access were available, the issue of compatibility can still be debated. Many of the programs required by MOOCs, like Microsoft PowerPoint or Microsoft Word, require money and bandwidth. While open-source software is a solution to disseminating required programs, academics have disagreed that it could work without access to the Internet.

In regards to assessment of knowledge, most MOOCs use quizzes or tests. Some MOOCs, like Coursera, rely on peer-to-peer assessments, and as a result many have questioned how to thwart plagiarism, cheating, and identity verification. Additionally, some have distrusted the validity and reliability of feedback from non–course content experts (Head, 2013). It was debated whether students could be proficient in assessing others' work when they themselves had not yet obtained mastery of the material (Head, 2013).

Finally, given the open environment of MOOCs, faculty have questioned how copyright and intellectual property rights would play a role in digital content (Smith &

Casserly, 2006). Before 1976, in the United States, when people wanted to protect their work, including published books, research findings, music, and inventions, they would apply for a copyright. After this date, several laws and decisions made by the Supreme Court declared any piece of work automatically copyrighted unless it was released by the originator; works could be used only with the explicit consent of the owner (Smith & Casserly, 2006). As a result, if copyright was automatically granted for most digital content, it was uncertain how material could be used or duplicated.

Overall, opinions related to the phenomenon have been mostly limited to individuals' thoughts and feelings about the learning forum rather than feelings based on personal MOOC experiences. While some organizations have begun to solicit feedback from users in the form of demographic surveys and emails, there is still a qualitative and quantitative gap in the research of all things MOOC as related to faculty and community colleges (Nielson, 2013; Kolowich, 2012). As a result, the goal of this study was to begin filling this gap by documenting and understanding the current discourse surrounding MOOCs.

Historical Evolution of Computers and Curriculum in Higher Education

To fully understand the power of MOOCs, it is important to understand the historical origins and development of education technology. From its introduction into higher education in the 1970s, the computer has played an integral role in developing learning and communication skills among students (Leinonen, 2005; Schulte, 2011). According to Leinonen (2005), four critical periods have shaped the way computers have been used in higher education: (a) programming/drill and practice period (late 1970s to early 1980s), (b) computer-based training with multimedia period (late 1980s to early

1990s), (c) Internet-based training and e-learning period (early 1990s to late 2000s), and (d) social software and free and open content period (mid 2000s to the present). While many have agreed that the computer helped redefine higher education to support students in becoming autonomous thinkers, others have felt that the integration of the computer corrupted the values of the traditional classroom and created access barriers (Bui, 2012; Oblinger, 2012). This section documents the evolution of computer-based technology over the past 50 years and describes how it has affected the curriculum discussion among faculty.

Programming/Drill and Practice Period

During the late 1970s through the early 1980s, the programming/drill and practice period was born, with the adoption of the first computer in the classroom. Prior to the 1970s, computers were mostly used as administrative tools, specifically for processing paychecks, report cards, course schedules, and inventory (Alessi & Trollip, 1985). During this period, instructors began using computers to deliver course content (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Students used them for basic functions such as rote memorization of tasks or answering simple math and logic questions (Leinonen, 2005). As computing technology developed, programs were created to give students the flexibility to be able to study at their own pace and take an active role in their own learning (Leinonen, 2005). Later, during the early 1980s, researchers at the Learning Group at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center were involved in creating a technology that could be used by young students to "communicate and manipulate knowledge . . . for their informational needs" (Kay & Goldberg, 1977, p. 11). The new computer, called the Dynabook, allowed students to input information into the program and receive responses back; it was the first

program to allow people to create tangible ideas on the screen. According to the researchers, the computer was a "metamedium," in that it could "respond to queries and experiments—so that messages involve[d] the learner in a two-way conversation" (Kay & Goldberg, 1977, p. 11).

Around the same time as the introduction of the Dynabook, the first electronic classroom was launched, known as online distance learning (Reiser, 1987). Given the increases in tuition and the need to accommodate a more transient society, higher education began investing in experimental electronic learning forums to support students' busy lives (Gerrity, 1976). Institutions began adopting electronic resources to better disseminate information (Gerrity, 1976). Also known as the "instructional technology movement," the goal of this period was to create "a field involved in the facilitation of human learning through the systematic identification, development, organization, and utilization of a full range of learning resources" (Association for Education Communications and Technology, 1972, p. 36).

Similar to the MOOC discussion today, supporters of the early adoption of the computer cited its benefits as being a powerful instructional delivery system. Technology-supported instruction was seen as a way to customize learning to the necessities of each student. Using computer programs was seen as an efficient way to help students learn difficult content areas (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). By only requiring students to review the content they had difficulty with, while bypassing content they had mastered, students were able to use their time more efficiently.

However, challengers noted that basic computer programs were limiting, such that they did not lead to any improvement in students' understanding of math and logic

(Holmberg, 1977). Although the computer program allowed content to be customized for each student, the integration of computers was seen as cumbersome and noninnovative because they primarily reinforced rote learning, a technique already taught in school (Holmberg, 1977). Given the fact that the technology, like the Dynabook, was expensive and provided little assistance in training users, the number of supporters for educational technology in this era was low (Leinonen, 2005).

Curriculum Discussion in the Programming/Drill and Practice Period

In the 1970s, the economic downturn or "new depression" had an effect in reducing the curricular options that were made available during the 1960s (Cheit, 1971). During the 1960s, when openness to world happenings and student youth had an influence on course curricula, offerings such as art, music, and photography were more widely available (Rudolph, 1977). As a response to the economic turmoil, many institutions pulled back on course offerings within art and history disciplines and focused on providing courses more applicable to the workforce, such as economics, math, and politics (Rudolph, 1977). By the mid 1970s, schools began modifying curricula to become more specialized, ultimately reducing the need for general education requirements and majors based on interdisciplinary studies (Rudolph, 1977). Majors like American studies and its resulting products such as programs in English, Spanish, French, and Russian were all but eliminated because they required the bringing together of multiple specialists versus relying on one specialist (Rudolph, 1977).

During this time, the architecture of higher education was also adapted to meet the changing demographics of incoming students (Thelin, 2004). Colleges and universities at this time began recognizing part-time, returning, and adult students as cohorts that would

have a significant influence on the institution. Terms like "traditional student" were accepted nomenclature, and the term eventually found its way into admissions offices and university publications (Thelin, 2004). Administrators recognized that most students would not necessarily complete a bachelor's degree in 4 years and, thus, curriculum sequences and course offerings had to be adjusted (Thelin, 2004). Some curriculum requirements and electives were amended, while some courses were offered on the weekends.

Critics of these curricular changes noted that with every step towards concentration, whether specifying a student's educational plan or bolstering a department's individual program, colleges and universities were hindering the role of the general education program. The issue of generalization versus specialization was "relevant breadth versus a limited and dangerously irresponsible competence" (Jencks & Riesman, 1968, p. 247). However, during this decade, most support was given to enhancing specific concentrations, as this was more widely accepted by faculty; when interests of breadth versus concentration came to debate, the specialization of curricula usually prevailed (Jencks & Riesman, 1968). Even experimental ideas to support the general education program such as books and flyers explaining the importance of a well-rounded education and a unity among disciplines failed at changing the focus from specialization (Rudolph, 1977). Despite these curricular experiments, all of these discussions regarding liberal education and creativity had little effect on the idea of lecture-based classes (Rudolph, 1977). Even as class seminars and group sessions increased, so did the power of the lecture (Rudolph, 1977). Given the advances in technology, such as computers and televisions, the restrictions on class sizes were

reduced. Faculty who taught introductory courses could now teach multiple sections at one time from one location, saving time and money. However, critics argued that, while the advances were exciting, students were less likely to be engaged and take the digital lecture seriously (Rudolph, 1977).

Computer-Based Training with Multimedia Period

The second period, which took place from the mid to late 1980s to the early 1990s, was known as the computer-based training with multimedia period. By 1983, the number of computers with increased memory and functionality had grown, thus increasing computers' capabilities to provide advanced programs to users (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Given these upgrades, newer computers could also read information from CD-ROMs. A CD-ROM is a circular disc that could be inserted into the computer to access programs and information that featured multidimensional characteristics such as sound and visual interactions (Budd & Williams, 1993). For example, instead of only being able to read text on a screen, a CD-ROM could allow a user to access pictures, sound, and video. The CD-ROM was the main source of multimedia programs, and the philosophy behind using it was that visual resources supplemented with audio offered a better understanding of material than information that was simply read or dictated. CD-ROMs were easily shareable and much more cost-effective than purchasing a computer for each student (McLean, 1996). In a survey completed by Schultz and Salomon (1990), 83% of college students agreed that using CD-ROMs helped save them time and were easy to use; 85% of students also stated they preferred the electronic content over paper copies. While several other advances were made to computers during this time, the

advancement in technology had not reached a point where students could use the computer to communicate externally (Leinonen, 2005).

During this time, supporters of the technology felt that the rote learning programs from the programming/drill and practice period could now be enhanced with supplemental listening and viewing activities (Budd & Williams, 1993). While some academics found these resources to be extremely effective in helping students in subjects such as English and writing, there was still a resistance to accept multimedia programs as a learning paradigm (East & Leach, 1993). At the point when computer productivity was increasing, many critics stated that the American educational system was improperly aligned with the needs of the modern postindustrial world (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Critics stated that computers were taking society into an information age, where gaining information would be viewed as a more desirable skill than the ability to interpret and communicate this information properly (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Advanced computer programs, CD-ROMs, and other computer systems were seen as barriers to the effectiveness of the traditional classroom model of rote learning and data (Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Many claimed that the training for and availability of these resources were still underdeveloped and expensive. Despite the fact that the technology was more readily available, it was primarily obtainable by schools and students with money (East & Leach, 1993).

Curriculum Discussion in the Computer-Based Training with Multimedia Period

During the 1980s, several reports and evaluations were published on the decline of the higher education curriculum and offered insights on how it should be shaped. According to Toombs and Tierney (1991), a report called *The Closing of the American*

Mind responded to the following three questions: (a) How much of the curriculum should be prescribed, and how much should be left to students' choice? (b) What is the best way to achieve breadth in a student's education? and (c) How does one teach students to synthesize what they have learned? Bloom (1987) stated that the American system of higher education had strayed from its true intent. Curricular changes were politically centered among faculty and administrators, which ultimately had a bearing on a student's ability to receive a liberal education. Similar to the introduction of the computer into the classroom, these recommendations stemmed from the idea that creating student-centered processes could enhance their learning. Faculty-student interaction, advising, and assessment of curricular programs were also stressed as characteristics that could help bolster the American higher education system.

As a result, a number of curriculum transformations caused a reorganizational shift within higher education. Opposite of the changes enacted during the 1970s, concepts such as dual-degree programs, interdepartmental committee-run academic programs versus department-run programs, and the pairing of majors such as business and language resurfaced (Toombs & Tierney, 1991). Appeals to evaluate the curriculum at this time period were also documented as imperative in order for the United Stated to enhance productivity and respond to the demands of the market (Toombs & Tierney, 1991). The concept of interdisciplinary collaboration was another change that took place among a number of institutions. The idea that two or more departments could work together to provide a cross-discipline experience was implemented in order to create a well-rounded, student-centered experience.

Internet-Based Training and e-Learning Period

The third era, known as the Internet-based training and e-learning period, started in the early 1990s and ended in the late 2000s. During this time, the educational system was introduced to the Internet, which allowed users to access information on a variety of topics in a short amount of time from an online platform (Leinonen, 2005). The main difference between this period and the previous period was that students were not confined to the limits of a CD-ROM. Students now could access a streaming database with information from all over the world at any time of the day. During this phase, programs from the computer-based training period were shared on the Internet. However, some of the multimedia components were not always available (Leinonen, 2005).

The major gain in the era was the shift of introducing an electronic forum for interpersonal communication. Technology tools such as e-mail, instant online communication, discussion boards, chat rooms, websites, weblogs, and file sharing programs allowed students to connect with anyone with access to a computer (Leinonen, 2005). Institutions of higher education began to create websites for prospective students as well as provide current students with their own personalized school email accounts (Stoner, 2004). Moreover, unlike ever before, students seeking higher education opportunities could now select, apply for, and enroll in college and connect with admissions counselors through online interactions.

Although the Internet could be used to embrace student interaction, some research proposed that depending on their personality, students might actually be harmed by technology (Timm & Junco, 2008). Students who were less likely to reach out and

communicate with other students were at a higher risk for harm via computer-assisted technology than students who were more extroverted (Kraut et al., 2002). According to a study of online introverted students, it was concluded that reserved students "do not have the same kind of psychology buffering effect of online communication as extroverts," which could lead to impairment (Timm & Junco, 2008, p. 120). As a result, some academics questioned how delivering course material via the Internet could be beneficial to all.

Later in the decade, information from the Internet was converted into structured courses for which students could enroll. Online distance learning courses became popular among institutions of higher education, and their ease of use and flexibility made these programs attractive. Students with varying work hours or frequent travel had the ability to read assignments and complete work on their own time schedules. Course content could be accessed from any location that had an Internet connection, and students could electronically communicate with their professor. However, one of the primary drawbacks to online distance learning was that students were typically required to own a computer and feel comfortable with using the school's online platform. Browsing for information could also be difficult for some. There were few search engines, and the capabilities that these providers did have were hardly strong enough to provide robust results (Leinonen, 2005). Despite these navigational issues, another major concern of the time was having access to reliable high-speed Internet. Without having access or having a strong connection, none of the features of the e-learning period would be available. Thus, even though the technological advances were available, because they were limited

and not fully reliable, consumers held out on making computer purchases (Leinonen, 2005).

As the use of the Internet and personal computers became more popular, researchers began to study the demographics of people who had the access and skills to use these resources (Santos, Santos, & Milliron, 2000). A disparity among White upper-class students and the rest of the population became apparent from the research, and the term "digital divide" was coined to represent this technological access and skills gap (Santos et al., 2000). Specifically, studies showed that African Americans, Hispanics, and Latinos were the most likely to lack access to a computer and Internet in their homes (NTIA, 1999). Subsequently, while the computer was able to help many students communicate and learn online, for minority students, access to the computer was viewed as another barrier.

Curriculum Discussion in the Internet-Based Training and e-Learning Period

From 1990 to the 2000s, a number of changes occurred in the higher education curriculum, again to the role of the general education program. At most colleges and universities, general education courses typically comprised institution-wide obligations to ensure that every student was well rounded and able to think critically and autonomously (Jones, 1992). The intentions of these courses were to help broaden students' comprehension and capability to think, write, and speak about intricate and multifaceted issues (Jones, 1992). Faculty members were responsible for the structure and layout of these courses, ranging from creating a specific curriculum to a set of course requirements.

Many of the curricular changes in this time period included the addition of interdisciplinary courses, first-year seminars, common learning, advanced courses,

honors, and paired or linked courses, to name a few (Johnson, Ratcliff, & Gaff, 2004). Several of the changes to the curriculum were adaptations to the program rather than a complete overhaul. Most notably, the number of courses necessary to meet general education requirements had increased, and courses such as critical thinking, art, history, music, literature, and life sciences were required. Obligations in foreign language and computer literacy were also added. By the year 2000, the number of students electing to take general education courses had declined because most institutions had prescribed these requirements among all disciplines (Johnson et al., 2004). General education requirements were adapted to support the needs of the first-year student as well as to meet learning outcomes for degree completion (Johnson et al., 2004). Additionally, student trepidation regarding the quality of the coursework and the lack of faculty presence in general education courses elicited change. Ultimately, the proficiencies needed by students in order to become successful graduates were a pivotal point for instituting change (Johnson et al., 2004).

Social Software and Free and Open Content Period

The final era, known as the social software and free and open content period, began in the early 2000s and continues to the present. During this period, systems of education have seen several advancements in technology, including the use of Web 2.0 sites, social networking, OpenCourseWare, and MOOCs.

Social networking services, or Web 2.0 sites, are programs found on the Internet that aim to support groups of people who share similar interests (Dohn, 2009). These programs or sites can vary in size and purpose, ranging from sharing one's personal thoughts with friends to exchanging information with like-minded individuals. Sites like

these allow users to share their ideas, life happenings, and events with their personal social supports (Alexander & Levine, 2008). According to some educators, this technology presents huge challenges to institutions of higher education. Many have asked if advances in technology help strengthen the university system or make it weaker. As electronic media began to flood the educational market, many assurances were made that these platforms would enhance teaching and make education more available and affordable, without having to replace personnel (Gregorian, 2005).

Curriculum Discussion in the Social Software and Free and Open Content Period

Colleges at the beginning of the 21st century morphed into information hubs for the dissemination and establishment of impartial education (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2003). Given the opportunities provided by the connection of telecommunication and the Internet, computers were introduced to help make educational information more widely available than at any time period before. During this time, students could access educational materials from their homes instead of exclusively from their schools, which prompted educators to teach students ways to obtain information versus ways to memorize the information (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2003). Because a vast amount of information was available to people outside of the classroom, specifically through television and computers, educators began teaching students how to analyze and make sense of good, credible data versus valueless, unreliable data. Learning how to quickly sift through electronic material had become an important skill among pedagogy in higher education (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2003). Generally, educators had enhanced their curricula to meet the needs of the changing technology.

Additionally, during this time period, the idea of interdisciplinary collaboration within institutions of higher education had once again become a priority (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2003). Partnerships were enacted to help relate educational concepts from one or multiple fields of study to another. Because it was thought that disciplines were restricted by their narrow boundaries and specializations, these barriers were viewed as obstructions to the learning of subject matter (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2003). As a result, educators brought together subjects through curricula changes, such as learning communities, online learning, OpenCourseWare, and MOOCs.

Curriculum Critique and the MOOC

As did the adoption of the computer in higher education, today the integration of MOOCs has sparked discussions as to how this initiative would connect with the college curriculum. Curriculum creation and alignment is typically the purview of an institution's faculty, and whether to incorporate MOOCs is likely to be a matter of the faculty too (Voss, 2013). As documented in the past, new technological advances are critically questioned and the opinions of faculty span the gamut. For MOOCs, the same scrutiny exists. On one side, many question the technology and voice concerns about the intentions of administrators and board members for pursuing massive online learning. However, others are more optimistic about the power and opportunities afforded by the online learning platform. One supporter of MOOCs stated, "Anything that increases the opportunity to access higher education . . . is a good thing" (Gardner & Young, 2013). A variety of questions are being asked by faculty: Will MOOCs replace current courses and marginalize faculty? Will MOOCs act as supplemental resources for more advanced students, or will they provide a means of developmental education for the precollege-

level student? Will a student who lacks the drive and motivation have a chance in successfully completing a MOOC? Given the fact that the completion rate of MOOCs has been documented as low, will MOOCs become significant aspects of hybrid courses that combine online learning with face-to-face instruction (Kolowich, 2013a, 2013b)? Is it better for a student to drop out of a MOOC and not be penalized versus dropping out of a traditional course and receiving a formal mark on his or her record?

The prospects of MOOCs are continuously being built, broken down, and rebuilt. Ultimately, the acceptance of MOOCs will depend on the degree to which faculty reference them in everyday discourse and whether they perceive the platform as a viable learning tool.

MOOCs and Adult Learning Theory

MOOCs are still a new concept within higher education, and despite the fact that courses have been offered since fall 2012, academics are only now beginning to understand the preliminary data (Nielson, 2013). In a demographic survey of the 104,000 users enrolled in a fall 2012 Coursera Course called "Machine Learning," 14,045 users responded to reveal that 50% of them held jobs in the technology industry and were not current students in higher education (Kolowich, 2012). Of those enrolled in institutions of higher education, 20% stated that they were graduate students, while 11.6% stated they were taking courses as an undergraduate student. The remaining users identified themselves as "other" (11.5%), "unemployed" (3.5%), "employed, but not in the technology industry" (2.5%), or "enrolled in a K-12 program" (1%). In a sub survey, 39% of these users stated they took the course because they "were curious about the topic." An additional 30.5% of users stated that they enrolled in the course to help

support their skills in their current job. The smallest percentage of users, 18%, stated they took the course to help "position them for a new job" (Kolowich, 2012). In a more recent survey of students enrolled in spring 2013 courses offered through Coursera and Udacity, responses revealed that between 50% and 75% of users who participated in MOOCs did so to enhance their job skills and help lead them to a new job (Nielson, 2013). As a result, it is clear that most users taking MOOCs are not currently enrolled students at formal colleges and universities, yet these users most likely represent the population of people who may have already completed some college or entered the workforce out of high school.

Because MOOCs provide students with a self-paced, self-directed type of learning experience, adult learning theorists would agree with the data revealing a large amount of adult learner participation. Malcolm Knowles (1996), an adult learning theorist, noted that adult students are attracted to learning experiences where there is a task-centered or life-centered orientation to learning. His six principles of adult learning theory in concert with MOOCs characteristics make it a viable option for adult learners. The six principles are as follows: (a) adults are internally motivated and self-directed; (b) adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences; (c) adults are goal oriented; (d) adults are relevancy oriented; (e) adults are practical; and (f) adult learners like to be respected (Knowles, 1996; Holmberg, 1989). Knowles (1996) defined the term "adult" as "one who has achieved a self-concept of being in charge of his or her own life, of being responsible for making his or her own decisions and living with the consequences" (p. 1). Because of the openness, independence, and self-directedness that MOOCs provide, it is not surprising, in light of adult learning theory, that most MOOC users were

currently employed or taking courses to enhance their current skill sets (Knowles, 1996; Holmberg, 1989).

The ideology of MOOCs was also studied by connectivist theorists who stated that meaningful learning can occur when connections are present between users or between users and facilitators (Kop, Fournier, & Mak, 2011). MOOCs are forums that connect users to multiple learning methods. Similar to an online event, MOOCs promote user participation around a specific topic, supported by content experts in the area of discussion, "relying on successful formations of learning networks to assist people studying the topics" (Kop et al., 2011, p. 88). In their research on MOOC users, a maturing of skills was found over time among individuals who had more experience with MOOCs and higher participation rates with the course (Kop et al., 2011). Additionally, more experienced MOOC users were more likely to create online artifacts and expand their connections with other users when they were comfortable with the technology and the area of discussion. By breaking down each principle, it is clear how MOOCs and adult learning theory principles intersect (see Table 2.1).

There are some limitations to Knowles' (1996) and Holmberg's (1989) theories, however. Rather than being considered a theory, the learning principles are considered a set of ideas that educators should practice when working with adults. For example, while it is easy to assume that adults are more mature given their life experiences, one cannot assume that all adults are self-directed learners and would benefit from MOOCs. Some adults rely on in-class experiences as well as in-person connections with other students and instructors to create structure, and thus a MOOC would not necessarily be appropriate for this type of adult learner. Additionally, just because adults have a

Table 2.1
Adult Learning Theory as Applied to Massive Open Online Courses

Learning principle	MOOC intersection with adult learning theory
Adults are internally motivated	Most adult learners oppose learning when they feel information, ideas, and concepts are enforced on them (Fidishun, 2000). Given the self-directedness of MOOCs, however, students are able to learn at a pace that is motivational to them. As a result, students can take as much time as needed to learn material, ask questions, provide and receive feedback, and ultimately learn with their preferred learning style.
Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences	Adults enjoy the opportunity to use existing skill sets and knowledge from their own lives and apply them in the classroom. With MOOCs, given the wide variety of topics from which to choose, adult learners can select an area that is meaningful to them and enhance their preexisting knowledge.
Adults are goal oriented and are relevancy oriented	Adult learners are ready to learn when "they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems" (Knowles, 1980, p. 44). Again, due to the vast array of topics offered by MOOCs and given adults' life experiences, these learners may find many of the courses to be more appealing and more relevant to their own lives than those offered by traditional degree-granting programs.
Adults are practical	Adult learners enjoy understanding the practical aspects of what they are learning. They prefer being able to move quickly from textbook to a hands-on experience. Given the online nature of MOOCs, adult learners are afforded the opportunity to work hands-on at their own pace. Adults can review material on their own time and move from understanding material to applying it as soon as they are comfortable and ready.
Adult learners like to be respected	Adults, like any learner, like to feel important and that their contributions matter. With MOOCs, communication outlets allow users to connect with other students and course instructors via email, chat, and discussion board. Unlike traditional courses, where contact with the content expert is limited to the instructor or a teaching assistant, MOOCs allow and encourage users to communicate to the massive population for support. As a result, adults receive the support and respect they seek in this learning environment.

Note. Information adopted from Knowles (1996).

positive attitude in wanting to learn does not mean that they will be successful or find that the self-directedness of a MOOC provides a better environment than a traditional classroom. Essentially, while MOOCs provide a self-directed and self-paced type of

learning environment, one must take caution in assuming that all adults possess the characteristics of adult learning theory and would benefit from these principles.

MOOCs and Student Development Theory

The integration of MOOCs and social media-type content as a part of the current landscape of higher education increased as colleges and universities began to understand that students are gravitating towards courses that are attuned to their learning styles. The traditional classroom, which once was the only forum through which to learn postsecondary content, is now among a growing list of platforms from which college students can select. Given the openness and the ability of students to be involved in their own learning process, and as a result feel comfortable and successful in a meaningful environment, programs like MOOCs are becoming more popular.

Astin's theory of involvement states that students are more likely to learn the more they are involved in both the academic and social aspects of the collegiate experience. As a result, when students find a learning method that supports meaning and success, it is likely that they will continue to employ that method (Dohn, 2009). A student who is involved is one who dedicates time to coursework, is active in student life activities, spends time on campus with friends, and actively communicates with faculty (Astin, 1984). While MOOCs are offered via the Internet, the parallel of an involved online student is one who devotes time to academics, participates in online activities and discussion boards, utilizes online resources, and stays in contact with professors, student assistants, or other users. In contrast to Astin's earlier input-process-output concept, where the growth of the student is developed passively by the instructor, this theory suggests that the student is a major contributor in determining his or her own degree of

growth in college activities. However, ultimately a student's level of involvement will be dictated by the resources provided by each institution; an increase in resources equals an increase in involvement. Characteristics of Astin's (1984) theory dictate that in order for MOOCs to support a student's involvement, creators must make a concerted effort to increase students' ability to communicate and be engaged in their own learning.

