EDMODO: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH AS THE SECOND LANGUAGE

(ESL) OF LATINO/LATINA STUDENTS

by

Michael Chris Taylor

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the EDUC 989 Course

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The population of English as the Second Language (ESL) students continues to rise throughout the United States especially among those of Latino/Latina heritage. An important aspect to help these students succeed is to build a sense of community through a social constructivist framework. By using and developing 21st century skills through social networking, students can develop a sense of community which could lead to an increase in academic achievement. Utilizing a philosophical assumption of methodology allowed for flexibility and ongoing reflection for the current study, and it was applied in the conceptual framework of social constructivism and sense of community. The purpose of this collective case study was to explore the development of the students' sense of community through a social networking platform, known as Edmodo, for seven Latino/Latina 7th grade civics students who qualified for ESL services, two civics teachers, and one ESL consultation teacher within a large Central Florida school district. Three research questions, derived from the literature, drove the study. The focus centered on, "How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics?" Data was collected through observations, interviews, and discussion board threads and analyzed by mining the data, categorical aggregation, establishing patterns, and generalizing the categories and patterns. Though the results of the study were inconclusive, four major themes emerged from the data. These themes included social networking, sense of community/zone of proximal development (ZPD), content relevancy, and cultural influence.

Keywords: Social constructivism, sense of community, blended learning, collective case study, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, social networking

Dedication/Acknowledgments Page

First and foremost, I dedicate the completion of this manuscript to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without His provision, guidance, and resources that He has so blessed me with, I would not have been able to complete this daunting task. Christ has blessed me through His atoning blood and has always been there for me. I pray that the completion of this manuscript and new opportunities that may await will only glorify His name. Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful wife and children. I thank them for the time that I needed to dedicate myself to the completion of this manuscript and for being patient and understanding with me. Over the past several years, both my wife and three children have made countless sacrifices in order for me to be successful. Thank you to my supportive family. Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my parents who always set a high academic bar for me. Their support in high school set the precedent for this monumental moment in my life.

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List of Abbreviations

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

English as the Second Language (ESL)

English Language Learners (ELL)

End of Course Exam (EOC)

Greek Educational Online Social Network (EOSN)

Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)

Internet Supported Learning (ISL)

Learning Management System (LMS)

Social Networking System (SNS)

Sense of Community (SOC)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The use of technology and social networking in the classroom continues to be an intriguing phenomenon for educators to contemplate in assisting with student learning. Coupled with this, the Latino/Latina ESL population continues to rapidly grow within United States' classrooms. This chapter will examine the background of the changing demographics in America and the use of social networking in the classroom. Then, the problem statement and the purpose will be discussed along with the significance and need of the study to the American, and in particular the Floridian, educator. The three research questions that drove this study will also be introduced. Finally, the chapter will conclude by discussing the research plan that was followed to complete the study and some of the challenges of completing it and by defining the important terminology.

Background

The United States is quickly changing. In the past, those of European descent have been the majority group. However, in the last 20 years, demographics have changed to the point that no ethnic group can claim to be the majority in America (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). This change is due to a large influx of immigrants. Today, one-fourth of the students in America claim that they come from a home of immigrants (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Latino/Latina students make up the majority who have immigrated into the United States, and thereby also make up the largest percentage of English as Second Language (ESL) students (Becerra, 2012). ESL students face an additional obstacle of a language barrier that traditional students do not. Therefore, educators must be concerned with how to assist these students and help them succeed in the classroom (Becerra, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009).

One way to assist students of Latino/Latina heritage who qualify for ESL services is to help build a sense of community (Rovai, Baker, & Cox, 2008; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Rovai, Wighting, & Liu, 2005). A sense of community can be defined as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). By building a sense of community, educators can help bridge the educational gap due to the language barrier and instill confidence that fosters academic success through communication and assisting each other with language acquisition and usage (Good et al., 2010; Gutiérrez-Clellen, Simon-Cereijido, & Sweet, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). One avenue of building the sense of community could be the possibility of implementing technology in the classroom. Technology in the classroom has led to an increase in the 21st century skills of collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving (Borokhovski, Tamim, Bernard, Abrami, & Sokolovskaya, 2012). With the constant advancement in technology, many emergent web-based tools are introduced every year. Among these technological tools are wikis, blogs, and social networking platforms such as Facebook and the educational social networking platform, Edmodo. Very little research exists of the influence of educational social networking and the 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, and critical thinking to increase students' sense of community in a virtual classroom.