Communication

When it comes to communicating with students, according to Gilroy (2010), it is imperative that institutions of higher education create multiple forums for students, which may mean the adoption of new technologies such as Facebook and Twitter in conjunction with MOOCs. Gilroy (2010) stated that in order for schools to connect with their students, multiple online accounts should be created to capture different audiences, including athletics, alumni, admissions, future students, and academic departments. Colleges who fail to create these connections or think that the idea of online networking is just a fad may miss out on their online audience and turn off students forever. Because Web 2.0 sites are primarily used to communicate, implementing these same types of connections in conjunction with academia could be helpful in retaining students (Astin, 1984). A recent study of social networking sites and Web 2.0 programs, including weblogs, wikis, and podcasts, revealed that when information is presented in a more usable and attractive template, students are more likely to be engaged and understand the information (Lorenzo, Oblinger, & Dziuban, 2007). Research by Cisco Systems reported that two out of three incoming college freshmen who attended a 4-year institution spent more than 1 hour per week on social networking sites during their senior year of high school, and out of all college students in the United States, 85% used social networking

to communicate (Wilen-Daugenti, 2007). Of the students surveyed, 73% reported using social networking sites to discuss coursework with others, with 27% stating that they communicated with others on a weekly basis (Wilen-Daugenti, 2007). Of these, 75% thought such sites were useful in enhancing their learning (Wilen-Daugenti, 2007). As a result, MOOCs that are able to sustain multiple methods of contact and maintain an active presence online are likely to help bolster student interaction and learning.

Engagement

Today, as students enter college, the integration of technology in the high school classroom has allowed them to embrace working in teams, having structure, and being intellectually engaged when learning in the classroom (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006). Growing up, these students have enjoyed activities that require and support personal communication, including instant messaging, Facebook, blogging, and email, to name a few. For these net generation students, learning is participatory, and understanding academic content requires an audio, a visual, and a kinesthetic component, all of which MOOCs can provide (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006). These students prefer environments where inductive reasoning is fostered, and they learn by doing rather than being told what to do (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006).

One example is the use of gaming and simulation, where students are able to assume the role of characters to create new experiences and learn on their own. For example, through the use of a game called Civilization III, students must interact, solve problems, communicate, and "deal with complexities—political, scientific, military, cultural, and economic. To win they must synthesize and integrate information from multiple disciplines" (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006, p. 13). Similar to social media

networking, gaming tools have also helped to bolster innovative ways in which course material is taught and learned. Given the "rule-bound structure" that a game provides, players find themselves in a virtual environment that "challenges built up skills and knowledge to help achieve specific goals" (Charles, Bustard, & Black, 2009, p. 102). Games provide a forum for collaboration and communication among users in a global environment. As these skills are essential for online learning, integrating game-like social media programs within the curriculum could support students' success (Blankenship, 2011).

A study of the integration of gaming within the classroom showed that "the game approach to the teaching and learning process seems to be successful" (Charles et al., 2009, p. 109). By creating an environment where students were placed into groups, rewarded for desired behavior, and given feedback on a weekly basis, students reported an 80% level of satisfaction, and failure rates decreased by 10% (Charles et al., 2009). Students responded very positively to the game-like environment and agreed that it was a "worthwhile experience for them" (Charles et al., 2009).

Overall, computer gaming, like online social media and MOOCs, provides students a different way in which to engage and converse with the world. If engagement is highly correlated to achievement and attrition rates, and gaming and virtual learning have been shown to improve engagement, integrating these types of programs into higher education curricula may prove beneficial to the discussions had by both students and professors (Trotter & Roberts, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

As the age-old topic of curriculum and pedagogy in higher education continues to dominate faculty discussion, so will the conversations regarding the implementation of MOOCs. Discussion of MOOCs, thought to be beneficial by some faculty but destructive by others, continues to increase with fervor and complexity. As faculty begin to understand how MOOCs work and what they can offer, opinions and research regarding the usage are becoming more common. While the conversations continue to expand within journal articles, it is clear that there is much more to learn. Most of the literature still presents MOOCs in a polarizing view. MOOCs are viewed as favorable or unfavorable, and there are few conversations that detail the middle ground.

To study these conversations, this research adopted the theory and method of discourse analysis as a conceptual framework. Specifically, this research embraced the tenets of James Paul Gee (2005), whose theory and method represent one of many ways to evaluate discourse. When defining the term *discourse* it should be noted that the term refers to more than just words or text. Rather, the term encompasses any meaningful language and expressions as articulated through communication (Gee, 1999). Using discourse analysis as a theoretical perspective emphasizes the point of view that "words have multiple and ever changing meanings created for and adapted to specific contexts of use. At the same time, the meanings of words are integrally linked to social and cultural groups in ways that transcend individual minds" (Gee, 1999, p. 40). What is important to note is the emphasis on social interaction within discourse. Gee (1999) defined the primary functions of human language as a "performance of social activities and social identities to support human affiliation within cultures, groups, and institutions" (p. 1). As

a result, to use discourse analysis as a theory means that the research must subscribe to the understanding that "language [in use] has meaning only in and through social practices" (Gee, 2005, p. 12). It is only when we can "see" the conversations in action and how they are constructed, organized, and played out in social action that we can really understand what is happening.

However, theory alone cannot uncover the meaning of discourse without the integration of a method. As previously noted, both theory and method are intertwined and must be used jointly. Gee's (2005) approach to discourse analysis as a method, admittedly, is made up of many tools and theories for which he cannot take credit. It is not an original concept but rather a compilation and balance of social and cognitive concepts that make it work. Gee (1999) openly stated that he borrowed and adopted others' work, but that his greatest contribution to the field of discourse analysis was being able to put all of the pieces together to create a mechanism that effectively studies language in use. Using discourse analysis as a method means using concepts and strategies to help describe and explain a particular phenomenon (Gee, 2005). Many methods are made up of several tools of inquiry that help close the gap between theory and practice. For Gee (2005), these tools came in the form of seven building tasks or seven different types of questions about the current language in use. The seven questions Gee (2005) asked are as follows: (a) How is language being used for significance? (b) How is language used to get others to understand what is happening? (c) What identity is the language enacting? (d) What type of relationship is the language enacting? (e) What language is being used to communicate social good or bad? (f) How does language connect with other language to make things relevant or irrelevant to one another? and (g)

How is language used to make knowledge relevant or privileged? Ultimately, discourse analysis as a method can offer insight into why specific words were chosen in a given conversation and also provide understanding as to how the conversation started. By applying these seven areas of reality to the conversations surrounding MOOCs in the community college sector, discourse analysis provided information about faculty members' perception of what MOOCs are and what role they will play in the future of their discipline.

Because this study aimed to do more than describe conversations about MOOC, the use of discourse analysis provided the researcher a robust mechanism for studying what language was used, how it was stated, and how it influenced what others said (Gee, 2005). As another advantage, use of discourse analysis allowed the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of a social issue. Since discourse analysis is highly fixed on the function of language in influencing cultures, social groups, and institutions, it is not uncommon for research in this field to reveal unspoken and unacknowledged aspects of human behavior. By dissecting the conversations using Gee's (2005) building blocks and tools of inquiry, the researcher used the information to obtain a better understanding of MOOCs that could potentially enact positive individual and societal change (Morgan, 2009). Since this research utilized focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews, discourse analysis also helped "people identify and understand their position and that of others in the world" (Morgan, 2009, p. 4). Ultimately, knowing one's position in the world can help other people to understand how to act and speak in different situations and empower them to make informed decisions in the future (Morgan, 2009).

While supporters of discourse analysis declare that the large array of building blocks and tools of inquiry is a strength in evaluating data, opponents criticize the superfluous options as a weakness, given that too many choices can cause confusion. With many options from which to choose, and given the fact that every theory of discourse analysis has its own theoretical concepts and procedures, the number of potential methodologies to be used can get complicated. As a result, the lack of specific procedures for evaluating data is cited as a limitation to generalizing findings for the public. Along the same lines, another major criticism is the level of subjectivity presented in the data. Because researchers in the field believe that meaning is never fixed and analysis is conducted through the researcher's point of view, data are always seen as open to interpretation and negotiation (Morgan, 2009).

What is known about the perceptions and attitudes towards MOOCs comes mostly in the forms of articles, comments, and editorials found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Predominantly thought of as the most commonly read news source for its constituents, the journal is a middle-of-the road media news source that reports on topics that are of interest to the larger population of higher education. The information provided by the journal is mostly free, but some aspects, such as receiving a paper copy, are subject to a fee. Authors and contributors range from the journal staff, faculty, students, administrators, and even readers outside of higher education.

Based on an initial review of MOOC discussions found in the journal, four perspectives were evident:

1. MOOCs are good for higher education and everyone benefits by sharing knowledge. Writers of this perspective believed that MOOCs are finally enabling

colleges and universities to live up to their global missions by allowing all people with access to the Internet to share, obtain, and learn postsecondary educational content.

2. The idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic and noble, but if they do not generate money, it is difficult to determine why institutions of higher education, which rely on tuition as a main source of funding, would support these initiatives. Writers of this perspective saw MOOCs as a positive step towards advancing institutions of higher education, but at the same time they questioned whether such a movement could potentially hurt them too. For example, institutions of higher education rely on tuition generated by students who enroll in classes. As a result, writers were uncertain as to why institutions of higher education would provide these same resources at no cost.
3. MOOCs are well known but not well understood. Writers in this position perceived MOOCs as a progressive step in educating the masses, but were still uncertain about many facts. One example of this perception came from a faculty member who taught online distance learning courses. While the faculty member was an advocate of online learning platforms, he still questioned the differences between his course and the way MOOCs function.
4. MOOCs and similar programs are approaching too quickly without consideration of their ramifications (Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012). Writers from this viewpoint were hesitant to accept MOOCs as a viable learning option and viewed them as an infringement of faculty rights. An example of this perspective came from the faculty member who felt that her livelihood was being replaced by a computer

program. Faculty expressed a feeling of being threatened and that institutions of higher education could use MOOCs as a way to cut costs and reduce the number of faculty they employed.

Overall, what we know about MOOCs and higher education as stated in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is just one perspective. Readers of this primary resource for postsecondary institutions have varying opinions about the online resource. While the journal represents the trendy discussions happening within institutions of higher education, its findings do not represent the perceptions and attitudes of any specific group of people. Arguably, most of the conversations that are representative of a specific population, like community college faculty, are happening via electronic communication, within department meetings, and among colleagues. Different groups of people from different disciplines have varying approaches to evaluating the topic. Specifically, because Gee's (2005) theory indicates that words take on meaning when communicated with others and influence what others say, it was imperative to hear the dialogues directly from community college faculty.

Summary

There is a great deal of information regarding higher education and the future of MOOCs that we still have to discover. The debates regarding educational technology and curriculum are cyclical, as evidenced through the recurring discussion over the past 50 years. By utilizing the lenses of discourse analysis as a theory and method in conjunction with focus group interviews and semistructured one-on-one interviews, the goal of this research was to provide a better understanding of MOOC-related discussions and describe how they can be used to prepare the community college sector for the future.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to document the conversations regarding the integration of massive open online courses (MOOCs) at community colleges as discussed by faculty. From a preliminary review of the MOOC literature found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* there were several noticeable perspectives: (a) MOOCs are good, and everyone benefits from the sharing of knowledge; (b) MOOCs are well known but not well understood; (c) MOOCs and similar programs are coming online too quickly without consideration of their ramifications; and (d) although the idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic, their true purpose is unclear (Bradley, 2012; Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012; Marguerite, 2012; Pappano, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). This research used discourse analysis as a theory and method to further examine this phenomenon. Specifically, this research utilized focus group interviews and semistructured one-on-one interviews to answer two research questions:

- What presuppositions do faculty hold about MOOCs and their significance for higher education in general as well as the community college sector in particular?
- In what ways do community college faculty employ references to MOOCs in their everyday discourse?

Ultimately, in a topic that is constantly fluctuating, this research helped gain a better understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in a sector of higher education that is also rapidly changing (College & Career Readiness and College Completion Act, 2013; Gonzalez, 2011; Kahlenberg, 2012).

This chapter begins by discussing the research paradigms that served as the foundations for the study. It then details the processes used for site and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Closing sections of the chapter discuss the validity and trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations.

Paradigm of Inquiry

A Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research takes a multipronged approach, using "interpretive" and "naturalistic" techniques to study behavior, events, and/or phenomena that take place in their natural setting (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). In order to understand the perceptions and thoughts of faculty, a qualitative design was considered the best approach for several reasons. First, a qualitative study allowed the researcher to understand the perspective of community college faculty by being able to ask questions about their opinions and understanding of the topic. Through focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews, the researcher was able to probe and ask participants "why" and in-depth questions as to the meaning of their statements. Additionally, the researcher was able to interact and follow up with the participants and "check with respondents for accuracy of implementation, [and] to explore unusual or unanticipated responses" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Second, due to the scarcity of literature and the limited studies of community college faculty and their thoughts surrounding the integration of MOOCs, it was deduced that a qualitative study served as the best medium to create a robust source of discourse. A qualitative approach was also strongly associated with the epistemology of constructionism, which emphasizes that individuals create and interpret meaning as they interact with the world around them.

Constructionism

This research was influenced by the theory of constructionism. This framework states that people in society create their own ideas, and thus information is not simply acquired (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001). Constructionism suggests that people are able to produce new ideas and information when they are actively involved in the building of that information. This theory also suggests that people can reflect upon this newly created information and communicate it with others (Papert & Harel, 1991). Often confused with the theory of constructivism, which emphasizes the creation of knowledge through simple transmission of information (from teacher to student), constructionism describes a process that requires a meaningful interaction; people must make a concerted effort to work with the information in order to understand it (Papert & Harel, 1991).

For this research, constructionism was the most appropriate paradigm of inquiry given the nature of the research questions, which evaluated the discourse among community college faculty. An important part of this research design was not only to describe what participants were saying, but to evaluate how faculty were saying it and how others in a group setting reacted and responded to the discussions. As such, discourse analysis was chosen as the theoretical perspective and method.

Discourse Analysis as the Theoretical Perspective and Method

Discourse analysis was used as a theory and a method to make meaning of the MOOC discourse. At the most basic level, Gee's (2005) theory posits that we "use language to say things, do things, and be things" (p. 3). In order to assess these words, Gee (2005) cited the importance of using the "seven areas of reality" or building blocks (Table 3.1) as one of several analytical tools (p. 17). From exploring the emphasis of

single words, to making connections between phrases, to evaluating the identity people create when using specific words, discourse analysis attempts to understand why and how people say what they say.

Table 3.1
Gee's Building Blocks

Building block	Definition	Example
Significance	The way in which people or texts accentuate or stress the importance of specific words	The statement "MOOCs and distance learning are really different" signals that the speaker is making a clear distinction between the two platforms by using the adverb "really." The use of this word conveys an emphatic feeling that shows significance.
Practices	Specific events or activities that are socially accepted or are considered normal with a specific cultural group	In higher education, it is acceptable for a professor to act as an advisor and give advice to students. This activity of giving advice is the practice to which Gee (2005) refers.
Identities	The way in which people use language to create a specific role or identity	In a classroom setting, the professor is expected to speak with his or her students using formal language. Outside of the classroom, when speaking to a colleague, the professor might speak less formally with someone he or she knows on a personal level.
Relationships	The connections people try to make or show with those they are speaking or writing to	A professor might call a student by his last name stating: "Mr. Smith, could you please stop talking" to emphasize a formal teacher-student relationship. However, by calling a student by his first name, "Donald," the professor conveys a more informal, colleague-like relationship.
Politics	The perceptions that people make and have about a subject when communicating, usually "good" or "bad."	The following three statements suggest very different views of a professor in terms of social goods: (1) "Professor Johnson makes his advanced psychology class very difficult to pass"; (2) "Professor Johnson's advanced psychology class is difficult to pass"; and (3) "Like all advanced psychology classes, this class is difficult to pass." In the first statement, the speaker clearly treats Professor Johnson as the main reason for the difficulty,

Building block	Definition	Example
		implying that he is not easy and thus denying him any social good. The second statement also places the difficulty of passing the class on Professor Johnson, but mutes the blame by not directly stating that he "makes it difficult." Finally, the last statement alleviates Professor Johnson of any blame, essentially granting him a social good, by making a generalization that no matter what professor teaches the course, all advanced courses are difficult and by alluding to the content of the course as the problem.
Connections	The way in which people make a specific subject relevant to other subjects	A professor who positively correlates the number of classes students take online with their average GPA makes a connection that values distance learning programs; the more classes a student takes, the higher the GPA. Conversely, the connection could indicate that distance learning reflects easy grading and is "bad."
Sign systems	How people make knowledge of a specific subject significant or not significant	A professor who speaks about a topic using advanced academic language is conveying a message that the topic is very technical and complicated. By the same effect, a professor who uses very simplistic and basic words to describe a specific topic is sending a message that the information is unsophisticated.

Note: Information adopted from Gee (2005).

In discourse analysis, it is difficult to establish, at the outset, the analytic questions and themes that will guide the investigation. That is, one cannot determine what to ask of data without knowing the data that are available. Gee (2005) reiterated that as researchers work, they continuously reevaluate, change, and adapt the tools and methods to the specific needs of their study.

Finding the proper lenses for which to illuminate the discourse required the researcher to become fully enmeshed with the data. To do this, a multiaxial coding

process was first applied to the discourse of both the focus groups interviews and the one-on-one interviews. Through the coding of data, the researcher was able to immerse himself in the data and make note of the many ideas presented by participants. From there, the researcher combined similar codes and noted outliers to create several salient themes. Many of the themes related to the way in which participants related positively or negatively to the topic. Additionally, some of the themes revealed that individuals made sense of the topic based on their own experiences or how MOOCs impacted students. Ultimately, the researcher was able to make sense of the discourse using all seven building blocks. However, to provide an in-depth analysis, only the most salient were selected.

To narrow the search, the researcher first applied each lens to several of the themes to best answer the research questions. For example, using the lens of "significance," the researcher reviewed the discourse for specific words and accentuation of words to analyze how faculty spoke of MOOCs and what kind of dialogue was used to describe their presuppositions. For most of the discourse, faculty spoke in terms of positive and negative adjectives to describe the phenomenon. Some participants used adverbs such as "really" and "very" to emphasize praise or disregard for MOOCs.

Through the lens of "practices," the discourse was analyzed for how statements made by participants may have encouraged other participants to act or respond in a certain way. By using certain phrases, such as "why don't you tell your story?" or "don't you agree?" it was evident that some participants used interrogative statements to discuss their perceptions of MOOCs.

Using the lens of "identities," the researcher looked for links as to how participants created and illuminated an identity in terms of MOOCs. Specifically, the researcher examined whether individuals' varied roles, such as part-time versus full-time faculty or positions within and among departments, and previous experiences would have an effect on how MOOCs were discussed. For example, would faculty from the computer science department consider their authority on MOOCs more accurate based on their workings with computers compared with those in the counseling and psychology department? While the use of titles as a means to define MOOCs was rarely discussed, participants who reported having previous experiences with MOOCs often noted this identity.

From the lens of "relationships," the discourse was analyzed from a viewpoint of how participants used formal or informal language to speak to one another. Specifically, given the different disciplines and educational backgrounds of the participants, the researcher evaluated whether varying language was used to create relationships in understanding MOOCs. Ultimately, while participants with previous MOOC experience spoke more personally about MOOCs, the language in which they used minimally delineated between formal and informal; most of the discussion involved informal language.

Using the lens of "politics," the researcher evaluated the discourse in terms of how participants related MOOCs in terms of "good" or "bad." Specifically, the researcher reviewed the use of polarizing viewpoints in participants' perceptions and understanding of MOOCs; faculty discourse was heavily rooted in terms of polarities to convey their perceptions.

Through the lens of "connections," the discourse was examined as to how participants associated MOOCs as relevant or not relevant to other topics. Through the specific words and topics of discussion, the researcher revealed that participants' presuppositions were widely based on relationships with current teaching practices. By comparing MOOCs to traditional in-person pedagogy, characteristics were perceived as important or not important.

Using the lens of "sign systems," the researcher evaluated how participants valued specific topics based on the complexity of language that was used. For example, the researcher reviewed whether participants used technical jargon or more basic terms to emphasize the importance of the topic. For the most part, basic terminology was used to describe perceptions of MOOCs. It was rare for participants to speak across dialects.

Once each lens was applied, the researcher reviewed the power offered by each lens to help answer the research question and related it back to the literature. Ultimately, the research questions were most strongly answered using the lenses of "connections" and "politics." The lens of "significance" also played a subtle role in understanding the discourse.

In conjunction with these lenses, Gee (2005) also encouraged the use of advanced analytical tools of inquiry to help dissect and analyze discourse further. These tools are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Gee's Tools of Inquiry

Tool of inquiry	Definition	Example
Social languages	The different number of languages that people use to communicate with one another	A professor would write to students using a technical and formal dialect but write to a coworker with a less formal and more relaxed dialect.
Discourses (with a capital "D")	The way in which people portray themselves to others; identities are made through language and behaviors	When a professor speaks to his class, he creates an identity not only through his words, but also through his inflection and his body language.
Discourses (with a lowercase "d")	The specific language people use to communicate	Refers to the language only.
Conversations (with a capital "C")	The communication about a subject that is happening within society. The tool does not represent individual communications among people, but the themes and ideas that are happening among a large group.	The discourse of MOOCs among society.
Conversations (with a lowercase "c")	The individual discussions that are happening among the larger group	The individual communication between a few people.
Intertextuality	The way in which words from different social languages are connected to make meaning	"Any student who uses their cell phone during class will be 'banished to the dungeon'" shows the intertwining of two languages. The statement "banished to the dungeon" reminds us of how people were punished for misbehaving in medieval times. It surprises us to hear this ancient punishment paired with a classroom problem of today when cell phones were not around hundreds of years ago.
Situated meanings	The way in which specific words are understood and recognized among different environments and social groups.	The term "distance learning" has multiple meanings. When the idea of distance learning was created in the early 1970s, learning was facilitated through the mail. Eventually, distance learning morphed into using telecommunication classrooms and currently to online platforms such as

Tool of inquiry	Definition	Example
		Blackboard and WebCT. Where the term may have different meaning, the interpretation comes from the environment from which it was introduced.
Figured worlds	How the meanings of words are influenced by past experiences.	Prior to the introduction of the Internet to the education system in the 1990s, "libraries" were the major physical repositories of information found in communities and schools. However, given today's open access to information, people who grew up with the Internet as a constant throughout their lives may only know the library as an electronic repository of information.

Note: Information adopted from Gee (2005).

The tool of "discourse" was selected at the time the research questions were created. Because the goal of the study was to identify presuppositions and to make sense of the language that was used, the "discourse" tool was most appropriate.

When Gee's (2005) building blocks and tools of inquiry are combined, there are potentially 42 different types of analyses and questions that can be conducted on a single piece of datum. Despite the large quantity of aspects for which to review data, Gee (2005) stressed that the purpose of discourse analysis is to be able to develop specific questions from the larger question based on the researcher's point of view. As a result, Gee (2005) stated that it is more realistic for a researcher to use a handful of the tools and building blocks rather than all of them, but it is important to keep all of these elements in mind when evaluating the data.

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection

The two sites that were studied were 2-year public institutions geographically located in the state of Maryland. The institutions were selected based on their developing interests in creating, housing, discussing, and implementing MOOCs and open source resources as referenced on their websites and institutional publications. Prior to contacting participants, the researcher sought and received permission to conduct the study from each college's institutional review board and office of academic affairs.

Institution A. This site, accredited through the Maryland Higher Education Commission, offers a wide variety of majors and career training. The institution enrolls over 20,000 students in credit and noncredit classes each year. Credit students are working and taking classes part-time or full-time to prepare for an associate's degree, transfer, or begin a career. The median age at Institution A is 22 years, and about 23% of students identify themselves as minority students. Institution A has received national and regional awards for excellence in publications.

Institution A holds membership in a number of professional organizations, including the American Association of Community Colleges, the Junior College Council of the Middle Atlantic States, the National Association of Colleges, the National Association of College and University Business Officers, the Maryland Association of College and University Business Officers, the Maryland Association of Community College Site Selection Trustees, the National Association of Community College Trustees, the National Accrediting Commission, the National League for Nursing, the

National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, and the Continuous Quality Improvement Network.

The institution currently uses an internal computer program to house noncredit and credit open-sourced materials. Students interested in taking open courses may do so by registering through the institution's website. While not labeled as MOOCs, courses found on the institution's open source noncredit site are free and open to anyone with Internet access. These courses typically run between 6 and 8 weeks and vary in discipline, spanning over 100 different topics. Instructors are available for help, and students may opt out of taking a course without any penalty (Institution A Website, 2014). Open-source credit-bearing courses are also provided at no cost to users. Courses vary from one to three credits and range in topic, including technology, paralegal studies, office management, and medical terminology and transcription. Most open-source credit courses provide users with the ability to earn certificates of completion or college credit that can be applied only to that institution.

Institution B. This site is a multicampus accredited institution registered through the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Institution B enrolls over 50,000 students in credit and noncredit courses each year to prepare students to earn an associate's degree, transfer to 4-year institutions, or enter the workforce. The median age at this institution is 25.1 years, and 73% of students identify themselves as minority students. Institution B offers more than 100 degree and certificate programs.

Institution B also holds membership in a number of professional organizations, including the American Association of Community Colleges, the Junior College Council of the Middle Atlantic States, the National Association of Colleges, the National

Association of College and University Business Officers, the Maryland Association of College and University Business Officers, the Maryland Association of Community College Site Selection Trustees, the National Association of Community College Trustees, the National Accrediting Commission, the National League for Nursing, and the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing.

Institution B has been recognized for the quality of its academic programs in humanities, arts, sciences, and business. In 2013, Institution B was one of many schools who partnered with the learning platform Blackboard to run a MOOC on the company's free platform website. The college has since reoffered the MOOC several times. The college also offers a wide range of career and technical programs, including nursing, biotechnology, automotive technology, and interior design. The college employs over 3000 faculty members, of which about 1400 are part-time.

Sampling Plan

In order to maximize information, this research utilized purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique that allows researchers to study participants who match the interests of the research questions being asked (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Invitations for the study were emailed to all full-time and part-time faculty at the identified community colleges on the student researcher's behalf through each college's faculty council. Additionally, flyers were mailed to all faculty members through intercampus mail as a secondary means of communication. The target was to recruit a minimum of 12 participants and a maximum of 24 participants; ultimately, 16 participants were recruited and participated.

Sample Population

Participants comprised employees who were currently working at the identified community colleges as either full-time or part-time instructional faculty members. Because the value of information lay in participants' ability to reflect thoughtfully on their experiences at the community college and their familiarity with MOOCs, to be eligible for the study, potential participants were required to be employed for at least two consecutive semesters in the community college sector within three academic years of the initial focus group (i.e., since January 2011). Additionally, while having an understanding of MOOCs was not required to be eligible for the study, it was highly recommended that potential participants be familiar with the concept in order to contribute to the discussions. A note detailing this condition was outlined in the research invitation.

Participant Invitation

Potential participants were contacted using institutional email addresses obtained from each school's institutional review board. The invitation briefly introduced the researcher, outlined the purpose of the study, described the time and effort expected for participants, explained compensation requirements, and provided instructions on how to contact the researcher and the principal investigator as needed (Appendix B). Other information, such as methods for data collection and audio recording and provisions for confidentiality, was included. Additionally, all potential participants received a paper flyer outlining these major points, including how to contact the researcher (Appendix D).

Participant Selection

Interested participants were selected for the study based on their responses to the questions found on the preinterview questionnaire (Appendix F). The questionnaire was presented in electronic form through a secure online web survey service. Potential participants were not required to answer "yes" to all questions to be selected for the study; however, participants had to have been employed at any community college for at least two consecutive semesters over the previous three academic years at the time of the initial focus group. Upon receiving responses of interest from potential participants, the researcher replied with a confirmation email including a "thank you" and a web link to complete the preinterview questionnaire. All potential participants were notified of their participation status within 10 business days from which the initial email invitation was sent. If after initial contact, the researcher did not hear from the participant within 10 business days, the researcher attempted to contact the participant two more times over a 3-week period. After a total of three unsuccessful attempts to communicate with the participant, the researcher terminated his attempts at contact.

One business day after the initial 10-business day period, all selected participants were emailed with a status of their selection into the study. Selected participants received a "welcome" email detailing the dates, times, and location of their focus groups (Appendix G). All selected participants received general information regarding the research study as well as copies of the information sheet about the research study (Appendix H). Additionally, selected participants received information about compensation. Any participant who completed both the focus group interview and the

one-on-one follow-up interview received a $20 gift card to Amazon.com. Participants received the gift card at the conclusion of their one-on-one follow-up interview.

Three business days prior to the focus group interview, participants received an email confirming the date, time, and location of the study (Appendix I). As stated in the information sheet about the research study, participants were free to terminate their participation at any time for any reason.

To ensure confidentiality of participants' identification, all communications and identifying information were secured in a locked digital storage space on the researcher's computer. All identifying information was kept as separate electronic files in a separate password-protected external hard drive in the researcher's home office. Participants' contact information was destroyed 6 months after the initial focus group interview.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to document the conversations regarding the implementation of MOOCs at the community college as discussed by faculty. Focus groups and one-on-one semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to gain awareness into participants' understanding of the topic as well as understand how individuals were persuaded by others in a group setting.

Focus Group Interviews

A focus group interview is a prepared discussion among a selected group of participants that helps to gain information about the participants' perceptions and understandings of a topic (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). This technique was preferred over other methods because the purpose of this study was to draw upon participants' feelings,

reactions, and beliefs about MOOCs that were not attainable through observation or surveys (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). Unlike group interviewing, where multiple people are interviewed at the same time, the emphasis of these focus group interviews was on the questions being asked and the interaction and conversation between the participants. Depending on the size of the group, the experience of the moderator, and the nature of the discussion, a focus group is typically moderated by one or two facilitators (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Each focus group was moderated by the researcher and lasted 60 minutes. A total of four focus groups were held, each composed of four faculty members from the same institution, ranging in academic discipline. Using a semistructured format, the researcher asked 10 common questions of all four focus groups and followed up with questions, as found in the precreated list (see Appendix A), based on the discussion of the group.

All focus group interviews were convened on the campus of each institution. At the beginning of each focus group, the researcher reviewed the information sheet about the study, and participants were invited to ask questions as applicable. After answering any questions, the researcher turned on the audio recording device and asked participants to create pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Each pseudonym was used for the duration of the study.

During the initial 30 minutes of the focus group interview, participants were asked to describe the characteristics of MOOCs by identifying three adjectives and a symbol or picture. Discussion ensued and the researcher asked follow-up questions as applicable. During the last 30 minutes of the focus group interview, using the precreated questions, participants were asked about the perceived challenges and opportunities for

MOOCs along with several follow-up questions pertaining to the effect of MOOCs on community colleges (see Appendix A). After each focus group interview concluded, the discussion from each group was transcribed.

One-on-One Semistructured Follow-up Interviews

As documented in several studies completed by The George Washington University, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard, Columbia University, and the University of Pennsylvania, supplementing focus groups with one-on-one interviews is integral to obtaining in-depth information from participants (Creswell, 2007). A semistructured interview is a technique that utilizes a set of predetermined open-ended questions created by the researcher combined with the opportunity for the researcher to freely question various concepts based on responses given by the participant (Creswell, 2007). Because each participant was assumed to respond to the focus group interview differently, a semistructured one-on-one interview was deemed most appropriate to allow the researcher to maintain consistency for some questions, but also to provide for customization of questions based on each participant's experience. Open-ended questions were utilized and provided an environment in which participants could discuss how and why they felt about a topic versus responding to only "yes" or "no" questions.

Each follow-up semistructured one-on-one interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. At the beginning of each participant's session, a copy of the transcript from his or her corresponding focus group interview was made available. As a consistency check, each participant was asked to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. Each participant was also given the opportunity to ask questions about the transcript, make comments, and request that information be redacted. Questions for each session comprised both

standardized and individual questions. Individualized questions were created prior to each one-on-one interview and were based on the statements made by the participant during the initial focus group interview, as shown in the interview protocol (Appendix K).

Pilot Study

In September 2013, a pilot study was conducted to test the focus group interview questions and to better prepare the student researcher's moderating skills. The focus group was held in a private conference room at an alternate campus of Institution B. The focus group was not audio recorded, nor was any identifying or demographic information recorded. The only record of the pilot study was documented through the researcher, who took notes to document irregularities and suggestions.

Three part-time instructional faculty members from this campus volunteered to participate for the pilot study (all referred to here with feminine pronouns for the purpose of anonymity). Each participant was screened using the pre-interview questionnaire, and each met the qualifications for the study. The pilot study convened for a full 60 minutes, utilizing the directions and notes from the focus group protocol. One business day after the interview, the researcher emailed the participants for feedback on the process. Upon reviewing the feedback, it was apparent that some of the questions elicited appropriate responses, whereas others did not. Specifically, one participant who identified herself as an avid MOOC user indicated that she found it easy to contribute to the discussion. This participant stated that the questions were thought-provoking and not difficult to answer in the time allotted. One participant noted that she enjoyed the uniqueness of using symbols and adjectives to describe the MOOC phenomenon. Unlike her experiences in other

surveys where she was asked to define terms, the participant commented that the exercise challenged her to come up with a response that was distinctive and personal instead of using standard universal language. One participant who reported a very basic understanding of MOOCs had difficulty contributing to the conversation. Despite explaining and expanding the MOOC acronym at the beginning of the focus group interview, she admitted that it would have been helpful to have been provided supplemental materials before the meeting to ensure a consistent understanding of the concept. As a result of this feedback, the researcher adapted the invitation to the study to include a statement that while knowledge of MOOCs was not a requirement to participate, it was a preference. References to MOOC literature were also made available to any participant who requested such materials.

Data Analysis

The coding process for transcribed focus group interviews and one-on-one semistructured interviews and notations made by the researcher was reviewed with consideration of how the data meshed with the research questions. Overall, the analysis followed five steps: (1) transcription; (2) confirmation of transcript; (3) open coding; (4) axial coding; and (5) development of themes.

The first step in analyzing the data consisted of transcribing the focus groups and one-on-one interviews as well as typing up any notes made by the researcher. Each focus group interview and one-on-one interview were digitally recorded and transcribed by a third party. All participants were identified by pseudonyms; however, in the event that personal information was stated or revealed during the discussions, that information was redacted.

After the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews were transcribed, the researcher listened to each audio file and compared it to the transcript for consistently and reliability.

Once the transcripts were verified with the audio files, the researcher began the coding process. According to Creswell (2007):

> Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information. It involves taking text, data, or pictures gathered during data collection . . . and labeling those categories with a term based in the actual language of the participant. (p. 186)

For the initial coding of this data, the researcher utilized a process called open coding. This type of coding allowed the researcher to process the data among a range of possibilities, including evaluating single words, full sentences, and full pages of text.

In a second-level analysis of coding, called "axial coding," codes that emerged from the open coding process were reevaluated and connected with other codes. During this process, codes that were initially created to separate the data into different pockets of information were recategorized to reveal their theoretical and thematic possibilities (Punch, 2008).

Lastly, codes and categories from the first two levels of analysis were evaluated for themes. According to Saldana (2013), "a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded" (p. 14). The themes gave insight into the description of what was being observed and stated as well as helped to organize the information into meaningful units (Saldana, 2013).

Evaluating for themes, like coding, was a rigorous process that required considerable comparison of all statements made by participants. As the data were analyzed, they were constantly organized and reorganized as patterns, gaps, and

repetitions emerged (Saldana, 2013). Coding of all data took place during the data gathering and data analysis stages. The themes that were created as a result of both open coding and axial coding helped to organize participants' quotations and helped to answer the overarching research questions.

Trustworthiness

Given the interpretive realm of qualitative studies, trustworthiness and validity are often viewed differently than they are with quantitative data. When evaluating for validity, Maxwell (2005) stated that "validity is relative. Validity is a goal rather than a product; it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions" (p. 105). Phillips and Hardy (2002) reiterated that since all concepts are created and questioned, including the concept of validity, validity in its most common understanding is not applicable to discourse analysis. Subsequently, it is the job of the researcher to reiterate the importance of "why and how findings are legitimate" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 79).

Gee (2005) related validity and trustworthiness to the strength and support of arguments made around a topic and did not view validity as a trait that can be compared to reality, especially as he described discourse analysis as subjective interpretation. Subsequently, he noted that people interpret reality through social language or symbols, which essentially create a number of different "interpretations," rendering it impossible to compare to a standard. Ultimately, the validity and accuracy of this research were maintained by adhering to four principles of discourse analysis: *convergence*, *agreement*, *coverage*, and *linguistic details*.

Convergence refers to the manner in which the data can relate to the seven building blocks and six tools of inquiry. According to Gee (2005), the more the building blocks and tools of inquiry conjoin to support the researcher's analysis, the greater the validity of the study.

Agreement is defined as the consistency in which the speakers of the language agree that the data reflect what really happens in the environment. In other words, validity increases as members of the social group agree that the data are accurate for their environment.

Coverage refers to the ability of the data to be related to other significant data. According to Gee (2005), "this includes being able to make sense of what has come before and after the situation being analyzed and being able to predict the sorts of things that might happen in related sorts of situations" (p. 123). The more the data can generalize to similar significant data, the greater the validity.

Linguistic details is defined as the way in which "communicative functions uncovered in the analysis are linked to the grammatical structures of the native language" (Gee, 2005, p. 124). Thus, validity is increased when the data are similar to what really happens within the social language that is being studied.

While applying these principles was not a guarantee that the data were safeguarded from error, intertwining them throughout the research as much as possible increased the probability of supporting validity.

In addition to utilizing the tools suggested by Gee, three additional techniques of qualitative trustworthiness were implemented. The first technique, member checking, took place during the one-on-one interview phase. Member checking is a procedure that

allows each participant to review the researcher's results for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the onset of each one-on-one interview, each participant was provided a full transcript of the focus group discussion. As part of the structured questions in the one-on-one interview, each participant answered several standardized questions regarding the accuracy of the transcripts and was provided the opportunity to comment on whether or not he or she believed the data were interpreted in a manner corresponding with his or her own experiences. Comments and feedback were recorded in the researcher's notes.

The second tool, called "rich, thick descriptions," allowed the researcher to provide a full account and explanation of the setting, participants, and responses. Additionally, the researcher fully documented the research methods and presented the findings with verbatim quotations from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, the third technique used to enhance trustworthiness was "peer debriefing." With this tool, the researcher worked with an outside researcher, who was deemed impartial, to provide feedback on various parts of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through peer debriefing, issues such as credibility of resources, validity, and researcher bias were addressed.

Subjectivity Statement

A subjectivity statement defines the relationship between the researcher and his or her work and any potential reasons why this connection could influence the outcome of the study. While it is hoped that using consistent language and interview protocols and following rigorous guidelines mitigates subjectivity and bias, nothing is completely free from bias.

The researcher described his own subjectivity as follows:

> I am currently employed as an administrator at a community college, so I have an affinity for the work of faculty and the students that populate our institution. Prior to my role as an administrator, I worked as a faculty counselor at the same community college, where I taught first-year students and was an advocate when it came to exploring and discussing online resources. In each of my courses, I utilized Blackboard as well as created assignments that required students to explore open online educational initiatives like Khan Academy and Coursera. When I teach, I am a fond believer that students learn through multiple learning styles, including audio, visual, and kinesthetic. As a result, and given recent changes in technology and communication over the past 11 years, I believe MOOCs and other online initiatives can provide students the ability to learn through these multiple dimensions. While I certainly support traditional models of higher education, I think higher education would be amiss if we did not reevaluate our current services based on the opportunities MOOCs and online resources can provide. Mission statements around the world boast of placing "students first," and given recent advances, I believe we can really start to do that. Additionally, I have participated in several MOOCs and look forward to taking more MOOCs in the future.
>
> Also, as a person who studied discourse analysis and as an educator, my hope is not only to report the findings of this study, but to insert myself into the discourse to help change the conversation. As a researcher and now a contributor to the MOOC discourse, I am fueled with the knowledge of how these programs might impact higher education and am compelled to continue the conversation.

In terms of the quality of discourse analysis as a theory and method, Gee (2005) stated that the "taste" of the researcher, or what the researcher brings to the table to make the study his own, is an integral component. Gee (2005) noted that each person will view and interpret discourses differently, but that uniqueness and personal touch is an important factor. As the researcher begins to organize, code, and make conclusions about information, he does so based on the influences of his own life and therefore contributes and inserts his taste in the conversation. The researcher commented on his own "taste":

> For me, my taste is influenced by the nature of my everyday work. Because my job requires me to solve problems at the micro level, I am constantly asking questions and gathering as much information as I can to make an informed decision. Within the research, this aspect is apparent, as every piece of discourse was evaluated and combed through using Gee's full complement of tools. Additionally, as a counselor, I listen to all sides of the story with a sense of unconditional positive self-regard. I take a very humanistic approach and listen to

> all aspects of the story with acceptance and without judgment. Through the use of numerous varying quotes from participants, this attribute is revealed; it is clear that all aspects of the discourse were considered and each perspective was discussed. Regardless of the quantity of topics discussed, each was fully recognized in this analysis.
>
> Finally, my personal taste in the research is revealed through the idea that this research is practical and has some merit in helping move the conversation within higher education. In my everyday work, I strive to find meaningful solutions to problems that have a profound effect on the community. I believe that the conversations of MOOCs and their integration at the community college is one that is lacking within the academic discussions and hope by doing this research, these discussions can increase and get people talking.

It is apparent that the researcher supports innovative, out-of-the-box educational methodologies to help students learn, and as a result, his preferences and feelings could prejudice the research. While there is a possibility for bias, protocols such as peer debriefing, member checking, and guidelines, as researched and applied by several well-known qualitative researchers, were implemented and verified with the dissertation advisor. Gee 2005 also states that the approach to Discourse Analysis is based on the "taste" of the researcher, specifically what ideals and experiences he brings to the table (p. 6). In turn, these tastes provide a subjective personalization and contribution to how the findings are created and conveyed. While the researcher was aware of his personal biases, he created a secure set of checks and balances to protect the integrity of the study.

Human Participants and Ethical Considerations

In consideration of human participants and ethical precautions, the requirements of The George Washington University Institutional Review Board pertaining to informed consent of participants were followed. An information sheet about the research study was provided to participants at the focus group interviews and at the one-on-one

interviews. Any questions pertaining to the information sheet were answered prior to starting each focus group or interview session.

Full and complete disclosure as to the nature of the research was provided to each participant, along with the assurance of confidentiality. Participants were not at any risk of a physical or psychological nature as a result of this research. At any given time, a participant was free to withdraw from the study for any reason. Anonymity and confidentiality were critical and were upheld when discussing aspects of participants' place of work. To ensure confidentiality, the following measures were taken:

1. This researcher and his dissertation chair were the only people who had immediate access to the data for this study. Data were secured in a locked digital or physical storage space when not in use.
2. Electronic copies of interview transcripts were deidentified and stored on a password-protected external hard drive in the researcher's home office.
3. Any communication between the researcher and participants as well as contact or identifying information was destroyed 6 months after the initial focus group interview.
4. All other information was secured in a password-protected space.

Overall, as a result of initiating these precautions, files and information were effectively safeguarded, and the identities of participants and institutions remained anonymous.

Summary

This aim of this research was to document the discussions of community college faculty in regards to MOOC integration among 2-year institutions of higher education. By utilizing focus group interviews and semistructured one-on-one interviews, this

research was able to document the current discourse of community college faculty. Through the lenses of discourse analysis, this research documented the conversational discourse surrounding these platforms as a way to understand where the discussions started, where they currently are, and how they will influence community college stakeholders in the future.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

Learning takes many forms, and for students who have tight schedules and limited money to invest in their educational path, MOOCs offer an opportunity to address their interests while mastering subjects on their own terms. MOOCs have evolved with technology and provide a channel to learning outside the traditional classroom environment that (a) provides free online access to higher education courses; (b) is open and free to anyone who wishes to take the course; (c) can provide learning courses for thousands of people online at one time; and (d) has no limitations regarding the number of users or the number of classes that one user can take. MOOCs also cover subjects that students may not have the ability or requirements to take during their program, which means students can learn about topics outside traditional curriculums, can take courses that have no bearing on their current curriculum, and can take courses just for fun or because they have an interest. Essentially, students can construct a personalized curriculum that suits their interests and expands on their learning processes in their own time. Given these new possibilities and the speed at which MOOC offerings are increasing, especially among 4-year institutions, the question of how this platform will affect the role of the community college and higher education is being asked.

Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participants of the study were selected from two Maryland community colleges known for their developing interests in creating, housing, discussing, and implementing MOOCs. To be eligible for the study, potential participants had to have been employed

as a full-time or part-time faculty member for at least two consecutive semesters in the community college sector within the three academic years before the focus group session.

Between the two institutions, four focus group interviews were held. Each focus group session involved four faculty members, for a combined total of 16 participants. Among the 16 participants in the focus group interviews, 15 participants followed up in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. Due to unknown circumstances, participant Patrick was unavailable after the initial focus group interview. Despite three attempts to follow up with him, he was not responsive and the researcher attempted no further contact.

Participants represented a variety of disciplines, including chemistry, biology, engineering, business, economics, English, computer science and applications, mathematics, literature, women's studies, psychology, and counseling. It should be noted that the academic disciplines of the participants did not represent the full complement of disciplines or degrees offered by each institution. Table 4.1 shows the demographics by group, including institutional affiliation, pseudonym, gender, and academic discipline. Additionally, the table shows whether participants had previously participated or completed a MOOC at any time and/or if they had taught a MOOC at any time. Of the 16 participants, six reported having participated and/or completing in a MOOC at some point, but none reported having taught a MOOC. All information was gathered from questions found on the preinterview questionnaire (see Appendix F).

Table 4.1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Group/institution /pseudonym	Gender	Academic discipline	MOOC participation	Taught MOOC
Group 1, Institution A				
Brittney	Female	Biology	Yes	No
George	Male	Business & Economics	No	No
Linda	Female	Biology	Yes	No
Patton	Male	Engineering	No	No
Group 2, Institution B				
Chip	Male	Counseling & Psychology	No	No
Cookie	Female	Counseling & Psychology	No	No
Dale	Female	Counseling & Psychology	Yes	No
Noreen	Female	Counseling & Psychology	No	No
Group 3, Institution B				
Elizabeth	Female	Engineering, Physical & Computer Science	Yes	No
Natalie	Female	Engineering, Physical & Computer Science	Yes	No
Patrick	Male	Business & Economics	No	No
Stan	Male	Biology	No	No
Group 4, Institution B				
Diana	Female	Mathematics	No	No
Erin	Female	Counseling & Psychology	No	No
Rocco	Male	General & Organic Chemistry	No	No
Vanessa	Female	English, Literature, & Women's Studies	Yes	No

Note. MOOC participation denotes whether each participant reported having participated in or completed a MOOC at any point in time. Taught MOOC denotes whether each participant reported having taught a MOOC at any time. All responses were gathered as part of the preinterview questionnaire (Appendix F).

Overview of Themes

From a preliminary review of the MOOC literature found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, several varying perspectives were found: (a) MOOCs are good, and everyone benefits by sharing knowledge; (b) MOOCs are well known but not well understood; (c) MOOCs and similar programs are coming online too quickly without

consideration of their ramifications; and (d) although the idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic, their true purpose is unclear (Bradley, 2012; Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012; Marguerite, 2012; Pappano, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). As a result of these statements, the research addressed the following question: What presuppositions do faculty hold about MOOCs and their significance for higher education in general as well as the community college sector in particular?

Thematically, this research question was answered through participants' presuppositions about what makes education successful at the community college. By analyzing these comparisons, the following four themes became apparent:

- Faculty shared the need to better understand the role and requirements of MOOC facilitators and students. Faculty questioned the lack of a standard curriculum across MOOCs as compared to in-person courses.
- Faculty discussed assessing students' understanding of course material as vital to a course's validity.
- Faculty discussed the importance of consistent attendance and participation within the higher education classroom (e.g., labs, lectures, discussion). They viewed intermittent attendance negatively. Additionally, they discussed the ability to confirm users' identities.
- Faculty discussed the need for students to be able to communicate and collaborate with instructors and peers within MOOCs. Faculty also noted that course objectives, assignments, and skills learned should be parallel with real-world experiences.

In addition to discussing how participants felt the role of MOOCs would influence the community college sector, it was also critical to understand how they talked about MOOCs in everyday discourse. As a result, the research addressed a second question: In what ways do community college faculty employ references to MOOCs in their everyday discourse?

From the discourse, participants referenced polarizing impressions of MOOCs as an option to education and focused on either the favorable or the unfavorable features of the online platform. Of primary interest to this discussion was the separation of these comments to define the context in which MOOCs represented an opportunity or provided a distraction, as well as the way in which proponents and opponents viewed MOOCs within the higher education landscape. During the process of evaluating these responses, the following four themes became apparent:

- Faculty questioned if MOOCs were accessible, safe, and customizable for students.
- Faculty talked about how the role of technology and communication within MOOCs impinged student success. Faculty also pondered the motives for institutions' use of MOOCs.
- Faculty discussed the ease in referencing MOOCs as a supplement to their own courses. Faculty also talked about how MOOCs provided a new avenue for which to gain professional development opportunities and innovation for the classroom.
- Faculty talked about the need to be properly compensated for time spent on MOOCs. They also discussed the rise of competition within and among academic departments that utilized MOOCs.

Additionally, the specific words used by faculty, in conjunction with their reported participation level of MOOCs, revealed subtle differences in how participants critically evaluated MOOCs. By analyzing the specific words of each participant and sorting them into different categories, the following theme was also apparent:

- Faculty who reported having previous experiences with MOOCs described them more subjectively and critically than participants who had never participated in a MOOC.

While the power of this theme is limited to the minority of participants, it nonetheless is worth noting.

These themes combined the participants' viewpoints of MOOCs as either important or not important, while also adding insight on the ways MOOCs can be utilized to supplement or act instead of a traditional curriculum. Using the theory provided through Gee's (2005) discourse analysis, the lenses of "connections," "politics," and "significance" coupled the research questions with faculty discourse, with the understanding that the topic itself is continually evolving and fluctuating. Of importance to the study was not only connecting the themes and defining the nature of each theme to illustrate how it might answer the research questions, but also to shift the movement about how people think and talk about MOOCs within the educational system. For instance, using the "connections" lens, participants placed the concept of MOOCs within the realm of their own personal experiences and expressed their viewpoints in a manner that reflected who they were and how they felt education should be handled in the near future. Through the lens of "politics," participants discussed impressions of MOOCs by making assertions that reflected how they saw MOOCs within the educational system,

being either a favorable opportunity or an unfavorable one. Finally, through the lens of "significance," participants who acknowledged previous experience with MOOCs used more subjective words and critical analysis to provide a deeper-level understanding of the phenomenon.

The following sections address these nine themes, reporting on findings from the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews.