Initial searches of ERIC and EBSCO databases produced only two results for the term, Edmodo, and those results simply described the platform but did not analyze the educational benefits (Harper, 2010; Trust, 2012). Therefore, after a cursory look for Edmodo, it appeared that little is known of how this medium of collaboration could influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina 7th grade civics ESL students. More is known for the popular utilization of

Facebook. As compared to the initial searches for scholarly articles on Edmodo, similar queries

for Facebook generated 562 results through ERIC and EBSCO. Amerson (2011) briefly

described an example of how Facebook was utilized in nursing education research; Loveless and

Griffith (2012) discussed the use of Facebook for remedial reading. This information about

Facebook relates to the current study and assists in making the argument about the value of

Edmodo in an educational setting because it has the same aesthetic appearance of Facebook such

as a wall to post discussion threads. It also provides the abilities for the educator to upload files

and documents for students to access. Students can also participate in quick online polls to

assess the pulse of what the group is thinking about different topics. Findik Coşkunçay and

Özkan (2013) described learning management system (LMS) tools within university courses to

assist with defining the term. They stated, "Higher education institutes implement LMS to

support their course curriculum with many types of tools; such as, discussion boards, forum,

chat, online grade posting, online exam, file sharing, management of assignments, syllabi,

schedules, announcements and course plans" (p. 13). As compared to the social networking

components of Facebook, the current study is important to explore the possibilities of social

networking by utilizing the unique educational features of a LMS within what Edmodo provides

by allowing the teacher and students to upload assignments, set a class calendar, and for turning

in assignments to help foster a sense of community in a blended virtual classroom. With the

implementation and utilization of the social networking and LMS aspects of Edmodo, it is

predicted that 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students should create a close-knit community to help

them overcome the academic barriers that persist (Becerra, 2012).

  Glezou, Grigoriadou, and Samarakou (2010) described a case study of a social

networking program being utilized in Greece which is called the Greek Educational Online

Social Network (EOSN). Though limited to the field of science, EOSN provided a small glimpse of success for a social networking platform to enhance the collaboration between students and educators. The program, EOSN, actually included many different resources, but the study focused upon one aspect known as "LogoinEdu" which was powered by another popular social networking program known as Ning (p. 410). The researchers stated that the goal of EOSN was to "exchange views, experiences, practices and tools, such as micro-worlds, websites, lesson plans, worksheets, codes and all kinds of resources necessary for our teaching practice, with the purpose to upgrade the teaching-learning process" (p. 406). While taking a snapshot of EOSN, Glezou et al. created a chart revealing over 200 members and 10 groups that were involved with the study. Even though there were many educators who participated in this study from Greece, Glezou et al. concluded that more research needed to be done especially in the area of breaking down the resistance of educators to utilize and implement social networking in the classroom. They stated, "An important open educational issue is the study of teacher ideas and attitudes towards the integration of social networking in everyday teaching process" (p. 417). The study of EOSN pertains to the purpose and intent of the current case study by examining how a social networking program can build a community of learning for both educators and students.

According to the "About" section of the website Edmodo.com, Borg and O'Hara saw a need to connect the everyday technological world of students with their classroom experience while working within their respective school district in 2008 (Edmodo, 2013). Once students entered the classroom, Borg and O'Hara felt that there was a disconnection between student learning and their social networking outside of school. Because of this disconnect, Borg and O'Hara created and developed a new social networking platform designed specifically for

education known as Edmodo. The information on the website in 2013 stated, "With Edmodo, teachers and students connect, share, and learn on our safe and secure social network" (Edmodo, 2013). This Web 2.0 resource allows both the teacher and the students to collaborate together to accomplish common tasks synchronously working together at the same time and place or asynchronously working together at different times and from different locations. The layout of Edmodo on the Internet looks very similar to Facebook, except there are no advertisements and it is solely for educational purposes (Harper, 2010; Trust, 2012). Teachers can post discussion threads for students to respond to and even create polls on issues and concepts discussed in class to reveal the "snapshot" of what the class as a whole is thinking. Edmodo incorporates online discussion boards, polls, quizzes, applications, and tools for teachers to monitor student progress within the course. According to the company of Edmodo.com, the design and purpose of Edmodo is to help "connect all learners with the people and resources needed to reach their full potential" (Edmodo, 2013).