Presuppositions of MOOCs and Their Effect on Higher Education

Based on the first four themes, the answer to the first research question is revealed. Specifically, by looking at the discourse through Gee's lens of "connections," community college faculty had various perceptions based on the associations they made between MOOCs and traditional classroom-style learning. By creating these comparisons of MOOCs to their own work and the work of their colleagues, faculty highlighted what they believed to be important and not important and illustrated how it might influence higher education and community colleges in the future.

Understanding Faculty/Student Roles and Standardization of MOOCs

Based on conversations, the first theme centered on questioning the instructor role within MOOCs, the role of students within MOOCs, and the standardization of materials and requirements among all educational platforms. Specifically, participants were concerned about the lack of common credentials needed to be a MOOC instructor, the lack of consistent communication between students and instructors, and the use of differing materials among similar MOOCs and in-person courses. Ultimately, participants presupposed that for MOOCs to be considered effective, they must be taught

by an expert in the field, "preferably from someone with a master's degree or above." Additionally, participants presumed that a community college student could only be successful in a MOOC if there was an expert readily available who consistently checked in with students. Participants also felt that MOOC users would be more successful when the resources within each course were consistent with information found in other MOOCs and other in-person courses in the same discipline.

When discussing the role of faculty within MOOCs, Brittney commented, "The quality of the education, I think, is going to be very dependent upon the education and the actions of the person who is leading the course." Stating that she had just finished a MOOC, Brittney noted:

> There were errors in the assessments that were associated with it. That was a little disappointing because I think that the information that was shared in the course was all top-notch, but the assessments that went with it didn't quite match the quality and expertise that I would have expected. In the end, I was really suspect of who was teaching the course. Anyone can Google information and put it on the web and call it a course. However, it takes a real expert to be able to take information and convey it in a way that has purposeful meaning. Lack of expert in my book equals lack of creditability.

By comparing her experience in taking a MOOC with the courses she taught, Brittney noted that the integrity of the courses was at risk if they were not facilitated by an expert. Thus, Brittney revealed that learning online cannot take place without an expert in the field, and as a result, would not be meaningful to students. Diana agreed and asserted that she was worried that students might get lost if they did not have an expert watching over them at all times. She stated: "I think that there is a large chunk of the population that without that one-on-one pushing, and motivating, and harassing in a good way to do your work, they won't be successful."

Given the ambiguous structure created by MOOCs, Brittney described the difficult role of students in each course:

> The credibility of a MOOC is highly dependent on the student and the student's purpose within the MOOC. With adult returners who are very motivated, for instance, in situations where it has been 20 years since they have been part of a classroom experience, the knowledge and potential to learn is clearly in existence, but is essentially buried under a layer of cobwebs. As such, an online-based system allows these learners to come back into the educational field in a way that gives them a sense of ease and comfort while still entering a credible and focused classroom environment. In these cases, the potential to learn and be motivated in terms of education could return relatively quickly. It could also set students back and turn them off from higher education, damaging the system as a reliable place for which to learn.

Cookie also agreed with this sentiment and stated:

> I think it goes back to the motivation of the student. You have an expert that will push all of this information, all of this material, so if someone is incredibly motivated to get the most that they can out of the class, then hopefully some real learning will take place. If they're a real self-starter, they're dedicated, they're going to read materials, they're going to take the time to watch videos, but other individuals, if they're taking a MOOC and they're trying to get some sort of certificate out of it, some sort of, "I have a certificate of completion; I have a skill now," but if they only put in half or quarter of the effort, how do you really gauge how much they actually got out of the class compared with someone else who has invested 120% at class? And if there is collaboration between peers, if there's any kind of review between peers and you're getting feedback from someone who is not a so-called expert in that field, you might be getting some inaccurate information or some biased information that's not really reflective of whatever the discipline or the subject is. This, in my opinion, weakens the credibility of the MOOC, and I think that in my mind is a little bit worrisome.

For Diana and Cookie, the effectiveness of a MOOC was based on the persistence and motivation of each student. Cookie stated:

> If a student is not a "self-starter" or a "go-getter," MOOCs might not be an ideal learning tool. In order for a student to benefit and learn from a MOOC, the student must contain an "invisible prerequisite" attitude of persistence and determination.

For participants, the lack of curricular standardization, including the varying information presented in MOOCs, as well as the inconsistent presentation of information, caused a feeling of discontent when describing them. Participants also conveyed concern about the lack of prerequisite knowledge needed to enroll in any MOOC. Many participants reported feeling uneasy about the idea of a credit-bearing MOOC where students were not preassessed or required to meet certain course prerequisites.

Linda acknowledged that while MOOCs provide "an opportunity for access to something that people didn't have previously," her primary difficulty was in the lack of consistency in the material presentation, something that she stated that a traditional class would "absolutely have." Additionally, Linda felt that because "MOOCs are not completed in real time, there is no framework for assisting students who are not self-directed learners." Natalie established a similar concern:

> Everything comes down to being able to set the foundation and to be able to follow the standard. Sometimes automation as a substitute for consistency and efficiency actually creates more problems. In one of my face-to-face classes, we used a type of automated program to help students with some of their computer programming, which can take a long time. However, because the program lacked the human component, it tweaked students' work to comply with an automated algorithm, which gave students incorrect programming results. Because of this automation, students were getting wrong answers and were not learning how to accurately customize programs for their client's needs.

For Dale, consistency among courses began when everyone met certain criteria for taking a course. She asserted that, too often, students taking courses even through distance learning are not successful because they are not all at the same level when it comes to having the prerequisite knowledge or the know-how to navigate the e-learning platform. She explained:

> The critical thinking, flexibility, persistence, curiosity, creativity, and motivational skill sets lacking in many students early on in their education are often critical for success in an online learning environment. Students who aren't in the same mind frame for taking courses are set up for failure. This coupled with inconsistent information could lead to a negative impact on higher education for both faculty and students.

Dale also noted that if a MOOC were connected to a well-regarded accredited institution of higher learning, the academic standards applied to courses offered on campus might also be applied to a MOOC. She stated:

> In higher education, we are compelled to question the validity of information. For example, I would not be likely to direct my students to Wikipedia as a primary source for information. Instead, I would be more apt to point them to peer-reviewed journals or other scholarly information. If a MOOC were connected to a well-regarded, accredited institution of higher learning, I would expect the same academic standards applied to on-campus delivery of courses would be expected in a MOOC. It is evident that there is value in offering alternatives to the established way of doing business; however, regulation still serves a purpose in protecting the integrity of the process.

Overall, Linda, Vanessa, and Dale noted that consistency in the form of resources and prerequisites were lacking from most MOOCs, which made it difficult to consider them an effective standalone educational tool. While some of the information found in various MOOCs was deemed to be of quality and helpful, due to the ambiguity of regulated instruction and lack of common consistent guidelines, MOOCs were viewed by some as "purely supplemental." As a result, some faculty presumed that for MOOCs to have a place at the community college, MOOCs would need to be standardized in terms of resources and the requisite knowledge needed to participate in them. Without these regulations, participants felt that MOOCs would not work for the community college student.

Therefore, by making "connections" to their own personal experiences, participants illuminated their growing apprehension about the value of MOOCs as compared to the traditional classes they taught. Additionally, participants revealed a concern in supporting MOOCs due to their lack of prerequisite processes and regulations.

Assessment Techniques of MOOCs

The second major theme addressed the idea of evaluating MOOC users' knowledge acquisition and progress through assessment metrics. Specifically, participants discussed their concern that MOOCs did not always assess users of their understanding of material during or at the completion of each course. As a result, participants questioned the validity of MOOCs as a useful tool. Additionally, given the massiveness of courses and the use of peer grading, some participants questioned if peer-to-peer assessment was effective.

From these impressions, participants revealed a preference for strategically timed assessment in their everyday workings as well as specific assessment tools to understand users' success along the learning continuum. Participants assumed that the need for accurate and effective assessment was critical in supporting the work of faculty and the quality of education offered. Without this evaluation, faculty could not assess whether their methods of teaching were working, nor could students verify if they had mastered the information.

As an instructor, Brittney saw a clear discrepancy in the ability of a quality professor to impart his or her knowledge productively without being able to connect with students in a manner that provided at least a minimal assessment of comprehension. She commented:

> For example, the course that I just finished, the first two modules on it, I teach [and] lecture that same content in my own classes. I was able to judge what [the MOOC instructor] was saying so far as, "Did it match what I know? Does it match what I know and take it farther? Does it make sense with what I do know about the topic?" In judging course content in this manner, one can evaluate the content based on course assessments. Based on my personal experiences and assessments, this is the area where MOOCs showed distinct issues.

Cookie observed that in terms of the credit portion of a MOOC, there was an uncertainty as to whether or not all students should get the same credit for what they accomplished, citing that "until the process is more regulated," students should have to prove their knowledge to a greater degree within MOOCs. In this capacity, Cookie was reluctant to agree that MOOCs should be a component in students' degree completion process until their knowledge could be fully assessed.

Additionally, Vanessa related that the implicit value of a student completing a MOOC would not be comparable to a student completing a traditional course unless there was a more standardized method for signifying competency in a subject. Vanessa acknowledged that if a student of a MOOC indicated that he or she was proficient in the material, she would require a demonstration to ensure that the student's competency level was indeed the equivalent of that in a traditional course. Vanessa stated:

> If they only get a certificate that says they completed the course and we don't have any way of knowing what the completion of that course is, . . . what the completion actually looks like, what they did to complete it, . . . then we need to be able to see what that means for them to make sure that the standards are in the same place. Just because it's Harvard. OK, it's Harvard. . . . That's [what] we're certifying [when] we're saying we know what the content is. We know that they have achieved that content for [earning] a certificate because the standards had been aligned and the expertise has been aligned. Without having an aligned curriculum, then, there exists a conflict between the implicit value of a traditional class versus the implicit value of a MOOC, being that the MOOC does not hold the same, or comparable, value without additional context for both the student and the college.

Linda also acknowledged that two of her concerns in supporting MOOCs as a means to awarding a degree were the insufficient assessment of a student's learning and the lack of expertise applied to grading assignments. If the instructor could not validate assessment of learning of the actual person taking the class, it was impossible to know who was actually doing the work. She noted, "It could be their mother, it could be anyone; it's the insufficiency of the assessment and accountability."

In regards to MOOCs using peer-to-peer assessments to grade work and provide other users with feedback, Dale explained how she was weary of its validity and reliability. On some MOOC sites, Dale noted that the assignments were "graded by other students in the class" and commented:

> MOOCs are so large, there's no way the teachers or the TAs [teaching assistants] could do all the reading in the MOOCs. Frankly, it scares me, especially in my field, that a peer could be incorrectly grading someone else's work. I work in a field where mistakes cost lives, and one wrong answer from someone who isn't considered an expert could be deadly. So I don't think a participant in the course is qualified to be grading others' work. I say, until they overcome the evaluation problem and the assessment problem, I don't see them as being a certifiable resource for a degree.

During this conversation, participants agreed that a course without assessment has very little authority to certify students as experts or knowledgeable upon completion of a course. Participants questioned how any instructor or institution of higher education could garner any value from a course that failed to assess learning, let alone accept credit for it. Additionally, any course that used peer-to-peer assessments, where nonexperts evaluated each other, was also presumed to be untrustworthy. Participants questioned how users unfamiliar with a topic could accurately provide meaningful feedback on a topic for which they themselves were not experts. As a result, the underlying presupposition woven throughout the discussion was that regular assessment, proctored

or evaluated by the expert, is fundamental before granting a credential or assuming a user has prerequisite knowledge.

Again, using the lens of "connections," participants were leery of a course that did not have standards for comprehension or an exit exam comparable to those of a traditional college class. Not having an assessment process was a point of frustration for opponents of MOOCs because they did not see a rationale for learning within an environment that had no comparable outcome.

Consistent Attendance and Identity Confirmation

Given the autonomy provided to MOOC users, such that they were not required to "be in attendance at all times," and given the lack of ability to confirm students' identity, community college faculty were very concerned about the lack of accountability measures. The idea that users could intermittently "drop in a class" whenever they wanted was alarming to participants. Based on their own comparisons, regular attendance and routine attention to class assignments were discussed as integral for students at the community college, especially for developmental students. This was a common presupposition found throughout all focus groups. Cookie, for instance, stated her dislike of the idea that students could just "pop in and out" of the class. She noted:

> Currently, individual students who sign up for a MOOC are not required to complete the course if they are unable to do so. As a MOOC is exceedingly more cost effective than a traditional course, there exists a lack of genuine accountability for students enrolled in MOOCs to complete the course or succeed in the subject matter. If the MOOC is offering a credential similar to an in-person course, the student should be required to meet the mandatory classroom hours similarly found in traditional learning. Without this, I don't see MOOCs as a viable option for credentialing.

Patrick considered the optional nature of MOOCs the most important factor in student participation, observing that "students begin participating in a MOOC but then eventually they fade away, life gets in the way, they got busy, missed a couple of lectures or assignments, and they fall behind." In this, Patrick contrasted the optional nature of the MOOC to the lack of accountability inherent in an online course. Compared to Cookie, Patrick felt the same way, identifying that the primary downfall of MOOCs was the inability to hold students accountable for coming to class and receiving the information in a comprehensive, regulatory way.

According to Elizabeth, "MOOCs require students to set their own boundaries for comprehension and course completion and, in general, have no true accountability system for requiring students to 'come' to class every session." Elizabeth felt that the majority of students who enrolled in MOOCs would back out or just stop attending because there was no requirement for attendance or a policy for accountability.

Linda related a similar concern in that there was no direct framework for validation because the professor did not know who was 'coming' to class or who was learning from the material. In comparison to her own experiences, she stated:

> Often time, online courses set a pattern for leaving students behind. Without a system of accountability, for instance, we don't know who our students are and students have no methods or measures with which to move forward in a MOOC because there is no easy way to track their success or measure their progress against other students. Without being in real time, there is no true way of charting progress among students; and further, there is no system of accountability to ensure that students move through the program to an acceptable level or that they can come forward if they need help with a concept.

Diana, who commented on the notion that MOOCs take in individuals from different levels of learning, stated, "It's essentially 'they float or they don't' concept. Everyone is essentially allowed to take any course because they don't ask about your

prior skills. They might ask, but the accountability factor is still minimal." Additionally, she observed:

> If an individual is one who does not do the work, or if the work these individuals put forth was not of high quality, then those students are going to be caught at the next phase. If MOOCs can hold people accountable, then people who don't know the content will get sifted out before the next level.

For students who did persist and completed the online assignments, Elizabeth cited apprehension about being able to identify that the student taking the MOOC was the one who actually took the tests:

> For one thing, there you said you could have thousands of people that could be taking this. Part of it's just a logistics issue as far as being able to assess that many people in real time. I think that's the biggest thing is just if you've got that many people, it's . . . unless they're using an automated tool or something, I think it would be very difficult. Even then, if you're using the automated tool, how do you even know that the person who says they're taking the test is taking it?

George added his own concern about being able to accurately identify students in his own online courses. As result, he spoke about the importance of role identity in MOOCs:

> As a person who teaches online or hybrid courses, you have to be cognizant of a student's identity, and who's really taking the course and who's really not. Is that a concern for you in MOOCs . . . to validate who's really taking it and who's really getting the knowledge? I do online exams, and I do have that concern sometimes. Unless you do fingerprint recognition, which would be pretty cool, there's no way really to validate, at least that I'm aware of. Face-to-face assessment of students could prove beneficial. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what I did in Shanghai, at the university there. I had online exams, and when I saw that the distribution of the results of the exam, exam one, were very, very high and unusually high, I was suspicious. The next exam, I went the old-fashioned way, and we did it in class. Maybe doing that assessment might be a way to address that concern.

Overall, Diana explained that while MOOCs have potential at the community college, there is still a lot to be desired when it comes to holding these courses to rigorous academic standards. She noted:

> I could see having a core of certain entry-level courses that would maybe entice someone of lower socioeconomic status to get started and to have that foot in the door. And then of course we are cheaper than others. We're a college so hopefully we can continue to be right for them. I'm not against having them here. I just have a lot of questions about accreditation and assessment. I think if it was based from [Institution A], it would have these qualities and I'd feel much better about them.

From these discussions, it is apparent that participants valued the ability to hold users accountable for their participation and work in class. In their current form, participants indicated that MOOCs do not have the proper assessment framework to support teaching or learning. Through comparisons of accountability measures in their own in-person classes, faculty reiterated the presupposition that without the ability to mandate assessment and collaboration or the ability to fully confirm students' identity, MOOCs would be unlikely to provide any value to higher education or the community college sector.

Through the lens of "connections," faculty conveyed that while many students are capable of learning on their own terms and reaching significant levels of comprehension, because there is no way to confirm which students are completing which assignments and attendance is not mandatory, it is a difficult platform to rely on or support.

Social Interaction and Real-World Application Opportunities

Socially, MOOCs can foster a community of like-minded learners and establish a forum to foster communication, competitive learning, and peer relationships. MOOCs

also grant users the ability to explore esoteric topics that might otherwise be too difficult and expensive to offer through the traditional classroom. Regardless of the available resources and open communication offered by MOOCs, participants agreed that the most important aspect is that skills learned through MOOCs must be commensurate and transfer seamlessly to real-world applications. In these discussions, participants presupposed that learning a skill online does always equate to learning the skills in person and, as a result, may not benefit students.

Diana was quick to assert that the social aspect of MOOCs varied widely, depending on how active the facilitator and the participants were in any of the available discussion boards:

> Some MOOCs will be highly interactive while others far less so. A student might be able to create peer relationships in a lesser interactive MOOC, but they might find their learning is hindered by the lack of participation and determine that only MOOCs with high participation rates will be of value to them. Other students might find the opposite to be true, finding less purpose in online interactions than with the course material. For so many of our students who have completed their collegiate degrees, the social aspect of their schooling is largely considered to be one of the most valued components for a student. At the current time, where networking and making professional connections are key to an individual's respective success in the real world, eliminating genuine social interaction from an educational setting seems counterproductive. . . . Despite the fact that many MOOCs don't offer students the ability to communicate with one another via message boards and forums, there is no real viable communication between these students, which devalues the experience overall and can drastically hinder the student's ability for comprehension. How, then, can individuals who participate in MOOCs note that they are satisfied with the social component of these courses if they are incapable of picking any of their fellow students or their instructor out of a lineup?

Dale talked about the lack of communication in a MOOC, especially when there was low interactivity because of the nature of the course. She described her concern:

> Students have no way to complain or create changes within the online environment. They are alone in their inability to learn from the environment

> because there is no way to generate connectivity and relationships that do not exist. In this, there is a distinct downfall to MOOCs, where students are left solitary in an online environment and have no chance to interact, communicate, question, or socialize with fellow classmates. As such, regardless of the actual interactivity of the MOOC, the student's ability to interact with classmates have no opportunity for continued interaction, camaraderie in the professional world, or ability to utilize fellow students or teachers in terms of networking or professional advancement.

Diana agreed that collaboration in any classroom is integral to learning. She had no doubt that MOOCs should provide the same:

> I think that if anything, it just helps us remember to keep our quality high so that there's value added by actually coming to class and collaborating, as opposed to just watching videos. That's happening even without MOOCs in classes—like our developmental math, where the delivery is through an online system, with videos and PowerPoints, etc. The question has come up as "What's the point of the teacher?"

Diana also observed that there could be other social issues, including the need to use and touch equipment or the difficulty that many students might have when exposed to an artificial work environment. Diana stated:

> Many individuals in these colleges believe that there is something missing in taking only online classes, as students never have the ability to be completely hands-on. For instance, individuals who complete their degree in any science, for instance, despite learning the tools and concepts they need to know to master the subject on paper, if that individual were to come into a lab, they would likely not know what to do.

As such, Diana suggested that some MOOCs need to force students to take part in a hands-on component where applicable. For example:

> In the realm of science if [students] can't come into a physical lab . . . you're not getting that same level of education. . . . Because of this, many community colleges are resistant to offer MOOCs at all in the field of math or science because these schools feel that someone who is going to be teaching and interacting socially and demonstrating techniques using manipulative and other hands-on methods needs to have done them in their own respective educations. I know there are innovative things or should be where you have to submit video of

> yourself teaching something or doing something. You can do some of that. But doing a one-time video, it's not like you could do all the time. I don't think it's at the same level as having classroom discussions and having case studies where you act things out, work with other people or, in my case, hands-on practicing of teaching.

In other words, according to participants, it was not enough for students to complete a MOOC; they must master the subject matter in a way that allows them to effectively understand course content and perform it in real-world applications. Vanessa agreed with this sentiment and stated:

> The stopping piece for me is as an institution, if we're going to give you a credit for something, we need to know that it aligns with what we're asking students to do in our face-to-face world.

Overall, it is apparent that participants placed significance on the ability to communicate with students and that a challenge for students was finding a MOOC that provided strong educational value on a topic in a meaningful environment. According to participants, the primary purpose of education is for students to interact, discuss, and relate on topics to gain a deeper understanding and greater insight through conversation and real-world action. Further, without communication and collaboration among students and faculty, the value of a course is diminished. As a result, faculty presupposed that MOOCs would have very little to offer students, higher education, and community colleges if communication and teamwork were not paramount to each course.

Using "connections," participants demonstrated a need for a personal communication between themselves and their students as a method of understanding how students were handling the material and what level of comprehension they attained. The environment of the MOOC was foreign and solitary, which, for many of the participants, meant that the MOOC style of learning was not highly conducive for students who

require a personal connection. Participants reflected that the nature of social interaction was a primary component in a cohesive and collaborative learning environment. When education is shifted into an online realm, where accountability is lost to virtual identities, the process of learning is equally shifted into an abyss where actual comprehension cannot be examined.

References to the Term "MOOC" in Everyday Discourse

The second research question posited that community college faculty had differing views and perceptions of MOOCs in their everyday discourse. By looking at the discourse, it was clear that faculty made polarizing references to characteristics of MOOCs. Specifically, participants' perceptions were focused on the effect that MOOCs would have on the faculty role. The following four themes, in concert with Gee's lens of "politics," helped answer the second research question regarding how faculty spoke of MOOCs in their everyday discourse. The themes were as follows: (a) faculty questioned how MOOCs are accessible, safe, and customizable for students; (b) faculty talked about how the role of technology and communication within MOOCs impinged student success, and faculty also questioned the motives for institutions' use of MOOCs; (c) faculty discussed the ease of referencing MOOCs as a supplement to their own courses and talked about how MOOCs provide a new avenue for which to gain professional development opportunities and innovation for the classroom; and (d) faculty talked about the need to be properly compensated for time spent developing and monitoring MOOCs. Additionally, Gee's theme of "significance" also played a similar, yet subtle, role in discussing the discourse among faculty. Specifically, the words used by participants who reported previous experiences with MOOCs revealed participants' ability to provide a

deeper evaluation of analysis. As a result, a final theme of the discourse was that (e) faculty with previous MOOC experiences offered a more subjective and critical evaluation of the platform than participants who had never participated in a MOOC.

MOOCs as Accessible, Safe, and Customizable

In both interview formats, participants agreed that MOOCs have the potential to be a viable learning tool for students and faculty. In general, participants felt that some aspects of MOOCs could act as a valuable resource for students who had an interest in a specific topic that they couldn't take a course in at the collegiate level or at their community college. Faculty discussed that MOOCs allow students to take courses without prerequisites and, as a result, students can often receive material that they would never get access to during the course of their current curriculum. Through the ease of accessibility, the safe cost exploration, and the ability to customize learning, participants viewed MOOCs in a favorable manner.

Based on the conversations, some faculty agreed that the mere ability to be exposed to new topics was a positive experience for students. Linda stated, "It's okay if a student doesn't always find value in the course; that just shows they're learning what they like and don't like." Linda continued by relating the affirming nature of MOOCs, noting that the openness

> allows teachers to get students to connect to material in ways that allow her to make direct references so that students can see the relevance of the subject at hand. For instance, if these students jump into a MOOC and get a better understanding of something other than chemistry, they can adjust things like marine biology or genetics or psychology in their class; it could be other disciplines outside of their own.

Linda also observed that what she liked about MOOCs was the wide variety of deep topics students could gain access to, including topics that would be off limits to certain majors. For instance, she stated:

> An English major would not be allowed to take an upper-level science course because they would not have the background requirements to ensure their complete course comprehension. With a MOOC, anyone can have access to whatever subject they please, and their ability to do well in the course will be completely up to how much they put into the study of material. Therefore, a student can embark on a MOOC of their choice and be granted information that they might never receive in a traditional classroom at community college.

Finally, according to Linda, taking a MOOC could mean the difference between getting a chance to get in depth with a topic of high interest and never being able to learn such things because of restrictions and regulations that define their course of study. As a result, Linda spoke highly of MOOCs to her students, referencing them as a "wonderful tool where students can play and not get hurt."

Natalie continued in much the same manner, mentioning her high praise of the ability of MOOCs to impart information and exist as a viable student resource:

> The ideal thing about MOOCs is the availability to notes, videos, assignments, and interaction. The discussions between members are very useful. I mean, they can help a lot to provide students a place to exchange information. Before MOOCs, I was against the idea of peer tutoring. I do like the comments that come from peer tutoring. It's very difficult. It's very difficult to find the balance, but sometimes peer-tutoring does help. I just want to reiterate that I believe that [MOOCs] would be useful to have some of this preparation to programming course so students can take it and when they come to our courses, they would have some knowledge . . . a little bit of preparation so they don't get overwhelmed. I think it would be very useful to have prep courses or some review courses of calculus I or calculus II or biology available so students can refresh what they learned 20 years ago when they come. It would be nice to have a refresher on any level that helps students to come back and be aligned to this, their up-to-date material.