Due to the lack of empirical research, this collective case study investigated the influence of a social networking program, known as Edmodo, to better understand the impact on students' sense of community in an educational setting for Latino/Latina 7th grade civics students who meet the requirements of an ESL student. The framework of this study relied upon the theory of social constructivism, especially the aspect of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and the theory of the sense of community (Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Rovai et al., 2005). The purpose of the current study was to explore how the sense of community was influenced by the social networking platform, Edmodo, by utilizing the 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Allsop, 2011; Amerson, 2010; Beames, Klenowski, & Lloyd, 2010; Harper, 2010; Trust, 2012).

Adding to the pressures of a language barrier for Latino ESL students, high-stakes testing in the area of civics can also fuel the need for building a community to succeed academically. Unfortunately for these Latino/Latina students who qualify for ESL services, they are expected to perform at a high standard immediately. Many times, they are thrust into the mix of a mainstream classroom and expected to sink or swim academically (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010; Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2008). The teacher's expectations can translate into a self-fulfilling prophecy for ESL students, and thereby impact their success. Walker-Dalhouse and Risko (2008) stated, "Unfortunately, too many students who drop out of school report that they could not identify anyone at their school who cared about them or their problems" (p. 422). Though many well-intended teachers who truly care about the students, no matter their heritage or language, desire to see ESL students succeed, oftentimes they are restrained by the mandates of the state and pacing deadlines of district curriculum maps. Therefore, these teachers do not have the time necessary to devote to assisting Latino/Latina ESL students with the proper amount of help needed to achieve true success.

In 2010, the Florida Legislature passed CS/HB 105 which required that middle schools must require at least one semester of civics education in language arts classes. With this bill, the state legislature also stated that students are required to pass an end of course exam (EOC) focused on the philosophical foundations and important documents of the country's government. Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic school year, students will need to pass this EOC in order to advance or matriculate to the high school level. As a result of this mandate, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) created a new year-long program of study for civics education within the Social Studies content. New standards and benchmarks were required with the creation of this course, and as a result, new curriculum maps for all 67 districts in the state of

Florida were created for the civics course. These curriculum maps included organizing

principles, target skills, state standards, and academic vocabulary. Within the curriculum map

for the 7th grade civics course, the Volusia District Social Studies Office (2013) defined and

described the purpose of the organizing principles as the following:

> Everything begins with the purpose, the Organizing Principle. The OP is like a thesis
>
> statement in an essay. It provides the direction for an essay and lets the reader know
>
> what the writer is trying to prove. Similarly, an OP provides direction for a unit of study
>
> in a classroom. It lets the student know what you as a teacher are trying to prove. (p. 2)

In congruence with this newly adopted course and benchmarks, FLDOE (2012) reported

that students who qualified for ESL services were rapidly increasing. Florida Statutes defined

students who are ESL students within the state as:

> An individual who was not born in the United States and whose native language is a
>
> language other than English; an individual who comes from a home environment where a
>
> language other than English is spoken in the home; or an individual who is an American
>
> Indian or Alaskan native and who comes from an environment where a language other
>
> than English has had a significant impact on his or her level of English language
>
> proficiency; and who, by reason thereof, has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading,
>
> writing, or listening to the English language to deny such individual the opportunity to
>
> learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English. (Florida
>
> Department of Education, 2012, Section 1003.56(2))

FLDOE also stated in the *Education Information and Accountability Services Data Report* for

2012 that ESL students increased by a total of 19.4% with an increase of 39,754 students (p. 1).

Teachers must, therefore, identify and implement strategies to help Latino/Latina ESL students succeed in the classroom (Becerra, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009).

An important venue that could help ESL students by creating a sense of community is a blended environment of traditional classroom work and collaboration through a social networking platform (Hung & Yuen, 2010; Lennon, 2013). An emerging educational social networking program is Edmodo. Hung & Yuen (2010) stated cautiously that it is more beneficial to use a platform, such as Edmodo, as compared to Facebook or other popular social networking sites (SNS) to help eliminate the distractions of unwanted advertisements and digital games. With the sole focus on educational outcomes and building a sense of community, Hung & Yuen stated, "SNSs open up the opportunity for class members to interact beyond the walls of the classroom, and such extended interaction can also lead to additional learning opportunities or enhance participation in the face-to-face classroom" (p. 712). This usage is similar to what Lin and Kelsey (2009) described with the collaboration of students by using wikis in the classroom. Students were able to work together at different times to create, edit, and review each other's postings to create a final product (p. 152).

Situation to Self

This case study was based upon the methodological philosophical assumption due to the emergent design of the technology used. By using this assumption, I had the liberty to implement, assess, and revise the study as needed, to allow opportunity to make it more robust throughout the process. The process included ESL students, particularly Latino/Latina ESL students enrolled in 7th grade civics in two different middle schools within the same Central Florida school district. Themes and concepts that increase the sense of community developed throughout the study; therefore, it allowed me to be flexible with the questioning during

interviews and have an open mind while conducting the study. Also, the paradigm of constructivism, especially social constructivism, was the basis on which this study was explored. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), within the theory of social constructivism, was essential for this study. Similar to Vygotsky's theory, both the teacher involved and fellow classmates assisted students to help them collaborate, communicate, and critically think about the civics content beyond what the individual student would have been able to comprehend on their own. The phenomenon, sense of community, was explored through the collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills of students within the blended virtual classroom setting via Edmodo. The 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students worked together, at each of the two schools, along with the assistance of the teacher and ESL consultation teacher, to construct their learning and knowledge, adhering to the principles of constructivism for each of the two different cases of the study.

With the increased demographic of Latino/Latina ESL students, new educational standards, and technological trends that are changing the landscape of education, I thought it would be both worthy and beneficial as an educator practitioner to explore how to increase the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students within the civics classroom. Merriam (2009) posed the question and then answered it by stating, "How do you select a topic for a qualitative research study? The first place to look is your daily life—your work, family, friends, community" (p. 55). I have looked at the developing trends, both globally and professionally, which are impacting education and chose this topic to study.

Problem Statement

Latino/Latina students, who have been identified through state procedures and who qualify for ESL services, struggle academically in the classroom due in large part to the language

barrier and misunderstandings of culture (Becerra, 2012; Good et al., 2010; Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Due to Latino/Latina students making up the majority of ESL students, they were the focus of the study. Also, the relevancy of this current study becomes significant for middle school educators because of the newly implemented course created by the FLDOE and the creation of benchmarks and standards in which students must pass the 7th grade civics EOC in order to matriculate to high school. This collective case study explored how a social networking platform, Edmodo, can influence the sense of community for Latino ESL civics students and assisted them to be successful academically within the mandates and high-stakes test of the newly created civics course.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to explore the development of the students' sense of community through the social networking platform Edmodo for Latino/Latina 7th grade civics students who qualified for ESL services at two middle schools in a large Central Florida school district. The term, sense of community, was generally defined as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Latino/Latina ESL students were the focus of this current study due to the research of Becerra (2012) and Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009) that indicated a rapidly increasing population within this subgroup. Bringle, Studer, Wilson, Clayton, and Steinberg (2011), Feldmann (2010), and Neufeld and Davis (2010) stated in their studies the importance of disseminating the principles of the American government and respect for the various facets of the government in order for the republic to be self-sustaining. Thus, in combination with Latino/Latina ESL students, the research questions focus on the content area of civics.

While exploring this phenomenon, I utilized the philosophical assumption of methodology to allow for flexibility and the opportunity to reflect on the process and make the necessary changes while the study was conducted. Creswell (2013) defined aspects of the methodological assumption by stating, "The logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive, from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer" (p. 22). He continued with the line of thinking that this study adhered to, and after reflection on what was transpiring before the researcher, some flexibility was exercised in order to change the research questions to better understand the phenomenon. This was the goal of this study: to build a sense of community with a cultural perspective through a social networking program for the middle school Latino/Latina ESL students while instilling in them the knowledge and skills to critically think, collaborate, and communicate, and better participate within the United States republic.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to educators throughout several regions of the country including Florida. According to the 2012 FLDOE report, the student demographics continue to change. A large portion of immigrant students are Latino/Latina students who qualify for ESL services. Therefore, educators need to know how to better serve the students who are enrolled in their classes to prepare them for a global economic and political society (Becerra, 2012; Good et al., 2010; Gutiérrez-Clellen et al., 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Secondly, educators can assist Latino/Latina ESL students to be academically successful by building a close, tight-knit group within their classrooms. This close bond then fosters a sense of community that research has shown is important for students to build their confidence. By building this confidence, it is then translated into increased academic success (Rovai et al., 2008;

Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Rovai et al., 2005; Wighting, Liu, & Rovai, 2008). The current study

explored the possible influence of how Edmodo, a social networking platform, may have on the

development of sense of community in Latino/Latina ESL students (Harper, 2010; Trust, 2012).

The development of sense of community, within the theoretical framework of social

constructivism with the emphasis on ZPD, was the foundation on which this study was

completed (Rovai et al., 2008; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Rovai et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 1978).

Other social networking platforms, such as the popular venue of Facebook, have been studied in

the past (Amerson, 2010; Cardona-Divale, 2012; Hunter-Brown, 2012; Junco & Cole-Avent,

2008; Swang, 2011; Woodley & Meredith, 2012). However, there is little evidence to show the

impact that a program, such as Edmodo, has had on the development of the sense of community

through collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Amerson, 2010; Junco & Cole-

Avent, 2008; Kok, 2008).

Research Questions

For this qualitative case study, three questions, based upon the literature review, were the

driving force for the research. Three research questions were explored to provide the framework

for the study to analyze the phenomenon of the sense of community and to better understand the

influence that Edmodo, as an educational tool, may have for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th

grade civics.

As a result, the first question was, "How does the social networking system, Edmodo,

influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics?" (Cardona-

Divale, 2012; Hunter-Brown, 2012; Kenyon & Carter, 2011; Laursen, 2009; Rovai, 2001; Rovai

et al., 2008; Rovai & Jordan, 2004). For the first question of the current study, the elements of

Latino/Latina ESL students, civics, and social networking were used in conjunction with the

phenomenon that Rovai (2001) described as a sense of community. Rovai described that the important aspect of SOC for students is creating a sense of belonging to a community while receiving feedback that is conducive, both from the instructor and fellow classmates. The building of a community can then lead to what Hunter-Brown (2012) described as a positive classroom environment. In two separate studies, Rovai et al. (2008) and Rovai and Jordan (2004) stated that a blended classroom environment, such as using Edmodo, created a higher level of SOC and connectedness because students created an atmosphere in which they mattered to each other. Cardona-Divale (2012) focused on building SOC through the social networking systems of Facebook and Twitter; while in their respective studies, Laursen (2009) studied the creation of a safe environment and Kenyon and Carter (2011) emphasized SOC and ethnicity. However, few studies have concentrated on adolescents and SOC. A gap persists in the literature exploring teenagers and their building SOC through an educational program such as Edmodo.

The second research question explored in the current study was stated as, "How does Edmodo influence the development of sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students through the collaborative and communicative aspects of the social networking platform?" (Balakrishnan & Claiborne, 2012; Drouin, 2008; Liu & Chen, 2010; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). This question explored the phenomenon of SOC more in-depth and focused on collaboration and communication. Both are facets of a social constructivist classroom espoused by Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky advocated that learning does not occur in isolation. Instead, learning transpires within the ZPD where the individual student receives assistance from either the teacher or fellow classmates. Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) built upon Vygotsky's work by suggesting that the driving force to learning is language, thereby making language the key to collaboration. Again, Balakrishnan and Claiborne suggested that another aspect of the

social constructivist classroom that educators must consider for language and collaboration to be manifested successfully is the student's culture. Liu and Chen (2010) agreed with this ideology and stated that when educators focus on collaboration and communication in a social constructivist classroom, they must be mindful of the various cultures. Drouin (2008) indicated that when students collaborate or interact there are actually three different levels. Powell and Kalina (2009) agreed with this stratification of interaction and also suggested that successful collaboration occurs when the teacher utilizes scaffolding. The use of Edmodo was conducive to adhering to the different levels of interaction and scaffolding within this current study. The second research question was derived from the literature of the aforementioned studies.