Diana established that learning in a MOOC could shift a curriculum's focus from lower-tiered classes to upper-division classes of great importance. For instance, Diana related:

> Learning in a MOOC is ironically quite the same and quite different from learning in the traditional classroom setting. The MOOC, for instance, allows students to take on the same type of educational courses that are offered in traditional colleges, but offers the ability to learn in a far different and more subjective manner that takes students' personal lives and educational needs into account first and foremost. MOOC offers much of the same experiences of the traditional classroom, but allows the students the ability to access these course materials and topics in a way that better suits their respective learning capabilities.

Cookie believed that MOOCs were a great way to introduce students to a different way of learning in the manner of letting these students know that there are other options, perhaps far more convenient, to the traditional method of learning. She stated:

> If a conflict of interest occurs, and a student hears that a school is offering a developmental class, in a MOOC scenario, there are new ways to allow a student to be taught and to learn in a nontraditional setting. Further, if students are looking for career information or subject-matter information in order to decide upon a prospective career, whether or not these students have earned previous credits, they can take a MOOC to spend far less financially and not waste one's individual time with a traditional credit-based class that may not transfer in the long run. As such, disciplines are essentially vetted by students who choose to participate in these MOOCs in a nonthreatening way. In this case, such an investment is genuinely worthwhile, as the downsides are minimal.

Cookie discussed how the framework for choosing classes at a community college was limited because most courses were "requirements and rarely is there room for electives." Based on the program, the student would have specific qualifications that had to be met with little room for open electives. However, in utilizing MOOCs as an addition to their program, students could essentially "test the waters" and customize their current curriculum by taking courses they would not otherwise be able to add due to time restrictions or imposed requirements. Cookie indicated that she often encouraged

students to take courses they had an interest in to solidify their career goals and work out the most comprehensive course of study:

> A MOOC can become essentially a support group, with individuals being open to supporting each other's learning as well as their overall communication. MOOCs, then, become a form of behavioral learning in which students pick out topics that interest them, rather than taking classes as required by their degree program. They will be in an online setting of other like-minded students, also taking the course because it was of interest to their needs. Students receive only what they put into MOOCs, which assumes that students of MOOCs won't learn anything of value unless they apply to their studies. In this environment, students can support other students, as the level of communication in the MOOC will adapt to the level of interest and application of the students overall. If for some reason, students don't find the topic interesting or meeting their need, they can drop out at any point without consequence.

Vanessa agreed and considered the autonomy of MOOCs as beneficial because it allowed students to engage in a subject without any real risk to their curriculum or finances. She further stated:

> If a student backs out before completing the MOOC and receiving a certificate of completion, they essentially have no consequences. This, in and of itself, allows students to try out courses and topics to determine their personal interest and make decisions that can impact the creation of their path of study altogether. If the course is not interesting to the student or the material won't help their career path, the individual can back out of the MOOC without trouble, financial penalty, or damage to their grade-point average.

Elizabeth acknowledged that MOOCs could be used as a tool for exploring new things with a low degree of risk, as anyone could enroll in a MOOC. She stated:

> Anyone who has an Internet connection is essentially able to complete a MOOC, which is why the notion of "global connection" came to her mind. The word "self-instruction" is basically self-explanatory, as any individual enrolled in a MOOC must, to some degree, facilitate their own learning experience.

Diana also noted that MOOCs offer their own sense of credibility with the tools and tricks that are given to students in order to best complete their own educational

experiences. She understood that in the realm of a MOOC, the potential to learn was always there, but it was up to the individual learner to utilize their own subjective opinions and given tools to enhance their learning to the best of their own potential. Diana clarified:

> I think the capacity to succeed in a MOOC depends on the individual. That's why I am a big fan of students using the tools that are given to them, for instance, utilizing the Accuplacer. If it's been 20 years and you want to save $500 or $1,000, depending where you place in our developmental series, and you can do that. Not even for a certificate but just to get the knowledge so that you place on an Accuplacer, that I'm all for. And I think it could really help people to save on both time and money to completion.

Diana referenced students' placement on a standardized assessment called the Accuplacer. Typically used at the onset of one's academic journey at the community college, Diana discussed her support for MOOCs, in that, by taking them, students could potentially earn higher scores and bypass unnecessary coursework.

Erin agreed with Diana and felt that MOOC accessibility was a major advantage, as it "allows people from all walks of life the ability to access information. The term 'free' [also] means that MOOCs do not charge a fee for access." This, alone, can be the difference for students as to whether they learn a subject or continue to grow their personal base of knowledge. She continued to state that MOOCs could

> lessen the need for developmental education. While I do not see it as replacing a full course for the student who needs that traditional classroom setting, it could help the students that might only need a brief refresher. In that sense, it could reduce the cost and time to completing their degree. Thus, while MOOCs do not hold students accountable or set regulations for accountability and course comprehension, they also do the opposite: provide access to information that has no consequences and provides a comprehensive topic for those who could not get the information elsewhere.

George found the nature of an online learning environment most important, stating:

> Universities and colleges have to embrace innovation, and they need to look at providing solutions for a new student. They need to incorporate maybe hybrid programs. I know several students have commented to me that they do not like taking the online classes. They need interaction with the professor. I'm currently teaching a hybrid program where there's face-to-face and independent time. Programs like that, which are innovative and meeting the student population, are going to be the success for universities in the future. We know that the cost of education continues to increase, and there is the threshold point where students may not be able to afford education. The timing for this delivery method could be very good.

For George, MOOCs provided students with increased innovation and accessibility and acted as a hybrid for learning that provides independence and a personalized learning routine. George added:

> Technology allows for a fast-paced learning environment that changes with new innovations, as well. Indeed, there are a number of factors that influence the fluidity of a MOOC as well as the ability for this type of learning environment to be utilized as a viable resource for students. The power of the MOOC is in its ability to transform a learning environment into something that provides exceptional material, allows for complete student freedom, and shifts the values of comprehension to features and focuses as determined by the needs of the student. The delivery of information will determine the success of the student; however, it is up to the student to establish how the MOOC will enhance their personal educational path. A student can go into a MOOC for many reasons, but it is the student who utilizes a MOOC to enhance their educational path that will get the most out of the learning experience.

Cookie matched this sentiment and stated:

> I think especially for an adult student who doesn't want to pay for developmental courses, that the MOOC is the perfect avenue for them. They already have to set aside their time; they don't have to set aside their money, but they can learn what they need to learn by taking the appropriate classes, rather than a full collegiate-delegated courseload.

Similarly, Dale considered that the minimal cost of MOOCs was very appealing to students:

> There may be benefits to MOOCs . . . such as lower tuition if payment done on a sliding scale or reduced because shared by many. Other benefits may be increased access to other points of view, networking with people around the world in all walks of life, and more integrated learning across disciplines.

Additionally, Rocco responded:

> My personal opinion in the classroom is if someone's done something to earn that credit, and they come to my class and they're struggling for whatever reasons, then I would help them to fill in the blanks for how to use it to my class. My opinion would vary, depending on the course that I'm teaching, but even in the 200-level course that I normally teach, if someone did a 100 level that was a prerequisite, and they came in with a certification that they completed it and they're good, then why not?

One of the statements Cookie used to describe MOOCs was "peer learning." She noted:

> Students in MOOCs take on the additional role of professor by having to read each other's assignments, give feedback, and potentially measure each other's learning capabilities. This environment creates a rich feedback forum because each student receives feedback from several individual participants' respective lives and experiences. I really feel like people in any kind of online class have more of a voice than in a traditional class because it is absolutely necessary that everyone respond.

She also explained that she supported self-motivated students in these class situations because they were able to allow students the ability to get "up to speed" on certain subjects that might elude them, especially in viewing the adult learner. Diana believed that enrolling in a MOOC

> allows a student to create and form their own path of study, complete with additional resources to learn from. In utilizing the opportunity to grow one's education in their own way, individual students take on a greater role in their own education, doing their part to work in a manner exactly comparable to their own educational style. They will learn at higher degrees because they will have a

> direct interest in the topic of study, while most course requirements in a traditional setting might not.

Natalie similarly explained that students achieve a competence level of their own making with MOOCs, and that competence level can be far greater due to their interest in the topic. Therefore, it is up to the students to not only select a MOOC that benefits their personal course of study, but also to provide their own accountability for comprehension and course completion. Diana called this type of landscape

> one that allows a student to enjoy the challenge that comes with developing their own tools and study habits, while allowing the student to set their own boundaries for learning and comprehension. From this, the student can determine if the MOOCs provide a better education on a personal level by enhancing their personal educational motives or if the student is better suited for traditional classroom learning.

Patton viewed MOOCs as the way higher education is moving. He cautioned his colleagues against being too pessimistic, as they risk creating their own extinction. He quoted a reference from Darwin and stated:

> The survival of a species is not predicated based on speed, knowledge, or strength. The survival of the species is determined by the species' ability to adapt to change. Faculty, universities, and students need to adapt to this change, because it is the future.

Through conversations describing MOOCs in terms of "politics" or the "good" and "bad" effects, participants concluded that MOOCs are open, are easier to manage for the busy student than traditional classrooms with strict schedules, and provide an access to education that many students would never receive. By speaking about MOOCs in a polarizing fashion, participants were able to draw upon a large list of responses. It should be noted that participants had more positive impressions of MOOCs. Participants indicated that, while MOOCs may have some weaknesses, their ability to support

students in unique nonthreatening ways may help students who would otherwise be challenged by the learning environment. As a result, based on discussion, participants cited that in terms of cost, flexibility, and accessibility, MOOCs could be a good alternative to learning for students.

Technology, Communication, and Purpose of MOOCs as Barriers

While many faculty referred to MOOCs as a favorable resource for students, others discussed some of the drawbacks. Specifically, faculty talked about technology as a barrier to access MOOCs, the lack of communication between students and the professor, and the negative effect from unmotivated students. Participants also discussed their concern about whether MOOCs were created to support students or if they were a front for schools' advertising and financial gain.

One of the discussions focused on the assumptions that people make about students and their ability to use technology for academic purposes. Noreen stated, "Students may know how to use their cell phones or laptops to connect to friends and social media sites, but that doesn't mean they know how to use it for class." This, in addition to varying socioeconomic statuses, was seen as a potential barrier to MOOCs. While faculty agreed that MOOCs might be free, not everyone had the skills or ability to access a computer or the Internet. Noreen stated:

> I think there's a big misconception that a lot of people are tech savvy. I don't really think people are as good with computers or have access to computers as we might assume. We have students that register for our distance learning courses who don't even know what Blackboard is or where to get it, or how to access their course. Even with instructions, they still have a difficult time.

For Noreen, MOOC accessibility for students was viewed as the opposite of "open" and "online." She added, "If students do not have the ability to understand how to use e-resources or have the equipment to view them, they [MOOCs] might as well not exist."

Brittney also referenced the negative impression that the lack of technology had on students based on a journal article she read. She stated:

> There was a disadvantaged country where they were just giving cell phones away to people who had very little access to technology. The picture in the article was of people going to the border to be able to get cell service that had Internet, and the picture was everybody's cell phones up in the air kind of thing. So for me, if they could redesign MOOCs so that they are accessible through a cell phone, or so you didn't need to have a laptop or a computer, then that might be able to reach into those populations that you're trying—that MOOCs were designed to support.

Brittney added:

> If you don't have a computer, and you don't have access to the Internet, then you can't take a MOOC. I think that that is a very real concern. Add to that if you don't know that MOOCs exist, because you're not in a situation where people are talking about them, you are not going to gain the knowledge from them. I think that there's a big gap in what MOOCs can do and the possibility of MOOCs and the reality of not having access because you don't know or don't have the materials to do it. That said, I do think in an environment where you have a community college where people can go to the community college, and people do go to the community college and say, "Hey, I'm interested in starting my education. What can I do?" If we set it up so that the advisors are saying, "Hey look, you're testing in at a transitional state right now," Or, "Why don't you try taking this MOOC. It's free. You can use the public library; they have free Internet access. You can do this and then come back and test," that would be a way to help save people money. Unfortunately, we're just not set up like this and the lack of discussion isn't moving us along very quickly.

Patton inserted his concern that reduced access may be a result of a low socioeconomic status. He stated:

> At our institution, we're potentially working with students who may not have access because they're extremely poor. For me, the difficulty lies in pretechnology; it's an economic issue. If you're at the low end of the economic scale, you're not going to take advantage of this kind of thing, because to you, the entry fee is having a computer.

Vanessa, too, voiced her concern regarding a division of equitable resources when she stated:

> I'm worried about a two-tier track for students: those who can afford to pay for good quality education and those who aren't and can only take what is available through these MOOCs. The "haves" are thus relegated to this free, do whatever you can kind of thing; cuddle it together and if you can afford to have teachers and counselor and go to a campus and go to a college, then great. But if you are not, then this is your trap.

Another topic of debate was the amount of communication, or lack thereof, across MOOCs. Because every MOOC was different and there was not always a platform to promote the collaboration of students and instructors, participants felt that this was an issue that could not be overlooked. For Vanessa, collaboration was critical for her coursework. She noted:

> One of the biggest things that I see as a challenge is when I'm teaching and I have my students engaging and collaborating on the material, they're sharing their work experience with my work experience and the material, and it's a collaborative experience. You don't have that. I mean, that's the thing that I find very rewarding, and I think the students truly benefit from that collaborative— discussions that take place on a topic. When you d— when you— when it's all one-sided, you miss that. Feels like it's, like a laboratory, you know, where discussion of a business situation that other students can share similarities and similar experiences and drive home the point. And you can't do that with a one-way, one-way broadcast of knowledge, right?

Noreen agreed and believed that what MOOCs needed to offer went beyond solely providing information. For her, the ability to give feedback was critical. She stated:

> It's great that you can provide a resource to many people that won't have it otherwise, but my concern would be how much quality can I really provide in my feedback to these students, because that's really important to me. And if there's 200 people, I have no time to connect with, say, 200 people. So I think they're getting half quality of what I could do in an actual classroom, and that doesn't really seem ethical to me.

Erin added that a lack of ongoing communication with students created a hole in the educational process. She stated:

> I think you may miss that opportunity to tie everything together. So if you just take this MOOC and this MOOC and this MOOC and they are all from different sources and everything, whereas if you at least enroll in a college there is some commonalities; there is opportunities for cross-curricular things where people interact. Is it required? No, but will the student be possibly missing something? Yes, I think so.

Returning to Vanessa, her thoughts on communication with students summed up many of the fears discussed by all four focus groups. She stated:

> One of my concerns is that, what we do for our students, a lot of our students need us face-to-face; if they don't have the option of seeing us face-to-face, that is a bad thing. If they have the option of taking something like class online or seeing us face-to-face, and they can make that choice. They make the choice to go online because it is more cost-effective or it is bettering their lives and they get a good education experience from it and they can continue—fine, great, that's fabulous. But those options both need to be there. . . . Some of our students need that contact with the professors. Somebody who they look up to, who looks at them and says, "You can do this, there is value to what you bring to this," and recognizes them as an individual, just by their very nature. If they're lucky in a MOOC, they may have a small peer group that recognizes them as an individual, but they then get lost really easily. That's still where I am, I guess, about MOOCs.

Finally, participants indicated that even if a communication outlet were available, the fact that MOOCs lacked instructors to communicate and to motivate students could be seen as a barrier. From Patrick's own experience, he stated:

> I think that in my informal discussions with colleagues about MOOCs and students, oftentimes they find that students sign up and begin participating in a MOOC but then eventually they sort of fade away; life gets in the way, they get busy, they miss a couple lectures or a couple assignments, and they sort of fall behind. Sometimes I think students see it as an optional thing since it's free; I can participate if I want to. If I don't want to participate, I don't have to.

Noreen also found the absence of an instructor a difficult concept for students to conceive. She noted:

> I would say some of the challenges for a lot of students for any virtual learning is having the discipline to actually login online. And you don't have to show up to a physical classroom, so you really need to be organized, to be making sure you'll login if there's any deadlines associated with the course, that you're meeting them. You know, you're not seeing a physical person, so you don't really feel like you're being held as accountable. It's all up to you. Just going back to what Dale said in the last question, was [what] someone's willing to put in is really what they're going to get out of it. And I think even more so with the MOOC, because you may not even have contact with your professor or your professor isn't reading everything; it's going to be more of a peer group that's reading it. If you're using the classroom experience for your motivation to go and do it, if you aren't self-motivated, it's going to be more challenging, more difficult for you.

Dale discussed that "MOOCs do not establish the genuine purpose and foundational benefits available to students because they do not devote themselves to something that immediately benefits a student's program of study or require their personal accountability to complete." She followed up and stated, "Of critical importance, then, is establishing the function of MOOCs within a student's curriculum, while providing courses of value." Dale also noted that based on her knowledge of MOOCs, she believed that MOOCs were "still in their infancy and the potential has yet to be realized":

> Like many innovations, MOOCs may have to go through many evolutions before determining the exact educational niche they may be able to fill. For the time being, MOOCs serve an extension of the learning that takes place informally online and formally through continuing education and on college campuses. MOOCs linked to established institutions of higher learning or offered by professional associations would seem to be the most credible at this time.

With this in mind, Dale concluded:

> There are solutions to increasing credibility, but people vested in making this venture successful will have to solidify them before MOOCs become mainstream in a community college setting. The process for creating a comprehensive

> credible learning environment as paralleled to a traditional classroom comes from a correct implementation; otherwise, students will face the barriers of online learning, including lack of accountability, not believing time spent in the online course is directly relational to time spent in a classroom, or not finding the same purpose for learning without direct face-to-face contact from instructors.

Vanessa felt eluded by the concept of the MOOC and wondered why a student would want to learn in a solitary online environment. She stated:

> A lot of the people who were designing MOOCs, they were thinking of this as a great opportunity, are the ones who would personally benefit from them and they don't know the people who they think they're trying to serve. They don't know what their lives are really like. It's one of those things, like there's a lot of talk about how the software industry spends a lot of time designing software for users based off of how they want the users to use the software as opposed to paying attention to the way users actually need to use the software, or are going to use the software, hardware, or whatever. I think that that's also kind of true here. People had this idealistic idea of: We can create access and all they need is Internet, and we'll just open it all up to them and they will come. It's been designed around the people who are designing it, and the way they work and the way they think and their life circumstances. I don't think that they really have an understanding, and I have a marginal understanding of a population that's low educated; I don't know what it's like to live in rural Africa or to live in India and not have access to education.

Therefore, the concept of learning without the support and detailed instruction by a member of the faculty was a determinant to critically questioning MOOCs. Using Gee's lens of "politics," participants again revealed the negative polarity of the conversations, citing that consistent pedagogies and levels of interaction are required between the instructor and student.

Ability of MOOCs to Support Faculty Coursework, Professional Development, and Innovation

On a foundational level, the intent of the MOOC is to provide access to information and subjects that many students would not otherwise have access to due to

financial reasons, their curriculum path, or time constraints. Indeed, many participants spoke in favor of how faculty could take advantage of MOOCs either as an educational opportunity for their students as to add something extra to their current curriculum. Using their own experiences, participants discussed aspects of MOOCs in terms of using them to supplement their own courses, using them to engage in professional development, and the ease of both course creation and innovation. Participants also noted that, as MOOCs have become more widely understood, the apprehension of the online learning environment has diminished. Ultimately, participants saw the MOOC experience as a potential partner to the traditional methods of classroom learning and expected MOOCs to be a regular teaching modality in the future.

Erin believed that MOOCs could play an important role in the professional development of faculty. She stated:

> Having organized, accessible, accurate information is very positive. I see that it can be used as a way for students to 'catch up' or enhance their time in the classroom. For faculty, it could be a way for them to supplement classroom learning and get new teaching ideas and methods. For an institution, it could be a way to get national exposure if done well. A challenge is ensuring that the information is coming from a reliable source and figuring out who will make that determination. Institutions might feel the need to rationalize or defend the value of a formal education. I think that there are a variety of learners and that education has a very long history. I don't see that MOOCs will replace education, but it might force educators to continue to be innovative and change the way that teaching is done. For the past couple of decades, there has been significant pressure to increase the amount of education required for careers, and perhaps this will help to level out that effort and consider different ways that qualifications can be met.

For George, the appealing aspect of a MOOC was its ability to provide faculty with new and innovative ways to disseminate information. He stated:

> MOOCs provide an opportunity to help students to enhance their current educational paths or provide them with insight into new topics that they might not

> have normally been able to commit financially or for a specific length of time. MOOCs provide flexibility and allow for students to define their personal independence in the learning scenario. . . . They give students the ability to view anywhere and anytime, to learn and engage.

Patton discussed how institutions of higher education could be transformed by MOOCs:

> To be perfectly honest, it could be a substitute—sometime in the future, maybe in the near future—for professors. It's a real threat to our entire educational system. I don't think it's a bad thing. I think they are very efficient. As a matter of fact, I used them when I completed my master's degree as paid video lectures. I did my whole master's based on that. My feeling is that they have a lot of advantages over having a live professor. One of the advantages I mentioned was that you could rewind the video. You can have the professor repeat what he said 10 times, if you like. That's very handy for foreign accents. You can't do that in a normal university setting with 60 or 80 students in a lecture hall with a professor. If you ask me, in my honest opinion, I think MOOCs could potentially be the automated solution that will affect higher education in the United States, for better or for worse. I don't know what the outcome would be, but it will certainly automate education, I believe. In a MOOC, for instance, a student can go over the material as many times as they wish to increase their knowledge of the subject, without keeping the class from moving on.

Diana, in being asked about the future, stated that she believed that while there was a general fear from faculty, she believed that it was starting to die out as MOOCs became more commonplace in the realm of education. She asserted, "I think there was 'hype' originally that MOOCs were going to end traditional institutions, but this thought is dying every day."

Elizabeth too, did not believe that MOOCs were part of a passing fad that would end with time but believed instead that community colleges should not feel threatened by their current popularity. She stated:

> I think there's still going to have to be a place for both. If you want to get accreditation for a MOOC, there's going to have to be someplace where that accreditation takes place. I can see that the community college might be a place for testing for accreditation.

Overall, Elizabeth mentioned:

> There would always be factors that influence a student to take different educational routes. Whether personal or professional in nature, students' opinions and respective lives will always keep them needing different options for schooling, which is something that both the MOOC as well as the community college can provide.

For a majority of participants, the MOOC represented a significant way for students to pursue their interests and to make use of opportunities that would be absent in traditional learning environments. Though MOOCs might have a way to go before many faculty believed they could replace classroom teaching, participants agreed that MOOCs were an alternative way of learning that many students may appreciate, adapt to, and prefer over the regulations and restrictions of traditional learning environments. Through the "politics" lens, participants either believed that MOOCs could act in a supplemental capacity to the education provided in a classroom, or they could not accept MOOCs at current face value. Little discussion related to middle-ground possibilities.

Compensation and Competition for Faculty

Overall, faculty also had many concerns about whether MOOCs could exist in the future or if they were passing fads that would get lost as technology continued to evolve. Specifically, faculty talked about their own unfavorable experiences within higher education and how the newness and ambiguity of MOOCs might make them susceptible to some of these similar issues. Participants talked about the difficulty of being appropriately compensated for creating MOOCs and the existence of competition within departments and across other schools of higher education upon creating MOOCs.

For Chip, adequately paying faculty for putting together MOOCs was a concept that needed further research and discussion before they could be implemented or recommended by an institution of higher learning. He noted:

> A challenge, and going on with that is [the] compensation for the instructor of the MOOC, building the MOOC, grading the MOOC to whatever grading standard is established, trying to give certificates out. Somebody has to read the discussion boards and make sure that things get turned in, so they can give the letters of recommendation for completing the class. I think those are challenges. The pay for faculty should be commensurate with what faculty are earning for developing classes, teaching classes, and the things they do at their regular jobs. . . . Right now, we have difficulty negotiating that with our in-person courses.

Patton agreed that a great deal of work went into manufacturing a MOOC, and as a community college faculty member, he was not privy to the resources that other institutions might have. He reiterated:

> I think they're certainly used within community colleges. I know a lot of professors that use the MOOCs from these other colleges. I think that community colleges, as far as putting together a MOOC—the video and all the things that go along with producing a professional-quality MOOC can't be done in the community college because a community college doesn't have the resources that a major university like Yale or MIT [the Massachusetts Institute of Technology] has. Places like MIT, they have an entire video production staff, where the guy can operate a video. They can do the recording. The professor can do what he does best. He can teach and the whole thing is recorded. The professor doesn't really have to do that much to produce the MOOC. Being a professor at a community college, it's a one-man show. You have to do everything. I'd probably have to wind up operating the video and setting it up and all of that, getting the lighting proper yourself.

In terms of competition, Erin talked about MOOCs as a way to put oneself out of business. She talked about the irony of having her college ask her to put her ideas out on the web where anyone could access them for free, when her college was paying her to impart knowledge behind a system of admissions and tuition requirements. She saw MOOCs as a competitor, noting:

> One thinks about quality information as a commodity that higher education institutions charge for, and you now have MOOCs that are trying to offer that same commodity for free; then it is understandable to view MOOCs as a competitor. While you do not have the same quality control or recourse if the information is bad, you still may lose some of your previously paying 'consumers.' Why keep paying me if you've got my information on the web now? This is very concerning for higher education.

Stan talked about his concern of reduced enrollment at the community college as more accredited MOOCs come online. Stan said by offering MOOCs and courses that already exist at the community college level, "you run the risk of students skipping this institution":

> It depends on how advanced they become with these MOOC courses. Community college traditionally has been for those students that need to come back and sort of refresh the fundamentals. If we just hand it to them for free, the community college could become obsolete. I have a lot of students in my class that I think are very good students that could attend a major 4-year university, but they're here for various reasons; the chief amongst them is often economics. I think if you're using the MOOCs online and they're cheap or free, you really give those students a pathway to bypass the community college. I think we'll always continue to get the students who have struggled traditionally academically here at the college. I think that population will remain, but I think the more focused and better academically prepared students may bypass us in that case.

Natalie added that "it's a risk. It depends. Like I said, everything depends on accreditation. Whatever the accreditation decision is, that would significantly impact skipping class and going somewhere else."

For Vanessa, the creation of a MOOC without support by academic peers could elicit disagreement and resentment. She noted:

> If it wasn't reviewed by our discipline and it was developed by one person and it would create a lot of problems in our discipline. That person would like us to use those materials, but people have looked at those materials and they're not things they want to use in their classroom. That's one of the problems of MOOCs. If you're doing something that's for a discipline and you're expecting other people to use them, you need to have a certain level of review or, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't want to say certification, but you can't go off and do it by

> yourself and expect that everybody's going to go like, "Oh, yeah, rah," especially if they're not really, totally sure of the quality of it.

Brittney acknowledged the benefits of a peer-review process or the approval of another institution or university through an oversight system: "If there were a system of checks and balances, faculty might be more inclined to participate and utilize them based on knowing if a MOOC program was peer-reviewed or not."

Finally, while participants noted that they had some knowledge of MOOCs, many were still concerned about themselves and their colleagues having an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This lack of understanding and communication could lead to misunderstanding and result in not taking advantage of the opportunity presented. Noreen stated:

> I can honestly say that the only conversation I've had at this institution about MOOCs outside of maybe this group right here and maybe with Chip specifically came up with the conversation about general studies or general studies curriculum, which is our most flexible curriculum and the idea of the college. Exploring the use of MOOCs as a way for students to bring in more credits to complete that degree. That's the only time I've ever heard it, and then that course that I mentioned that was offered to continuing education. Otherwise, it's not a big part of conversation I participate in. So if I don't know about it, students probably don't know about it, which isn't a good thing.

Patton, too, found that discussion among his colleagues was nonexistent, primarily because no one at the community college was teaching or recommending MOOCs as an alternative. He stated:

> I think community colleges are right in the tranches with MOOCs because community college is like a stepping-stone from high school to a normal 4-year university. We're right in the middle. Unfortunately, I don't see any MOOCs given by community college professors. I see a lot of MOOCs given by 4-year university professors, and I think that's an issue.

Dale reiterated Noreen's statement that due to lack of discussion and understanding, faculty "view MOOCs with suspicion":

> I guess they don't really know whether these things are legitimate. While MOOC creators are claiming to be experts who have verified that indeed they are an expert, the question of who is going through and monitoring the materials that's being presented in MOOCs to ensure that it's real information is still up in the air. I know I worry because a lot of times, students think that just because something is on the Internet it's true, and we all know that's not the case. . . If a MOOC were connected to a well-regarded, accredited institution of higher learning, I would expect the same academic standards applied to on-campus delivery of courses would be expected in a MOOC.

Linda agreed that the lack of discussion and understanding was still a major problem. In referencing MOOCs, she talked about an experience she had with a friend outside of the college:

> I think there are a lot of people who still don't even know about MOOCs. I was talking to a friend of mine's daughter and she was just saying, "I'd really like to get some business knowledge but I can't afford to go to school." I'm like, "Hello? Have you heard of MOOCs?" She was like in a candy store. She was like, "Oh my gosh, this is so amazing." She had never heard of them before.

Patrick agreed that once people started talking about MOOCs more and realized they could "cash in on it," MOOCs would gain influence and popularity. As for now, however, he noted:

> There is a lot that has to happen for MOOCs to work. Once there is recognition that taking a MOOC will advance your career or launch your career or something like that, then it will take off. Right now, both sides have to work. You have to get the students interested and on the other hand, from an administrative point, they have to . . . it has to be an opportunity for the students to advance their career or to launch their career. Both sides have to . . . it's like high-definition television. You have to make the TV sets and they have to have provided the programming for it. Without the communication, there's nothing to sell.

Overall, Vanessa summed up her thoughts of faculty's perceptions of MOOCs by stating:

> For MOOCs, there will always be barriers. The barriers are cultural. The barriers are infrastructure. The barriers are subjective and are ever changing. Until you really understand those, I don't think you can design an education system that's going to reach all of those people. In other words, until the MOOC is able to achieve the same in terms of higher education as traditional classes, there will always be dissent in the process. And while many students will find value in MOOCs, there will always be others who take a MOOC only to drop out of the class due to disinterest a few weeks later. The insight gained, here, is that MOOCs can provide a distinct advantage to those who know how to use them; and further, that those who know how to use them will continue to do so for the betterment of their education. Those who insist on seeing them in a negative light and refuse to try will always see them as bad.

The Effect of Previous MOOC Experience

During the initial focus group interview, each participant was asked to describe the MOOC phenomenon using three different adjectives. Based on the initial responses, it was evident that many of the adjectives used by participants referred to the size and affordability of the online platform; few participants used words that described a subjective experience based on MOOC participation. However, of the six participants who revealed having a previous experience with MOOCs, five included a subjective word in their lists and provided subtle, but more critical, viewpoints in their overall descriptions of MOOCs (Table 4.2). As a result, through Gee's lens of "significance," it was apparent that the word choice played a part in processing the topic.

Table 4.2
Description of MOOCs

Group/institution/name	MOOC participation	MOOC description (three adjectives)
Group 1, Institution A		
Brittney	Yes	Free, online, accessible
George	No	Flexible, tailored, independent
Linda	Yes	Online, accessible, advantageous
Patton	No	Easy, accessible, free
Group 2, Institution B		
Chip	No	Fast, flexible, fun
Cookie	No	Peer learning, multiple, noncredit
Dale	Yes	Fluid, exciting, public
Noreen	No	Accessible, virtual, large
Group 3, Institution B		
Elizabeth	Yes	Self-instruction, expand horizons, global
Natalie	Yes	Useful, massive, great/free
Patrick	No	Independent, studious, facilitating
Stan	No	Large, convenient, optional
Group 4, Institution B		
Diana	No	Free, accessible, global
Erin	No	Free, accessible, large
Rocco	No	Big, accessible, inconsistent
Vanessa	Yes	Opportunity, amenity, inconsistent

Note. MOOC description describes the three adjectives each participant gave at the beginning of each focus group interview.

For example, while Linda described MOOCs as "free" and "online," she also described them as "advantageous." She spoke of MOOCs as positive by relating to her own subjective experiences:

> My perspective of MOOCs is they're incredible! I absolutely love the fact that MOOCs are available to both students and faculty. That development and veneration of so many different types of organizations offering MOOCs or in the different topics that they address, it increases teacher and student's academic knowledge and information. And one way that it's going to impact the community college is that instructors will be able to have professional development by using MOOCs. They'll have access to course materials and approach it in teaching that they might be able to incorporate and bring to their own classes. I'm using it with my own faculty and I'm using them as ways of professional development. That's that important. I already am using them. In my position I have like a college. I'm using it to provide faculty professional

> development, and as an educator at the college, I'm using it to change what I teach and the way I teach. It's better than looking for a textbook. You can immerse yourself in multiple courses over the course of the year and different disciplines; it broadens you. And one way it's going to impact community colleges is it develops the faculty and helps them become better teachers. It also would help students because, let's say you have a student that's been out of high school for a while and they're about to take a community college class and they're back on this week. They could use a MOOC as a free brush up in an area to become more college ready. It's good to use MOOCs with our students to move them forward. I've seen teachers use MOOCs in their class and to supplement the lecture so students would have access to MOOCs by the way the teacher chooses to use them within his or her own classroom.

Instead of comparing MOOCs to current practices, Linda spoke about the opportunities MOOCs provided as a potential standalone platform. Use of the phrases "incredible," "immerse," and "professional development" showed an understanding of her experience beyond what she may have heard or read from others. In another discussion within her focus group interview, Linda again spoke highly of MOOCs and used subjective words to explain her positive experience. Linda described how MOOCs provided access to a vast variety of intensive and extensive topics and subjects from which students could build their own more personalized curriculum. She related:

> So one of the things that makes the concept of MOOCs shine is the various topics available. I also like the fact that so far all the ones I've done have been short-term, maybe the longest one 12 weeks, so I like the fact that you can get in and get out. In general, I like that about MOOCs. I like the expertise that the faculty, in every MOOC I've taken, has been incredible. They've brought me places I've never been before. I completed one in "evolution," and we went around the world. Through the computer, we went to new places, met people that were working in the field, and so I got to see cutting edge. It was the coolest thing I've ever experienced. We went to Gibraltar one week and then in Africa the next week. We were at archaeological digs. We were seeing the evidence in front of us, learning about how they obtained it from the ground, from the people that do it. For me, what makes the MOOC good is an ability to get access to something I can't get access to any other way and to have access to these faculties' expertise. I'm choosing really good MOOCs. I'm choosing MOOCs from good colleges, with people with many years of experience for this work. My typical way to learn about a topic is not even through journal articles, because to me, it's really hard to get a broad view of a topic in a journal article that's so narrow and esoteric.

> [Journals] are like a textbook and I might read a book and I might not. But here on a MOOC I get to, . . . I love watching the videos when they present, so I like the act of lectures. . . . The fact that in every MOOC I've taken, there's been a delivered lecture along with a transcript. I like the fact that I can listen, and then I can go back and read. To me, it's bringing me up close and personal with the most current knowledge of the disciplines, and I like it delivered in both a verbal and a written way. We've done labs and visited some cool places. They've done very innovative things. They've done things with their online classes I haven't done with mine. I also do the ones that quiz us or exam us. I like the feedback, that I know it forces me not to sit there and listen but to go back and commit some of it to memory and understand it well. So I like the ones that incorporate exams and quizzes.

Again, words such as "coolest," "innovative," and "personal" described the genuine and in-depth familiarity only a participant with MOOC experience could provide. Additionally, Linda evaluated MOOCs on their own personal merits and contributions; no comparison was made to current teaching models.

Vanessa also used her own personal experiences to provide an in-depth description and understanding of MOOCs. When asked to provide three adjectives describing the online learning platform, she chose "opportunity," "amenity," and "inconsistent." While the first two words are positive, the third word provides a subjective critique that nonparticipants would not be able to share. In another example, Vanessa talked about the lack of organization within some MOOC courses. She stated:

> This is the primary "design flaw" in MOOCs. MOOCs do not present the course materials in a way that establishes similar goals or meets curricula outcomes, assists all levels of student learning, provides feedback, assists students who need help with concepts, and tracks all student progress prior to testing.

Use of the phrase "primary design flaw" revealed her personal understanding and connection to MOOCs. Additionally, similar to Linda, Vanessa's previous experiences allowed her to views MOOCs as a unique platform rather than comparing them to current teaching trends.

Finally, other participants, such as Dale, Elizabeth, and Natalie, also provided personal accounts of their experiences with MOOCs. Using words such as "exciting," "great" and "expand[ing] horizons" all conveyed a critical evaluation of MOOCs that nonparticipants did not otherwise state. This, in turn, revealed that previous exposure to MOOCs allowed for a more in-depth and personal evaluation of the platform.

Overall, through the lens of "politics," participants revealed that their support of or disregard for MOOCs was varied and opinions were primarily based on current teaching experiences. Additionally, through the "significance" lens, it was clear that previous MOOC experiences provided participants with a subtle, yet more critical evaluation of the online platform.

MOOCs are a highly polarized topic with viewpoints highlighting both opportunity and confusion about the value of a nontraditional educational path. Most conclusive was the differing viewpoints between what a learner would achieve in terms of comprehension and whether that comprehension could be tracked in a manner similar to that of a traditional classroom. Through Gee's lens of "politics," the discourse revealed how aspects of MOOCs were viewed as plausible but needed discussion. Of greatest concern was the lack of accountability and the role that learners must take in their own comprehension. Participants revealed the frustration at defining the relationship between instructor and student, noting the level of accountability a student must have and the inadequate assessment ability of the MOOC to determine comprehension comparable to classroom learning.

Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the participants' profiles and the data analysis methods utilized to construct meaning and complete a review of the researcher's findings. The use of discourse analysis and its lenses of "connections," "politics," and "significance" helped illuminate apprehensions and foundational beliefs defined by the participants' own personal experiences and how they viewed MOOCs within the current educational system.

Additionally, nine themes emerged as most dominant, and their implications and meanings as applied to the research questions have been discussed. The chapter discussed how the various themes were determined, how those themes were used to construct meaning, and how the themes appeared to be influenced by the participants' experiences. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, presents the study's conclusions, and discusses the study's implications.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

From an analysis of the discourse among community college faculty, this dissertation sought to answer the following questions: (a) What presuppositions do faculty hold about massive open online courses (MOOCs) and their significance for higher education in general as well as the community college sector in particular? and (b) In what ways do community college faculty employ references to MOOCs in their everyday discourse?

Overall, faculty viewed MOOCs in terms of both "good" and "bad" and believed them to be highly useful to supplement current curriculum offerings. Some faculty, however, were reluctant to assert that MOOCs were a viable resource due to peer collusion, the absence of accountability, and the lack of accurate knowledge assessment. Due to logistical issues, including limited communication between the student and instructor and difficulty confirming users' identities, and given the absence of standard assessment, the knowledge obtained from a MOOC was not valued in the same manner as information obtained from traditional classroom models. Ultimately, faculty were unable to perceive MOOCs as a standalone educational platform that would work in the community college setting. Similar to cyclical discussions of the past, related to innovations such as the introduction of the computer, the Internet, and curriculum assessment, the topic of MOOCs has evoked debates of critical questioning. While faculty challenged some aspects of MOOC, many admitted that more information was needed in order to move the conversation to one of acceptance and approval.

Overall, the priority of this research was to identify how faculty viewed the purpose, function, and potential future of MOOCs among community colleges. The following sections synthesize the themes, make connections to ideology, and provide conclusions to the findings. Additionally, the chapter describes the implications for future practice, discusses what questions were not answered by the findings, and concludes with a review of recommendations for further study and a discussion of the research limitations.

Discussion of Findings

Community colleges play an important role in the realm of higher education. These institutions support almost half of all undergraduate students in the United States and create affordable, open access to higher education content (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015, para. 2). MOOCs were founded on the idea that higher education information should be accessible to anyone with the aspiration to learn; access should be met without demographic, economic, and geographical constraints. Both platforms hold students and learning as the focal point of their existence. In addition, both rely on their faculty to provide the expertise and content from their disciplines to make them work. Together, the experiences provided by community colleges and MOOCs could be a powerful tool; however, the catalyst for this interaction relies on the faculty.

The pattern among the discourse surrounding MOOCs is similar to discussions of past debates where polarizing discussions ensued and faculty challenged whether new opportunities were a help or a hindrance. Eventually, innovations such as the computer and classroom assessment were adopted, but not without upfront resistance and

skepticism (Katz, 2010; Kurland & Kurland, 1987). Gee (2005) stated that language "gets its meaning from the games or practices within which it is used" (p. 5). As a result, the way in which faculty viewed, discussed, and used MOOCs in their everyday discourse had an effect on how MOOCs will be referenced in the future.

Review of Themes

After reviewing the discourse of community college faculty, several recurring themes were revealed. In total, there were nine salient themes that answered the research questions:

- Faculty shared the need to better understand the role and requirements of MOOC facilitators and students. Faculty questioned the lack of a standard curriculum across MOOCs as compared to in-person courses.
- Faculty discussed the importance of assessing students' understanding of course material as vital to a course's validity.
- Faculty discussed the importance of consistent attendance and participation within the higher education classroom (e.g., labs, lectures, discussion). They viewed intermittent attendance negatively. Additionally, they discussed the ability to confirm users' identities.
- Faculty discussed the need for students to be able to communicate and collaborate with instructors and peers within MOOCs. Faculty also noted that course objectives, assignments, and skills learned should be parallel with real-world experiences.
- Faculty questioned if MOOCs were accessible, safe, and customizable for students.

- Faculty talked about how the role of technology and communication within MOOCs impinged student success. Faculty also questioned the motives for institutions' use of MOOCs.
- Faculty discussed the ease in referencing MOOCs as a supplement to their own courses. Faculty also talked about how MOOCs provided a new avenue for which to gain professional development opportunities and innovation for the classroom.
- Faculty talked about the need to be properly compensated for time spent on MOOCs. They also discussed the rise of competition within and among academic departments that utilized MOOCs.
- Faculty who reported having previous experiences with MOOCs described them more subjectively and critically than participants who had never participated in a MOOC.

Faculty responses ranged at the ends of the spectrum in regards to supporting and discarding many of the educational aspects MOOCs provided. Many of these responses related to the lack of knowledge and experience faculty had with MOOCs, the presuppositions faculty had based on their own experiences, and the way in which they currently discussed MOOCs among their colleagues. The following section is an overview of the main discussion points as found in the discourse.

Faculty spoke positively of MOOCs in regards to being a powerful supplement to current in-class offerings. Faculty who reported having previous experiences with MOOCs were able to speak more subjectively and critically than participants who had not reported experiences. Many participants felt that the ease of access allowed students a supportive resource for which to obtain information and connect with others via

discussion boards. Many felt that the wide variety of courses offered by MOOCs allowed students to explore majors and disciplines they otherwise would not have been able to explore, especially given the prescribed coursework within specific majors. Faculty also discussed MOOCs as a benefit to themselves, as many of the courses provided professional development opportunities and the sharing of educational resources. Faculty felt MOOCs were a good adjunct to, but not replacement for, in-person courses.

Additionally, regardless of participants' academic backgrounds and institutions, there were no major differences in how faculty spoke about or made presuppositions about MOOCs in their everyday discourse. Faculty from both institutions agreed that MOOCs have advantages and disadvantages, but there were no outlying discussions that were unique from what all participants stated. The discourse among participants within academic departments was also very similar. While the researcher assumed that a science and math academic faculty might disagree on the usage of MOOCs, for example, the conversations about how MOOCs were perceived and discussed were parallel among disciplines. No major differences were reported, and this could be attributed to a lack of understanding of MOOCs.

On the other hand, faculty still questioned the role of MOOCs in higher education. Specifically, they reiterated that constant communication from a course leader was essential to success, a characteristic that MOOCs could not guarantee. A course without a leader or content expert to clarify issues and help students was viewed as haphazard and unethical. Faculty viewed the leader role as an integral one—one that helps students gain a proper understanding of the material and an experience commensurate with what is expected in the real world. While faculty viewed MOOCs as

a viable source of information, the logistics of course instruction and dissemination of information was called into question. Faculty spoke in depth about the need for standardization of course outcomes and assessments to begin to build their credibility. Without common standards, faculty questioned the ability for any MOOC or traditional course to be assigned college-level credits. Absent these tools, faculty felt uncomfortable supporting MOOCs as a standalone platform.

Relationship to Ideology

In relationship to ideology, this research ascribed to Gee's (2005) theory of discourse analysis. Discourses are characteristic ways of talking and writing about, as well as acting with and toward, people and things. These ways are circulated and sustained within various texts, artifacts, images, social practices, and institutions, as well as in moment-to-moment social interactions. In turn, they cause certain perspectives and states of affairs to come to seem or be taken as normal or natural and others to seem or be taken as deviant or marginal (Gee, 2005).

Using this theory, discourse analysis revealed how participants felt MOOCs were relevant or not relevant in relation to faculty success. Results showed that faculty viewed the characteristics of MOOCs with a polarizing view and based their perceptions on current teaching techniques. Additionally, the successes and drawbacks of MOOCs were also determined to be positive or negative based on the way participants compared the phenomenon to their own lives and based on their presuppositions of success. While many of Gee's (2005) lenses helped make sense of the discourse, the three most influential lenses were "connections," "politics," and "significance."

The first lens of "connections" allowed the researcher to analyze the way in which participants made specific subjects relevant or not relevant to other subjects. The way in which participants connected concepts and beliefs back to their own personal lives became a significant factor in answering the research questions. In the case of this research, faculty praised or criticized the subject of MOOCs based on comparisons to their academic situations and current teaching trends. These connections also provided insight into the diverse rationale that participants had for feeling as they did about MOOCs. For instance, participants who believed that aspects of MOOCs offered learning comparable to that of the traditional classroom environment were also the same participants who had participated in a MOOC. Similarly, faculty who informed their students of MOOCs as a supplemental option to their class were also the same participants who had taken MOOCs in the past and knew of their value. Therefore, participants who felt positively towards MOOCs had an experience with MOOCs in the past that added value to their life or current curriculum. Participants who had a poor experience with MOOCs felt negatively towards the platform as a formal forum for learning.

Gee's lens of "politics" also proved useful in making determinations about how MOOCs were referred to in faculty discourse. This lens allowed the researcher to analyze the perceptions that people had about MOOCs, specifically in the context of "good" or "bad." Faculty made polarizing statements either for or against MOOCs as an academic option. Moreover, even the negative outcomes for MOOCs were seen in a positive light for some participants, with one participant asserting that the nonchalant environment of the MOOC and the lack of accountability was actually a positive feature.

Since MOOCs allow students to engage with a subject they might not otherwise be able to access, the mere exposure to this information was seen as helpful to students. With this assumption, then, faculty felt that students who did not place their full capacity into the MOOC could still leave with something that they would not otherwise have. Further, according to participants, because some students do better with learning material without the pressures of testing, the possibility exists that the pressures of traditional classrooms could inhibit the value of learning achieved within a MOOC.

Although subtle among the discourse, through the lens of "significance," participants who reported previous interactions with MOOCs provided slightly more subjective and evaluative statements than participants who reported no previous participation. By evaluating the different words of each participant, it was clear that having experiences with MOOCs allowed participants to provide a more in-depth analysis of the platform.

Finally, what the lenses added to this discussion is an interpretation of the values of MOOCs through the past experiences and value suppositions of the participants. Through these lenses, it is apparent that what faculty presupposed and how they discussed the topic amongst themselves in their daily discourse had and will have an influence on the future of MOOCs. The topic is one that will continue to be debated. Regardless of whether MOOCs achieve increased academic status, opinions about the legitimacy of information learned while in a MOOC will continue to be polarizing.

Conclusions

The findings of this research were developed as a result of reviewing the data through several phases of analysis in concert with the use of Gee's discourse analysis

theory. First, data were collected using focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews among community college faculty who met the participation criteria. Once the interviews were completed, the discourse was recorded and coded using a multipronged process and categorized into themes. Initially, themes started out as large, broad topics, but through reorganization, themes were narrowed down to more specific concepts. Identified themes from the discourse were examined in detail and connected to Gee's lenses of discourse analysis and back to the research questions. Ultimately, the answers to the research questions, in conjunction with discussion found in the literature, allowed the researcher to create research findings. The conclusions relate to the three most significant discussions of this research related to (a) the similarity of participants' discourse compared with the current MOOC literature; (b) the polarizing discourse of participants either in support of or against MOOCs; and (c) the existence of the cyclical pattern of higher education to critically question new innovations.

Similarity of Faculty Discourse to Current MOOC Literature

Prior to the inception of this research, an informal review of the current MOOC literature was conducted. The purpose of this review was to identify the topics of discourse among academic constituents and to have an understanding of the current conversations. From that review, as investigated through articles found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, several common viewpoints were found: (a) MOOCs are good, and everyone benefits by sharing knowledge; (b) MOOCs are well known but not well understood; (c) MOOCs and similar programs are coming online too quickly without consideration of the ramifications; and (d) although the idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic, their true purpose is unclear (Bradley, 2012; Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012;

Marguerite, 2012; Pappano, 2012; Whissemore, 2012). Given these viewpoints and given the themes that were created, the discourse among community college faculty was revealed to be similar to the discourse within the higher education literature. In the following subsections, each theme found in the initial review of the MOOC literature is discussed and connected to the discourse as a result of this study. The connections made from the current literature and this research help provide insight as to where the MOOC discourse is headed in the future.

MOOCs are good for higher education, and everyone benefits by sharing knowledge. For the most part, participant discussion was congruent with the current literature that stated that aspects of MOOCs are a relatively beneficial tool for higher education, and by opening up access, institutions, especially community colleges, can be more accessible to their constituents (Pérez-Peña, 2012; Yuan & Powell, 2013). Specifically, discussions among the literature and participants reinforced how MOOCs could be used as a supplement to current in-person courses and allow students the ability to explore a variety of topics in an informal, self-paced, risk-free environment (Whissemore, 2012). MOOCs were viewed as a space where students could gain information from a different perspective and try new things without penalty. While one early critique of the online platform was that less than 10% of users were completing courses, participants of this study agreed that completion was not entirely necessary for the MOOC to be considered successful. If a student only needed information from part of the course or only needed to hear the introduction to know whether the topic was a good fit, it was agreed that student success would be defined by an individual's goals and not by completion of all parts of the course.

MOOCs are well known but not well understood. In general, participants were aware of MOOCs, but still had questions about their role and implications. Similar to discussions by Carlson and Blumenstyk (2012) and Pappano (2012), who questioned the role of MOOCs in academia, it was a common for participants to want to learn more about MOOCs. Additionally, when asked about their peers and how MOOCs were being discussed among the community college sector, many stated that the conversations were not happening at the department level. For the most part, it was reported that conversations of MOOCs were held at the senior administrative leadership level and that information was being discussed on an "as-needed" basis. As a result, it was reasonable to understand why faculty stated that they wanted to learn more about MOOCs and why they had misconceptions about the platform. For example, MOOCs were regarded as similar to online distance learning courses where faculty and students would log on each week, review topics, and communicate with one another on a regular basis. Additionally, many were surprised to hear that in one online platform, students were grading peers' work. This comment elicited confusion and raised concerns of validity and reliability, as also discussed by Head (2013). Others commented that they were unaware that some MOOCs had been awarded transferable credit. It was obvious that MOOCs were not well understood when questions about transferability and currently approved American Council of Education courses were raised.