Edmodo incorporates the use of technology in the classroom; thereby, the last question was derived from the literature and was stated as "How does Edmodo influence student engagement within the content material for Latino/Latina ESL middle school students?" (Campbell, 2009; Hur & Oh, 2012; Hutchinson & Henry, 2010). The third and final question of this current study focused on building sense of community through Edmodo by exploring student engagement within an academic content area. Similar to the other two questions, this question was derived by reading several studies and identifying the gap in the literature. Student engagement is a natural occurrence within a social constructivist classroom. Campbell (2009) found that when educators encourage and endorse student engagement, students are more motivated and prone to self-regulate their learning. Not only does student engagement cultivate student motivation and self-regulation, but in their respective studies, Hur and Oh (2012) and Hutchinson and Henry (2010) agreed that it also allows for more open questioning. Even though student engagement fosters student motivation, self-regulation, and more questioning, Hur and Oh (2012) suggested that the implementation of laptops increased student engagement.

The three driving questions for this current study are reiterated as follows:

RQ1: How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics?

RQ2: How does Edmodo influence the development of a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students through the collaborative and communicative aspects of the social networking platform?

RQ3: How does Edmodo influence student engagement within the content material for Latino/Latina ESL middle school students?

<div align="center">

Research Plan

</div>

This qualitative collective case study was conducted to explore the influence of Edmodo for the development of a sense of community within two middle schools in a large district located in Central Florida. These two schools represented locations that have large Latino/Latina student populations where students qualify for ESL services and where the principal and civics teacher agreed to try an experimental unit of study utilizing Edmodo. The current study utilized an exploratory and emerging lens into the phenomenon known as the sense of community via the social networking tool, Edmodo, and its impact through student collaboration, communication, and critical thinking for Latino/Latina 7th grade civics ESL students.

The students, civics teachers, and ESL support teacher were interviewed via two different focus groups per case study both before and after a unit of study in civics that utilized the virtual classroom and social networking platform, Edmodo. Students were also observed while using Edmodo, and notes were taken of those observations. Discussion threads were analyzed to explore for themes that might reveal the influence of community building due to the use of Edmodo (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The discussion threads consisted of a

prompt, or scenario, that students responded to requiring them to critically think about the civics content. Students then replied and commented on what their classmates stated in their original posts about the subject at hand. Chan, Hew, & Cheung (2009) defined the components of discussion threads as the following: "Each message, represented by a note, builds on the preceding note in a systematic manner. The development of the discussion is orderly, and the participants seem to observe stringent and established 'ground rules' (like one message per posting)" (p. 445). Building on this definition, So (2009) added, "Online discussion forums can function as a collaborative learning space, where shared meaning-making is mediated through interactional dialogues and computer support" (p. 144). The scaffolding of messages building upon themselves, and the interaction between students that was generated through the use of Edmodo, was the focus of the discussion threads to explore if sense of community was developing.

<div align="center">**Delimitations**</div>

Delimitations for this case study included focusing only upon Latino/Latina ESL students. This is a largely growing student population for both the United States and for the state of Florida. Therefore, to help meet the needs of these students, a better understanding of their culture and how to assist with their learning were the reasons why Latino/Latina ESL students were chosen for this qualitative study. Secondly, civics was chosen as the content area to study due to the newly implemented high-stakes test that 7th graders must pass in the state of Florida in order to matriculate to the high school level.

Limitations for this study included the willingness of the schools, teachers, students, and parents to participate. The very nature of the study was based on the sense of community. This was a very important aspect to both explore and understand for Latino/Latina ESL students (Li,

Wang, & Yao, 2008; Heejin, 2012). Culture is a very important part of building sense of community among members of a group. Li, Wang, and Yao (2008) stated, "Here 'comfortable' means that the relations network need to accord with the cultural awareness and can arouse students' sense of classroom community" (p. 103). However, this same sense of community among Latino/Latina ESL students may have produced a protective resistance to myself due to my Caucasian ethnicity; thereby, this may have skewed the results. For this reason, it was essential for the ESL support teacher to assist with the study to help remove or limit this barrier by assisting in creating both a conducive and comfortable environment for the students. Li et al. (2008) stated, "The teacher [in this study, me] needs to show sincerity, respect, and enthusiasm to be empathetic" (p. 96). A sincere rapport with the students was essential to help them overcome their language barriers, and to assist them with building a community of learning (Heejin, 2012). Heejin (2012) related to the benefits of using a social networking program by stating, "By participating in collaborative experiences in an e-learning environment, the students have opportunities to share different opinions, and to use various styles of collaboration and communication with which to construct knowledge of the target language" (p. 159). Also, this study was limited geographically due to the fact that it was conducted in one large Central Florida school district. The results and discussion were limited to just Central Florida, particularly the one school district in focus, and not generalized for other parts of the United States.