MOOCs are approaching too quickly without consideration of their ramifications. Many participants described some of the components of MOOCs as daunting, unrealistic, and unsupportive to student success. Similar to discussions in the MOOC literature, it was established that, in their current format, MOOCs missed the

mark of cultivating an educational experience that provides standardization, accountability, and proper assessment (Oblinger, 2012). As a result, MOOCs in their current format were viewed as better suited as a supplement to current in-class practices as opposed to a standalone platform. The idea of awarding credits to students in an "unmanaged" classroom was deemed as hasty. Regardless of the fact that MOOCs were accredited through the American Council on Education, when asked about transferability of credits for currently approved classes, a response of skepticism was portrayed. Regardless of where the MOOC were offered and what credits were transferable, if MOOCs were not regulated through some means of checks and balances like common outcomes and assessment, participants hesitated to accept them. In fact, despite what credits a student may have received, faculty from all groups agreed that additional assessments should be enacted to test students before they were allowed to transfer credits. Based on this reasoning, it was clear that these thoughts on MOOCs are in alignment with current beliefs that although they may provide good information, they have a long way to go before they are ready to stand on their own (Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012; Oblinger, 2012). While many of the concepts and ideas found in MOOCs seemed to support student learning, it was widely reiterated that further research and evaluation must be done before fully adopting them at the community college.

Although the idea of initiating MOOCs sounds altruistic, their true purpose is unclear. While discussions of compensation and the reasoning for MOOC integration in higher education was a relevant topic within *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the discourse of the community college participants only briefly touched on one of these points, namely, the discussion for proper compensation. The fear specifically was that

faculty would be paid only once for the initial setup and then be considered fully compensated, regardless of how many times the MOOC was offered in the future. This led to a discussion, similar to Bui's (2012) question of sustainable business practices in higher education, pertaining to why an institution would give its "product" away for free, when its business plan depended on collecting tuition for the "product." While this topic was an outlier in comparison to other viewpoints, this line of questioning is consistent with what critics have discussed (Bui, 2012; Head, 2013; Mangan, 2012).

Overall, while not all of the discourse as documented by community college faculty matched these four conclusions as found in the current literature, a majority of it did. As MOOCs become adopted by institutions and constituencies other than faculty members, it will be critical to see how and if the discussions change. As of now, the idea of MOOCs as a standalone, reliable resource of transferable higher education information has yet to be fully adopted by community college faculty.

Polarizing the MOOC Debate

Participants were highly polarized in their opinions, and there was little discussion that described a middle ground between traditional teaching models and MOOCs. Participants either believed that MOOCs offered incredible opportunity for supplementary information, or they believed that MOOCs were not worth the time invested.

Faculty who supported MOOCs lobbied that an external option to education that allows students to take subjects of their choosing, requires little to no cost, and could enhance student learning in addition to what the traditional classroom environment could offer is a positive step in higher education. The fact that MOOCs have the capability to

transform a physical classroom into a highly contextualized online learning environment that has no boundaries, has an open dialogue between classmates from around the world, and can allow students to focus on material over and over was viewed with some support. Even if a student did not meet the intended requirements of the course, there was still a possibility that a student's goals were met.

Faculty who challenged MOOCs also focused on the same issues, noting that the value of the MOOC was determined by the student's effort, which did not offer an actualized value system that transfers to regular classroom learning. Faculty stated that the lack of standardized requirements associated with MOOCs implies a devaluation of the ability of students to learn and adequately be assessed. Ultimately, challengers of MOOCs touted that the inherent values it boasted were also its weaknesses.

Also of interest was the cordial nature of the participants, even though they were highly polarized in their opinions. Though disagreements were not completely expected, there was some expectation going into the focus group interviews that participants would try to persuade others towards their beliefs or that proponents would command one side of the argument over the others. In some ways, the expected behavior links back to Gee's (2005) theory of discourse analysis, which asserts that foundational understandings and values are intertwined with social and cultural groups and communication between people will affect what the others in the conversation do, say, and think. Using this theory, it would have made sense for participants to establish their side in the discussion and begin to back similar theories and responses. Patterns would arise that participants would challenge or support, and beliefs would have been accessed, debated, and ruled out as the strongest opinion began to persuade the others in the group. Instead, participants

remained cordial, expressed their opinion, and listened to the opinions of others. This behavior demonstrates that the participants valued the others in the discussion and were entirely open to any opinion, theory, or value placed on the concept of MOOCs. It also opened the theory that no one opinion was right or wrong; that each person, in his or her own way, was being entirely truthful about how MOOCs were presented in their life. For some, MOOCs had great value, and for others MOOCs had little value.

The Cyclical Pattern of Adapting to Change

As new technology develops and advancements are made in the way information is distributed, the landscape for learning will continue to transform as well. The debate on how to connect curriculum and technology has been at the forefront of faculty dialogues since the 1960s and will continue to be a topic of discussion as long as higher education is in existence. MOOCs, like previous innovations, have been met with faculty resistance. Specifically, faculty were concerned that students could complete a MOOC and receive college credits from a course that lacked standardization, accreditation, and ongoing, constant communication.

What is profound about the debates of the past and the relationship to MOOCs today is that the discussions have been ever present and cyclical from the inception of higher education. While MOOCs are one of many new types of learning phenomena to breach the pillars of higher education, they are not the first and will not be the last. As seen in the past, any time new technological advances or theories have been introduced, including the personal computer, the CD-ROM, and even assessment techniques, for example, faculty debate ensued, a spike of uncertainty increased, and in the end, higher education adapted and forged on (Schulte, 2011; Leinonen, 2005). Though one

participant briefly raised the topic that MOOCs would replace higher education, the reality is that it is unlikely that the faculty role will be replaced in the near future. Even if MOOCs were more widely adopted as supplemental to courses or provided students more credit attainment opportunities, participants agreed that the role of the educator might shift slightly, but is likely to remain. Especially within the community college realm, where the emphasis on teaching is core to the mission of supporting students, the majority of participants overwhelmingly agreed that they did not fear that their jobs were in jeopardy or that higher education would be completely redefined as a result.

Despite these views, however, because technology will continue to development and because it has an important function in higher education, it is still critical for faculty to continue to stay abreast of the latest technology as it advances in tandem with their curriculum. Again, as participants agreed that the role of the community college faculty member is unlikely to be dramatically modified, technology will continue to have influences in higher education.

Implications for Future Practice

The study of MOOCs and the potential for their academic implementation on a large scale is a topic that will continue to be discussed as technology continues to evolve. As MOOCs become more relevant and more widely used among community colleges, institutions need to evaluate how online platforms will affect key aspects of college life, specifically those that operate as "in-person"–only services. Institutions should consider how areas such as curriculum design, student advising and course selection, and faculty tenure and research will be affected. While it is clear that higher education will not be, and has not been, completely redesigned given the implementation of MOOCs, it is

apparent that small shifts are happening and institutions need to be aware of these changes. This section provides discussion points and potential solutions that may help institutions acclimate to MOOC integration.

Curriculum Design

Currently, curriculum design and the process for approving pedagogical changes vary among institutions. Despite such variance, an academic department is typically responsible for making and approving changes to its curriculum. In some cases, final approval is required by a larger institutional committee or accrediting body. Given the global nature of MOOCs, however, massive courses that are now available and provide credit supersede an individual institution's curricular standards. Consequently, curricular alignment, in light of a global approach to higher education, becomes more difficult to control. As a result, it is suggested that institutions, accrediting bodies, and faculty consider taking a proactive approach and begin reviewing accredited MOOCs for applicability to their curriculum. Procedures, parallel to current curricular alignment processes, could be designed to evaluate MOOCs and make recommendations to curriculum committees. While no institution will be able to fully evaluate every available MOOC, creating a repository of findings and sharing this information with other schools is suggested. Additionally, accrediting agencies might consider creating formal consortium agreements among specific institutions to collectively adopt or approve courses as a part of their accepted curriculum.

Advising and Course Selection

One of the most important support services in higher education is the advising and counseling students receive. Advisors and students work as a team to identify and create lifelong personal goals, to ensure scholastic success, and to chart the critical steps for the attainment of the students' personal, academic, and career goals. Advisors also help students create educational plans to complete their majors as well as listen to students' presenting issues and offer support as needed. Traditionally, the advising model that most colleges use requires that students meet with their advisor face to face in a very formal session on campus. However, given the openness of MOOCs and the lack of need for students to step on campus to obtain college information, institutions must find creative ways to become more global to reach their students. While the preferred method of this researcher is in-person advising, new supplemental methods must be designed to meet the implications of total online learning. It is suggested that institutions begin researching technological advances that help them communicate beyond the walls of physical offices. Technologies such as online conferencing, chat applications, telephone meetings, and use of file sharing websites to document academic progress and to discuss scholastic endeavors are recommended.

Tenure and Research

The process for applying for and receiving tenure is different at each institution. When faculty members are granted tenure, they are considered permanent members of the institution and, based on specific guidelines, cannot be released from their job without violating the institution's policies. Obtaining tenure provides faculty members protection of their position at the institution as well as protection of their ideas; faculty members

cannot be removed based on their academic beliefs or style of teaching and researching. Typically, the tenure process is an evaluation system utilized at 4-year research institutions; however, it is not uncommon to find this system in the community college. What is common is that regardless of institution type, the tenure track may be affected by MOOCs. Given the academic priorities of each institution, it is possible that faculty applying for tenure could be encouraged or discouraged to utilize them. Publication of research is typically the main requirement for whether a faculty member receives tenure; however, schools like community colleges, which focus on teaching, may view MOOCs as a necessary component and require faculty to develop them. It is also reasonable to assume that institutions and academic departments have yet to value or disregard MOOCs and, as a result, dissuade faculty who are applying for tenure from using them. On the other side, it is also important to consider the implications for faculty who are tenured. Since the tenure track typically provides job security, regardless of what a faculty member researches or how he or she goes about disseminating information, the question of how MOOCs will be utilized by these faculty is unclear. On one hand it is possible that faculty who are safeguarded by tenure may find MOOCs useful and use them regardless of what others think. On the other hand, faculty may choose to ignore using MOOCs despite the fact that a department or institution embraces the technology. Either way, whether a faculty member is tenured or not, institutions will need to start thinking about how MOOCs fit in this evaluation process. Based on the varying role MOOCs can play in higher education, it is recommended that institutions begin researching how these online resources can best support the evaluation process. Institutions may find it

beneficial to work with sister schools and unions to identify best practices and to set standards.

In the future, MOOCs may be highly important to higher education or they may evolve into something else entirely; however, what is known is that changes to the academic system will need to shift as the online platform becomes more widely accepted.

Outstanding Questions

Many themes emerged throughout the interviews that aided in responding to the research questions. However, also important for the implications of MOOCs are the topics that were not discussed by participants. For this research, two questions were unanswered. One topic relates to intellectual and property use rights on the Internet. Within the literature, faculty generally had concerns about how their work would be used (Smith & Casserly, 2006). Regardless of this viewpoint in the literature, however, not one participant questioned intellectual property rights, raised concerns, or inquired about how their user-created materials would be used or whether the materials would be used again for future users. Additionally, it is unclear why the discourse was polarizing. It was not clear whether the polarizing discourse was a result of historical response to change in higher education or a result of how the participants truly reacted to one another.

What was clear is that as MOOCs gain popularity and as technology evolves, faculty should still consider what might become of their information and materials when they post online. Given new ways to share and use information, faculty should still be cautious in protecting their personal information and intellectual property. What is unclear, based on the current discourse, is the current perception of how the openness of MOOCs affects how faculty feel about others accessing and using their material freely.

There are three possible viewpoints with this nonconcern: first, that participants do not yet understand the ramifications for their user-created materials; second, that participants already know the ramifications of placing material online and did not find it to be a concern; or third, that the questions asked by the researcher were not written in a manner that would elicit such a response. While this researcher supports the latter viewpoint, further research on the topic is recommended.

It is also apparent that there is some misunderstanding of what MOOCs are, and as a result faculty try to make sense of them based on their own in-person courses. However, these points do not completely explain why faculty continue to speak in binary points of view. There are several possibilities as to why the discourse was polarizing: (a) change, no matter what, will always elicit pushback among faculty; (b) given participants' varying experiences with MOOCs, those who knew very little may have simply agreed with those who knew more; (c) participants who had actual experiences with MOOCs were early adopters and able to speak genuinely about MOOCs; and (d) faculty misunderstood the concept of MOOCs.

Similar to previous innovations like the CD-ROM and telecourses, which received great scrutiny, the idea of MOOCs is a moving target, as new changes occur, course offerings are added, and different institutions provide access every day. While not a focal point of the study, this researcher supports the idea that the polarizing discussion was a result of the newness of MOOCs, the varying experiences faculty had with MOOCs, and the cyclical threat faculty have when new pedagogical ideas pose a change to higher education. More research on how faculty have responded to changes within

higher education, beyond technology, is recommended to further explain this phenomenon.

Recommendations for Further Study

Due to the context of the research questions, the study remained focused on faculty presuppositions and everyday discourse surrounding MOOCs within the community college sector. Indeed, the most critical aspect of this study has been to define the presuppositions faculty hold about MOOCs and their significance for higher education and to illustrate the context and implications for MOOCs within the participants' everyday discourse. Faculty and their discourse surrounding MOOCs was chosen as the focus of this research, as curriculum, course alignment, and pedagogy are the purview of this population. Given MOOCs' newness within higher education, specifically within the community college sector, it was prudent to review the discourse of the creators of the content to fully understand the impact at for the 2-year sector.

Based on this researcher's approach, additional research could focus on three other areas: (a) the discourse of multiple group types, to include administrators, students (workforce development, developmental, and college level), politicians, parents, prospective college students, and MOOC users and nonusers from among the community college sector and the 4-year sector; (b) analysis of the data through a multicultural lens; and (c) the changes of student enrollment at schools where MOOCs are embraced versus student enrollment at schools where MOOCs are not encouraged.

First, a study that included varied types of participants (e.g., students, administrators, parents, those with an MOOC experience) and institutions, including both credit and noncredit courses within the community college and 4-year institutions, would

allow review of a different magnitude of perceptions of participants. The value in creating a study such as this would be to make identifications about MOOCs that either do or do not apply across groups and institutions. For instance, a group of students might feel MOOCs are essential to their study, while a group of administrators might feel that MOOCs are a growing threat to enrollment. Additionally, students who take developmental courses or workforce development–type courses might report a different understanding of MOOCs than students enrolled in college-level courses. From this, value statements could be applied to the themes that emerge from different groups, programs, and institutions, which would broaden the assumptions of this study to develop a more comprehensive worldview of MOOCs as a potential threat or ally to higher education in general. As the current study allowed for only one group's perceptions from one sector of higher education, the global predictions for MOOCs as part of the academic institution were limited only to what community college faculty perceived or believed. Adding to the study by including more group types, programs, and institutions would provide greater context for the future of MOOCs and, perhaps, provide insight into how the institution of higher learning will evolve and transform over the next decade.

Second, data could be analyzed through a multicultural lens. Many theorists have made assertions about a person's belief system being tied to a cultural background or norm. With this view, people will react differently to specific cues than their counterparts due to their background or belief set. Therefore, future studies could draw connections between cultural viewpoints, themes that emerge from varied groups, and belief tropes that change the way respondents feel about MOOCs in the academic system. A study of this sort would be useful in making determinations about why respondents felt

positively or negatively about MOOCs and could offer insight into opposition or polarized opinions. The concept would feature the belief systems of the respondents as grouped, which could polarize themes even further and transform the discourse into a culturally bound dialogue. Further, although the multicultural lens would add limitations to the study, the emerging themes would provide insights into how culture defines perceptions.

Finally, analyzing the effect of student enrollment at schools that partner with MOOCs versus those that do not encourage MOOCs would demonstrate the difference on a quantitative scale. An analysis such as this would be critical to institutions and administrators as they make decisions about course selection and student enrollment. It could add insight into the process for implementing new technology into the curriculum, and it could add insight into whether the institution should partner with MOOCs on a more inclusive level. Further, determining student preferences towards MOOCs would demonstrate whether there is a need on each institution's level to implement MOOCs as an educational option. A quantitative discussion would also show verifiable evidence of whether students prefer MOOCs as an option to their education or if they prefer them as a supplemental option to their classroom learning. In all cases, such an analysis would be highly useful for future recommendations.

Limitations

Several factors could have threatened the validity and trustworthiness of this study including (a) the use of discourse analysis as a theory and method; (b) researcher bias; (c) the way in which the focus group was conducted; (d) limiting the scope of the data to focus on faculty perception of MOOCs; and (e) participant selection. As

discussed, these factors could have had an effect on the process of obtaining and analyzing the results; however, it was believed that the research overcame most of these limitations due to the study's focus and specificity.

The first factor was the use of discourse analysis as both a theory and method. Since the scope of this research was to primarily review and make sense of participants' discourse by using only a few of Gee's (2005) tenets, it is plausible to assume that the level of analysis was limited. While Gee's perspective encourages researchers to consider all of the discourse as part of a study, ultimately, the goal was to focus on a few characteristics and expand on them greatly. As a result, this limited method and use of a few concepts to study may have contributed to a narrow analysis.

Researcher bias was also a concern throughout the project, due to the researcher's personal assumptions about MOOCs and highly positive experience with online courses. In some part, this project was chosen because the researcher felt that MOOCs provide an outlet and opportunities that traditional institutions cannot, and it is believed that students should be able to choose their educational path and their learning environment. It can also be acknowledged that personal positive experiences with MOOCs provided a lens through which greater insight could be gained by the responses of the participants. Regardless of these facts, however, great care was taken to reduce bias, protocols were followed, and guidelines were set to protect the integrity of this study.

Using focus groups to obtain data has its own potential for limitations. Specifically, it is impossible to know how a group will interact and speak on a specific topic, and as a result a practiced moderator is required to maintain the flow of the conversation in a timely manner and ask relevant questions. A novice moderator, such as

the researcher, could have jeopardized the findings by allowing dominant participants to control the conversation or let unrelated topics become the focus of the discussion. Focus groups also have the ability to create an artificial environment where participants agree with other participants and socially acceptable answers. Due to the fact that each focus group included participants from the same institution, it was conceivable that statements and reactions of group members could have been affected.

While faculty are central in the creation and use of MOOCs, there are other important constituencies affected by MOOCs that were not included in this research. As a result, because this research only evaluated the discourse of community college faculty, the ability to generalize the findings is limited. It has been noted that further research involving other populations will be necessary to provide a more robust understanding of how MOOCs will affect higher education.

Finally, obtaining participants for the study proved to be difficult. As a result, the lack of participation from Institution A was the reason to expand to an additional site. It is unclear why obtaining participants was a challenge; however, many factors could have been involved, including the time and location of the interviews, the time required to interview, or the lack of understanding of the subject. As stated by participants, the discussion of MOOCs at the community college was not widespread and was primarily isolated to small subgroups. This lack of communication within institutions could have been a reason why faculty felt they could not participate in the study.

Although the limitations to the study were legitimate and could have shifted the direction of the study, a thorough analysis was provided of the primary themes that

faculty felt were the most important in their current worldview when discussing the potential of MOOCs.

Closing

Throughout this discussion, an effort has been made to review the positive views and criticisms of MOOCs and the application of MOOCs as a potential asset to academic learning. Using the theory applied by Gee's lenses of "connections," "politics," and "significance" enabled the researcher to consider themes as they emerged through the values and experiences of the participants. This method for analysis created a foundation from which new findings about the potential of MOOCs within the academic realm, specifically at the community college level, were made. For instance, several participants noted that they currently take MOOCs to supplement their curriculum, and several instructors agreed that although MOOCs do not offer accreditation, they do provide access to material that students would not access in their current curriculum.

However, what this study could not answer is the total value of the MOOC as a complete alternative to the traditional curriculum. Although participants were highly polarized in their opinions of MOOCs and although many presuppositions on the future and applications of MOOCs within an academic environment were made, there was no definitive or conclusive evidence that MOOCs provide an education that will surpass that provided by a traditional classroom setting. For now, it is evident that community college faculty believe that MOOCs offer significant value to students who have an interest and who apply themselves to their studies. Further, MOOCs offer a significant learning advantage to supplement or augment students' current curriculum. Participants believed that MOOCs held great value and potential for learning paths that students

would not otherwise see in their current curriculum options. Thus, MOOCs can act as a valuable supplement to learning and have the potential to act similar to a traditional classroom curriculum, but ultimately, in its current state, MOOCs will not replace the traditional classroom. Overall, the movement of the discussion continues to gain acceptance at a slow rate. For MOOCs to be completely acknowledged by community college faculty, more information and discussions are needed. As a researcher of discourse analysis and now a contributor to this topic, I hope to continue asserting myself within the conversations and act as a conduit for keeping the conversations going.

REFERENCES

Alessi, S. M., & Trollip, S. R. (1985). *Computer-based instruction: Methods and development.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Alexander, B., & Levine, A. (2008). Web 2.0 storytelling: Emergence of a new genre. *Educause Review, 43*(6), 1-8.

American Association of Community Colleges. (2015). *Community college trends and statistics.* Retrieved March 1, 2015, from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/aboutcc/trends/Pages/default.aspx

Association for Education Communications and Technology. (1972). The field of educational technology: A statement of definition. *Audiovisual Instruction, 17*, 36-43.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25*, 297-308.

Barseghian, T. (2012, December, 7). *For the future student, higher education will be redefined* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2012/12/for-the-future-student-higher-education-will-be-redefined/

Blankenship, M. (2011). How social media can and should impact higher education. *Hispanic Outlook in Education, 21*(11), 11-12.

Bloom, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Bradley, P. (2012). Invasion of the MOOCs: Community colleges seek best of both worlds in embrace of Internet-based courses. *Community College Week*, *25*(9), 6.

Budd, J. M., & Williams, K. A. (1993). CD-ROMs in academic libraries: A survey. *College and Research Libraries, 54*(6), 529-535.

Bui, V. (2012, October 23). Why the rush towards MOOCs? *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/why-the-rush-toward-moocs/

Carlson, S. (2005). The net generation goes to college. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 52*(7), A34-A37.

Carlson, S., & Blumenstyk, G. (2012, December 17). For whom is college being reinvented? *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-False-Promise-of-the/136305/

Charles, M., Bustard, D., & Black, M. (2009). Game inspired tool support for e-learning processes. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, *7*(2), 101-110.

Cheit, E. F. (1971). *The new depression in higher education: A study of financial conditions at 41 colleges and universities*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013, Maryland Code Ann. § 7–205.1 (2013).

Coursera. (2013). Coursera website. Retrieved May 14, 2013, from https://www.coursera.org

Coursera. (2015a). *Partnership manager*. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from https://www.coursera.org/about/careers/5350e075-04dc-417b-afc4-71ce053ee7ca

Coursera. (2015b). *Home page*. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from https://www.coursera.org/.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dohn, N. (2009). Web 2.0-mediated competence—implicit education demands on learners. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, *7*(2), 111-118.

East, H., & Leach, K. (1993). The continuing prominence of CD-ROMs in academic libraries: The findings and evaluation of a survey. *Aslib Proceedings, 50*(8), 208-214.

Educause. (2011). *Educause: Things you should know about MOOCs.* Retrieved from http://www.educause.edu/library/resources/7-things-you-should-know-about-moocs

Educause. (2012). *Educause: What campus leaders need to know.* Retrieved from http://www.net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB4005.pdf

Fidishun, D. (2000). *Andragogy and technology: Integrating adult learning theory as we teach with technology.* Paper presented at the 5th Annual Instructional Technology Conference. Retrieved from http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed00/fidishun.htm

Fifield, M. (2013, March 23). *Coming to terms with MOOCs: A community college angle.* Retrieved from http://www.nebhe.org/thejournal/coming-to-terms-with-moocs-a-community-college-perspective/

Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education with PowerWeb* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Gardner, L., & Young, J. R. (2013, March 14). California's move toward MOOCs sends shock waves, but key questions remain unanswered. *Chronicle of Higher*

Education. Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/article/California-Considers-a-Bold/137903/

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (2nd ed.). New York, New York: Routledge.

Gerrity, T. W. (1976). *College-sponsored correspondence instruction in the United States: A comparative history of its origin (1873-1915) and its recent development (1960-1975)*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Gilroy, M. (2010). Higher education migrates to YouTube and social networks. *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 19*(9), 12-14.

Gonzalez, J. (2011, February 9). 'Achieving the dream' produces little change at community colleges. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Achieving-the-Dream-Produces/126404

Gregorian, V. (2005). Six challenges to the American university. In R. Hersh & J. Merrow (Eds.), *Declining by degrees: Higher education at risk* (pp. 77-96). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Han, S., & Bhattacharya, K. (2001). Constructionism, learning by design, and project-based learning. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*. Retrieved from http://www.projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/

Head, K. (2013, April 3). Sweating the details of a MOOC in progress. *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/sweating-the-details-of-a-mooc-in-progress/43315

Hollands, F. M., & Tirthali, D. (2014). MOOCs: Exceptions and reality. Retrieved from http://www.academicpartnerships.com/sites/default/files/MOOCs_Expectations_and_Reality.pdf

Holmberg, B. (1977). *Distance education: A survey and bibliography*. New York, NY: Nichols.

Holmberg, B. (1989). *Theory and practice of distance education*. London, UK: Routledge.

Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Jencks, C., & Riesman, D. (1968). *The academic revolution.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Johnson, D. K., Ratcliff, J. L., & Gaff, J. G. (2004). A decade of change in general education. In J. Ratcliff, D. Johnson, & J. Gaff (Eds.), *Changing general education curriculum* (pp. 9-28). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Jones, E. A. (1992). Is a core curriculum best for everybody? In J. Ratcliff (Ed.), *Assessment and curriculum reform* (pp. 37-46). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kahlenberg, R. D. (2012, March 12). Demographic change in community colleges. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/demographic-change-in-community-colleges/31882

Katz, S. N. (2005). Beyond crude measurement and consumerism. *Academe, 96*(5), 16-20.

Kay, A., & Goldberg, A. (1977). Personal dynamic media. *Computer, 10*(3), 31-41.

Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to androgogy*. Chicago, IL: Follet.

Knowles, M. (1996). Adult learning. In R. K. Craig (Ed.), *ASTD training and development handbook: A guide to human resource development* (4th ed., pp. 254-265). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Kolowich, S. (2012, June 5). Who takes MOOCs? *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/06/05/early-demographic-data-hints-what-type-student-takes-mooc

Kolowich, S. (2013a, July 8). A university's offer of credit for a MOOC gets no takers. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com.article/A-Universitys-Offer-of-Credit/140131/

Kolowich, S. (2013b, March 18). The professors behind the MOOC hype. *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.chronicle.com/article/article-content/137905/#id=overview

Kop, R., Fournier, H., & Mak, S. F. J. (2011). A pedagogy of abundance or a pedagogy to support human beings? Participant support on massive open online courses. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, *12*(7), 74–93.

Kraut, R., Kiesler, S., Bonka, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V., & Crawford, A. (2002). Internet paradox revisited. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*(1), 49-74.

Kurland, D. M., & Kurland, L. C. (1987). Computer applications in education: A historical overview. *Annual Review of Computer Science, 2*, 317-358.

Lederman, D. (2013, February 7). Expanding pathways to MOOC credit. *Inside Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/02/07/ace-deems-5-massive-open-courses-worthy-credit

Leinonen, T. (2005, June, 23). *Critical history of ICT in education and where are we headed* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.flosse.dicole.org/?item=critical-history-of-ict-in-education-and-where-we-are-heading

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lorenzo, G., Oblinger, D., & Dziuban, C. D. (2007). How choice, co-creation, and culture are changing what it means to be net savvy. *Educause Quarterly, 30*(1), 6-12.

Mangan, K. (2012). MOOC mania. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 59*(6), B4-B5.

Marguerite, D. (2012). The impact of MOOCs on higher education. *College and University, 88*(2), 24-30.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McLean, D. D. (1996). Use of computer-based technology in health, physical education, recreation, and digest. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from http://www.ericdigests.org/1996-3/dance.htm

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Introduction to qualitative research: Examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morgan, A. (2009). Discourse analysis: An overview for the neophyte researcher. *Journal of Health and Social Care Improvement, 3*(2). Retrieved from http://www.wlv.ac.uk/

Morgan, D. L., & Kreuger, R. A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. In D. L Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups*. London, UK: Sage.

Moule, P. (2006). E-learning for healthcare students: Developing the communities of practice framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 54*(3), 370-380.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration. (1999). *Falling through the net: Defining the digital divide. A report on the telecommunications and information technology gap in America.* Retrieved from http://www.nces.ed.gov/

Nielson, B. (2013). MOOCs: Personal initiative and professional development. *Your Training Edge.* Retrieved from http://www.yourtrainingedge.com/2013/05/

Oblinger, D. G. (2012). *Game changers: Education and information technologies.* Bolder, CO: Educause.

Oblinger, D., & Oblinger, J. (2006). Is it age or IT: First steps toward understanding the net generation. *California School Library Association, 20*(2), 8-16.

Papert, S., & Harel, I. (1991). Situating constructionism. In S. Papert & I. Harel (Eds.), *Constructionism* (pp. 193-206). New York, NY: Ablex.

Pappano, L. (2012, November, 2). The year of the MOOC. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

Pérez-Peña, R. (2012, July 18). Top universities test the online appeal of free. *New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/18/education/top-universities-test-the-online-appeal-of-free.html

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pulliam, J. D., & Van Patten, J. J. (2003). *History of education in America*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice-Hall.

Punch, K. F. (2008). Introduction to research methods in education. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 40*(6), 1149-1150. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8535.2009.01026_8.x

Reiser, R. (1987). Instructional technology: A history. In R. Gagne (Ed.), *Instructional technology: Foundations* (pp. 1-34). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rudolph, F. (1977). *Curriculum: A history of the American undergraduate course of study since 1636*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Saldaňa, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Santos, G. E., Santos, A. G., & Milliron, D. E. (2000). Access in the information age: Community colleges bridging the digital divide. In G. Santos, A. Santos, & D. Milliron (Eds.), *Access in the information age: Community colleges bridging the digital divide* (pp. 9-16). Mission Viejo, CA: Element K.

Schulte, M. (2011). The foundations of technology distance education: A review of the literature to 2001. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 59*(1), 34-44.

Schultz, K., & Saloman, K. (1990). End users respond to CD-ROM. *Library Journal*, *115*(2), 56-57.

Schwartz, K. (2012, May 14). *Guide to MOOCs: Free, quality higher education* [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://www.blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2012/05/guide-to-free-quality-higher-education/

Shirky, C. (2012). *Napster, Udacity, and the academy*. Retrieved from http://www.shirky.com/weblog/2012/11/napster-udacity-and-the-academy/

Smith, M. S., & Casserly, C. M. (2006). The promise of open educational resources. *Change, 38*(8), 8-17.

Stoner, M. (2004). How the Web can speak to prospective students. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50*(34), B10-B11.

Thelin, J. R. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Timm, D. M., & Junco, R. (2008). Beyond the horizon. *New Directions for Student Services, 124,* 117-123. doi: 10.1002/ss.299

Toombs, W., & Tierney, W. G. (1991). *Meeting the mandate: Renewing the college and department curriculum* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 6). Washington, DC: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Trotter, E., & Roberts, C. (2006). Enhancing the early student experience. *Higher Education Research Development, 25*(4), 371-386.

Udacity. (2013, May 1). Udacity webpage. Retrieved from http://www.udacity.com

Voss, B. (2013). *Massive open online courses (MOOCs): A primer for university and college board members* [White paper]. Retrieved from http://agb.org/reports/

2013/massive-open-online-courses-moocs-primer-university-and-college-board-members

Whissemore, T. (2012). *Moving toward MOOCs*. Retrieved from http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/Pages/Technology/Moving-toward-MOOCs.aspx

Wilen-Daugenti, T. (2011). Higher education practice lead? *Higher Education Trends & Statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.cisco.com

Wilhelm, A., & Theirer, A. (2000). Should Americans be concerned about the digital divide? *Insight on the News, 16*(33), 40-42.

Young, J. R. (2011, February 27). Actually going to class, for a specific course? How 20th-century. *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Actually-Going-to-Class-How/126519/

Yuan, L., & Powell, S. (2013). *MOOCs and open education: Implications for higher education.* Retrieved from http://publications.cetis.ac.uk/2013/667

APPENDIX A:

MOOC FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Welcome

Facilitator read aloud:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group regarding the integration of MOOCs in the community college sector. Today's session will be divided into two 30-minute parts. For Part I of our session, I will ask questions related to your understanding and knowledge of MOOCs. To further help us, I will write notes and diagrams on the whiteboard as needed. During Part II of our session, we will talk about how MOOCs might impact various aspects of the community college sector. If you have comments or further clarification of another person's comments, please feel comfortable to contribute to the discussion. This focus group will be digitally recorded and last approximately 60 minutes.

Confidentiality

Facilitator read aloud:
In order to protect your confidentiality, I will ask each of you to create a pseudonym that will be attached to your words for the purposes of documenting the results of the study. You will maintain this pseudonym throughout the duration of the study. All discussions will be saved and recorded on a security-encrypted device which will be formatted at the conclusion of the study. Any notes or documentation I make on paper will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. When transcribing these discussions, your real names will be replaced with your assigned pseudonyms, and all personal identifying information will be removed. At any time after this initial session, you may review the transcripts of our session and request a redaction of any information you think would compromise your confidentiality and identity. Further, I am requesting that all participants respect the group by not telling anyone outside this group what is said. This confidentiality will depend on your agreement not to share the group's discussion.

Part I: Introduction

Facilitator turn on digital recorder
Facilitator read aloud:
In front of each of you is a blank name tent and marker. Before we begin please choose a pseudonym and write it on the tent. Please remember to refer to this name when speaking to the conversation. Please also use others' pseudonyms when making reference to participants in the group.

Question 1: The term "MOOC" stands for massive open online courses. Given the full expansion of this acronym, take 5 minutes to complete the following two tasks:

A. Generate three adjectives that you think best describe the characteristics of MOOCs; and
B. Identify a symbol or a picture that best represents MOOCs.

Once you have completed these two tasks, please take a dry erase marker and write your responses on the board. Please be sure to label your work.

Facilitator instructions:
Briefly review the responses on the whiteboard with the team. Ask each person to state their pseudonym and explain their findings. Copy this information in your notes.

Facilitator read aloud:
Question 2: Let's briefly talk about where you are reading and hearing about MOOCs. If these are the adjectives and images we collectively have of MOOCs, what are they informed by?

Transition Phase

Facilitator read aloud:
Now that we have a definition and an idea where this information is coming from, what seem to be the challenges and opportunities that people are associating with MOOCs?

Facilitator instructions:
Note and list participants' responses on the whiteboard. Be sure to divide the list into "opportunities" and "challenges."

Part II: Primary Questions

Facilitator read aloud:
Given this list of challenges and opportunities, how do you think these courses will impact the role of community colleges in higher education across the country?

Facilitator instructions:
Use the following list as possible follow-up prompts (optional). Monitor time. Read each question aloud as they become applicable to the conversation.

- It is important to understand faculty's viewpoint on innovations to the curriculum. As a result, what type of comments, thoughts, and feedback are you hearing from other faculty regarding MOOCs and curriculum integration?
- Continuing to think about community colleges **as a whole**, how would you feel if a student transferred MOOC credit from another institution within your field of expertise?
- Thinking about your own courses, and assuming the technological support was provided to assist you, would you consider teaching one of your courses as a MOOC? Why or why not?
- As a faculty member, where do you see MOOCs fitting at the community college?

- Knowing your student populations, what might be the impact, if any, to enrollments to your academic area of expertise?
- Given the recent adoption of The College and Readiness Act of 2013, where do MOOCs fit in?
- How might MOOCs affect developmental education?

Wrap Up:

Facilitator instructions:
The session moderator will provide a 2-3 minute summary of the discussion evoked by the primary questions. After the summary, the participants will be asked about the adequacy of the summary. Provide a summary of your notes, briefly pointing out the major concepts developed during Part I, Part II, and the Transition Phase.

Facilitator read aloud:
[Provide summary] Did I correctly describe what was said?

Is there anything that we should have talked about that we didn't?

Is there anything that you came wanting to say that you didn't get a chance to say?

Facilitator instructions:
Write down any responses made by participants.

Close

Facilitator read aloud:
Thank your for participating in this focus group regarding the integration of MOOCs in the community college sector. I appreciate your time and support, and I will be in contact with each of you for follow-up.

APPENDIX B:

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY (EMAIL)

Subject: Participation in Research

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

You are receiving this email message because you are a full-time or part-time faculty member employed at [name of institution]. As a result, you are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Mr. Jamin Bartolomeo, a doctoral student at The George Washington University. Mr. Bartolomeo has worked as a faculty member for several years and is currently working on a dissertation entitled, "The Discourse Among Community College Faculty Regarding the Integration of MOOCs." Below you will find a message from him including further details.

[Signature of Institution Official(s)]
++

Greetings! My name is Jamin Bartolomeo and I am working on a Doctor of Education degree at The George Washington University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study that is focused on learning about the perceptions of community college faculty regarding the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) movement and its impact on the community college sector. I am the student investigator for this study, and the principal investigator is my dissertation advisor, Dr. Rick Jakeman. Although [name of institution] has assisted with the circulation of this invitation, it is not a formal partner in this research project.

Having worked as a faculty member and having taught courses in the student development and psychology disciplines, I am grateful for the opportunity to reach out to you with this invitation. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of what community college faculty think about MOOCs and to document the discourse. By learning from you and others, the aim of this project is to advance understandings of what faculty perceive of the potential integration of MOOCs at community colleges and help guide future discussions.

To be eligible for the study, potential participants must have been employed in the community college sector as a full-time or part-time faculty member for two consecutive semesters over the past three academic years. Additionally, while not required, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of MOOCs. Faculty who are not familiar with massive open online courses, but are interested in learning more for the sake of the study, may contact me for reference material. Ultimately, to participate, you agree to have at least a basic familiarity of MOOCs. This information will be verified through a short prescreening online survey.

If you meet the prescreening criteria and agree to participate in this study, you would meet with me for two interviews. In the first interview, you would participate as a member of a small focus group comprising full-time and part-time faculty from [name of institution]. During this 60-minute session, I will ask participants a series of questions regarding their understanding of MOOCs and how they think MOOCs will affect the future of community colleges. In the second interview, to be conducted 1 to 2 weeks after the focus group, you would meet with me in a 30-minute one-on-one follow-up interview to review questions and statements made during the focus group. Both interviews would be digitally recorded (audio) so that they could be analyzed later.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without any threat or consequences. Your employment status will not, in any way, be affected should you not choose to participate or if you withdraw your participation.

I hope that you will strongly consider participation in this research study. Each member who participates in both the focus group interview and the one-on-one follow-up interview will receive a $20 gift card to Amazon.com. Thank you in advance for considering this invitation. If you are interested in participating in the study or have questions about participation, please contact me directly at (240) 429-5126 or jkbarto@gwu.edu. Alternately, you are welcome to contact the principal investigator, Dr. Rick Jakeman, at (202) 994-5123 or rjakeman@gwu.edu.

Regards,

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX C:

REMINDER INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY (EMAIL)

Subject: Participation in Research

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

You are receiving this email message because you are a full-time or part-time faculty member employed at [name of institution]. As a result, you are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Mr. Jamin Bartolomeo, a doctoral student at The George Washington University. Mr. Bartolomeo has worked as a faculty member for several years and is currently working on a dissertation entitled, "The Discourse Among Community College Faculty Regarding the Integration of MOOCs." Below you will find a message from him including further details.

[Signature of Institution Official(s)]

++

Greetings! My name is Jamin Bartolomeo and I am working on a Doctor of Education degree at The George Washington University. I am sending you this email reminder to invite you to participate in a research study that is focused on learning about the perceptions of community college faculty regarding the massive open online course (MOOC) movement and its impact on the community college sector. I am the student investigator for this study, and the principal investigator is my dissertation advisor, Dr. Rick Jakeman. Although the faculty council of [name of institution] has assisted with the circulation of this invitation, it is not a formal partner in this research project.

Having worked as a faculty member and having taught courses in the student development and psychology disciplines, I am grateful for the opportunity to reach out to you with this invitation. The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of what community college faculty think about massive open online courses (MOOCs) and to document the discourse. By learning from you and others, the aim of this project is to advance understandings of what faculty perceive of the potential integration of MOOCs at community colleges and help guide future discussions.

To be applicable for the study, potential participants must have been employed in the community college sector as a full-time or part-time faculty member for two consecutive semesters over the past three academic years. Additionally, while not required, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of MOOCs. Faculty who are not familiar with massive open online courses, but are interested in learning more for the sake of the study, may contact me for reference material. Ultimately, to participate, you agree to have at

least a basic familiarity of MOOCs. This information will be verified through a short prescreening online survey.

If you meet the prescreening criteria and agree to participate in this study, you would meet with me for two interviews. In the first interview you would participate as a member of a small focus group comprising full-time and part-time faculty from [name of institution]. During this 60-minute session, I will ask participants a series of questions regarding their understanding of MOOCs and how they think MOOCs will affect the future of community colleges. In the second interview, to be conducted 1 to 2 weeks after the focus group, you would meet with me in a 30-minute one-on-one follow-up interview to review questions and statements made during the focus group. Both interviews would be digitally recorded (audio) so that they could be analyzed later.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without any threat or consequences. Your employment status will not, in any way, be affected should you not choose to participate or if you withdraw your participation.

I hope that you will strongly consider participation in this research study. Each member who participates in both the focus group interview and the follow-up interview will receive a $20 gift card to Amazon.com. Thank you in advance for considering this invitation. If you are interested in participating in the study or have questions about participation, please contact me directly at (240) 429-5126 or jkbarto@gwu.edu. Alternately, you are welcome to contact the principal investigator, Dr. Rick Jakeman, at (202) 994-5123 or rjakeman@gwu.edu.

Regards,

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX D:

TEXT FOR RECRUITMENT FLYERS

Attention Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty
Your help is needed!

A student researcher from The George Washington University in Washington, DC, will be here later this semester to interview faculty regarding the impact of **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** on community colleges. The study requires participation in a focus group interview and a one-on-one follow-up interview with the researcher. The purpose of this study is to inform university professionals about the faculty perception of MOOCs at community colleges.

Participants will be compensated with a
$20 gift card to Amazon.com!

For more information, please contact:
Jamin Bartolomeo (GW Doctoral Student)
Email: jkbarto@gwu.edu
Telephone: 240-429-5126

An email with specific details has also been sent
to your [name of institution] email address.

For eligibility purposes, this study presumes that you are a full-time or part-time faculty member at [name of institution] and that you have been employed in the community college sector for two consecutive semesters over the past three academic years. This information will be verified through a short online survey.

Please note: Although [name of institution] is not a formal partner in this research, the Institutional Review Board has given approval for this study to be conducted on campus.

APPENDIX E:

CONFIRMATION OF INTEREST (EMAIL)

Subject: Confirmation of Interest

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study regarding MOOCs and community college faculty. Below is a link to a short preinterview questionnaire to gather some preliminary information about you. The questionnaire should take no longer than 2 minutes to complete. Please click on the link within 24 hours of receiving this email and complete the questions. I will be in contact within one business day of your submission.

[Link to questionnaire]

Please remember that your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time without any threat or consequences. You are also entitled to a full, accurate, and honest responses to your questions about any aspect of this study.

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX F:

PREINTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (SECURE WEB FORM)

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study regarding MOOCs and community college faculty. The answers to this brief questionnaire will help the researcher understand participants' knowledge of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as well as their community college experience. In some cases, the answers to these questions may be used to determine placement within focus groups. All information is confidential and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

1. Please provide your first and last name

   [ ]

2. Have you been employed as an instructional faculty member (teaching) for two consecutive semesters over the past three academic years?
   ◯ Yes ◯ No

3. Do you currently teach courses at the institution?

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

4. Have you heard or are you aware of massive open online courses (MOOCs)?

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

5. Have you completed or participated in a massive open online course (MOOC)?

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

6. Do you teach or have you taught in a subject area that also offers the same course through an online medium?

   ◯ Yes ◯ No

   Submit

Automatic response: Thank you for your participation. You will be contacted by [date] for further instructions.

APPENDIX G:

CONFIRMATION OF SELECTION (EMAIL)

Subject: Confirmation of Participation

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study regarding MOOCs and community college faculty. Congratulations, you have been selected to participate in the study. Attached to this email is an Informed Consent form explaining the purpose, procedures, and confidentiality statement for the study. Please read the document carefully and let me know if you have any questions. This information will be reviewed during our first meeting.

Our focus group will take place on [date] at [time] in [location]. I have attached a campus map to this email detailing directions to our meeting location. Please try to arrive 10 minutes early and expect to stay for the full 60 minutes. You do not need to bring anything with you.

Thank you again for your participation. Please confirm that you can attend this meeting by emailing me at jkbarto@gwu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX H:

INFORMATION SHEET ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

The Discourse Among Community College Faculty
Regarding the Integration of MOOCs
IRB #111346

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Rick Jakeman of the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University (GWU). Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine, from the perspective of community college faculty, the perceptions and understanding of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and their impact on the community college sector. For eligibility purposes, this study presumes that you are a full-time or part-time faculty member at [name of institution] and that you have been employed in the community college sector for two consecutive semesters over the past three academic years. Additionally, you agree to have at least a basic familiarity of MOOCs. This information will be verified through a short online survey.

Methodology and Duration: During the study you will be asked to meet with the researcher for two interviews. The first interview will take place in a focus group setting where four to eight other faculty members will accompany you from your institution. The focus group will last approximately 60 minutes, will be held in a private meeting room on campus, and will include a series of questions that prompt you to think of massive open online courses and their impact on the community college sector. The goal of this interview is to generate focused conversation among participants rather than a strict question-and-answer exchange. During the focus group discussions, while we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the discussion, we request that all present respect the group by not repeating what is said outside the group.

The second interview is a one-on-one interview with the student researcher and will occur approximately 1 to 2 weeks after the first interview and will be more informal in nature. You will have the opportunity to choose an alternative meeting location, and the conversation will be focused on statements and reactions made by the group during the focus group. You will have the ability to review transcripts from the focus group and provide comments and feedback to the student researcher. The second interview is semistructured, which means that the researcher may ask questions specific to your comments made during the discussion. This interview will last approximately 30 minutes. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you may stop your participation in this study at any time.

Risks: While participating in this study, you might experience the following risks: distress discussing matters related to the topics of working as a community college faculty member; anxiety speaking in front of other community college faculty from your

institution; and discomfort talking about potential changes to the community college sector. At any time throughout the study, should you feel uncomfortable or unwilling to continue, you may terminate your participation. Your employment status will not, in any way, be affected should you choose not to participate or if you withdraw your participation.

Benefits: If you decide to participate in this study and partake in both the focus group interviews and one-on-one interview, you will receive a $20 gift card to Amazon.com. Moreover, having an understanding of the faculty perception may help influence how college-affiliated employees, such as administrators, board of trustee members, policy-makers, and politicians, make decisions about MOOCs in the future.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential; however, this cannot be guaranteed. In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms will be assigned during the focus groups and will carry throughout the duration of the research. All records will be digitally stored. Any files containing participants' contact information (name and email address) and pseudonyms will be kept in a password-protected file which will be locked on a separate external hard drive located at the researcher's home. All digital files will be discarded at the conclusion of the researcher's dissertation defense. No hard copies of this information will be retained.

Digital recordings from both focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews will be converted to mp3 files and secured on a separate (second) external hard drive under password protection in the student researcher's office/home. Transcripts of recorded interviews will be produced by a third-party transcription service and, likewise, secured in digitized form in the student researcher's office/home on a password-protected external hard drive. All digital files will be kept in a password-protected file, which will be locked on a separate external hard drive located at the researcher's home. All electronic files will be discarded at the conclusion of the researcher's dissertation defense.

If a participant or the student researcher unintentionally makes reference to the participant's or another participant's real name during the interview, that information will be redacted from both the digital recording and the transcript.

Any hard copies of printed transcripts and handwritten memos will be secured in a locked file cabinet in the student researcher's office/home. Electronic copies of interview transcripts will be deidentified, code-linked, and stored on a password-protected external hard drive in the student researcher's home office. All files will be discarded at the conclusion of the researcher's dissertation defense.

If results of this research study are reported in journals or at scientific meetings, the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified. All direct quotes from the focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews will be cited word for word and will be deidentified to protect the identity of each participant. In cases where participants' responses could potentially identify themselves or others, the researcher will redact all identifying information.

Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting the student investigator, Jamin Bartolomeo, at (240) 429-5126 or jkbarto@gwu.edu. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact the principal investigator, Dr. Rick Jakeman, at (202) 994-5123 or rjakeman@gwu.edu.

If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the Office of Human Research, The George Washington University and Medical Center:
Voice: 202-994-2715, Email: ohrirb@gwu.edu
Website: https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/

To ensure anonymity, your signature is not required, unless you prefer to sign it. Your agreement to the terms and your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed.

_____ _____

Signature (optional) Date

*Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.

APPENDIX I:

72-HOUR CONFIRMATION (EMAIL)

Subject: Confirmation of Focus Group

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

This is a reminder that our focus group/interview will meet on [date] at [time] in [name of community college location].

Please try to arrive 10 minutes early and expect to stay for the full 60 minutes. You do not need to bring anything with you.

I look forward to working with you.

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX J:

ONE-ON-ONE CONFIRMATION (EMAIL)

Subject: Confirmation of One-On-One Interview

[Date]

[Customary Salutation]

Thank you for your participation in the initial focus group. At this time, I'd like to invite you to participate in a 30-minute one-on-one interview with me to review the focus group conversation. Below are a list of dates and times that are available for which to meet. Please select one of the following and email me with your top three choices.

Please try to arrive 10 minutes early and expect to stay for the full 30 minutes. You do not need to bring anything with you.

I look forward to working with you.

Jamin Bartolomeo
Doctoral Candidate
The George Washington University

APPENDIX K:

SEMISTRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Welcome

Facilitator read aloud:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this one-on-one interview regarding the integration of MOOCs in the community college sector. The goal of today's session is to follow up on the focus group discussion you participated in a few weeks ago. Before we begin, let me reiterate the confidentiality agreement:

In order to protect your confidentiality, you have been assigned a pseudonym that will be attached to your words for the purposes of documenting the results of the study. All discussions will be saved and recorded on a security-encrypted device which will be formatted at the conclusion of the study. Any notes or documentation I make on paper will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. When transcribing these discussions, your real name will be replaced with your assigned pseudonym, and all personal identifying information will be removed. At any time after this initial session, you may review the transcripts of our session and request a redaction of any information you think would compromise your confidentiality and identity. Do you understand this agreement?

Facilitator, turn on recording device

Part I: Reviewing the transcript and summary

Facilitator read aloud:

Here is a copy of the transcript from your focus group as well as a summary I have complied. Take note of your own comments. Please review the document and let me know if you have any comments, questions, or concerns. Please let me know if you see any inconsistencies or inaccurate transcriptions. I'll give you about 5 minutes to review these documents.

Facilitator note time on watch

Question 1: Do you feel that the document is accurate and completely depicts the discussion and statements made on [date of focus group]? Why or why not?

Question 2: Do you have any comments or feedback on the process or the discussion? If so, what are your thoughts?

Part II: Customized questions for participant

Question 3: During the initial focus group interview, participants provided many different perspectives regarding MOOCs. What is your perspective?

Questions here will be determined based on the participant's actions and feedback during the initial focus group. Please refer to the participant's individual file.