Definitions

To help clarify the focus of this study, the following will define some of the important terms. Understanding these terms was beneficial for analyzing the data sources and cross

analysis of the separate cases thereby leading to the conclusions of the study. The terms are as follows:

1. *Blended Learning* – Students learn in a combination of the traditional face-to-face classroom setting and virtually through an online learning management system (Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Shi-Jer, Nai-Ci, Huei-Yin, Kuo-Hung, & Ru-Chu, 2012).

2. *English as a Second Language (ESL)* - Students who qualify for these services in accordance with Florida law would have been given a family survey that identified that another language was spoken at home (Florida Department of Education, 2012).

3. *End of Course Exam (EOC)* - End of course exams are state-mandated tests that are administered at the end of given courses. For the purpose of this study, 7th grade Civics will be the crucial EOC that would have implications in the summation of the study and course (Florida Department of Education, 2014).

4. *Sense of Community (SOC)* – By communicating and collaborating together, students gain a sense of a team or community. Rovai (2001) identified the aspects of feeling like one belongs to a group by trusting and interacting with each other.

5. *Social Constructivism* – Instead of students learning from the teacher lecturing, they learn by interacting with either the teacher or other students. According to this theory, students do not learn in a vacuum and thereby learn via social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

6. *Social Networking (SN)* – Social networking is a means in which people or students can communicate and collaborate together synchronously or asynchronously via discussion board posts, walls, and picture galleries (Allanson, 2013; Boyd & Parker, 2010; Kist, 2010).

7. *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* - This is part of Vygotsky's (1978) theory for

   social constructivism. Students learn at a higher degree in more complex learning

   situations by working with their peers or teacher as compared to working on them

   individually (Vygotsky, 1978).

Summary

Reflecting on current trends in education and in the ever-changing field of technology, a topic to study was identified to help practicing educators. Then, prior research and literature were used to identify the gap for this study. As a result, three research questions were identified and explored to help determine if a social networking program, Edmodo, could influence the sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students in civics. To complete this study, two middle schools within a large Central Florida district were identified and sent consent forms to take part in the study. The principals, teachers, and students agreed to participate in the study. Interviews, observations, and discussion board threads via Edmodo were analyzed to determine if Edmodo could be a useful tool to build a sense of community.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This qualitative study was based upon the conceptual framework of social constructivism with the focus on the zone of proximal development, sense of community, and social networking. This chapter will focus upon the works of Vygotsky (1978) and Rovai (2001) in addition to supporting research. After the foundation of the current study has been examined, literature from related research will be analyzed. In this section of the literature review, research pertaining to the growing Latino/Latina ESL population and civics education will be discussed to examine the significance and relevancy of this study. In addition, the research of social networking platforms and their social implications that assist in fostering relations will be explored and how they can influence student learning.

Theoretical Framework

Social Constructivism and ZPD

Since the 1980s and 1990s, Vygotsky's (1978) earlier work and study of social constructivism have gained popularity in educational circles, and his work has been accepted by many within the field. Vygotsky's seminal work took place within the communist regime of the Soviet Union. However, the processes of learning that Vygotsky described in the 1930s and 1940s, and then reprinted in English several decades later, are paramount in understanding how students can learn within a social setting. Similar to Piaget (2008) in that learning develops in stages, Vygotsky took it a step further by adding the social element. Learners do not learn in isolation or in a vacuum according to his theory. Instead, a student is able to produce better work through the assistance of a teacher or classmate (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky advocated the

social aspects of learning by stating, "Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (p. 88).

Vygotsky (1978) compared two different stages of learning. "The first level can be called the *actual developmental level* (emphasis Vygotsky), that is, the level of development of a child's mental functions" which are "those things that children can do on their own [that] are indicative of mental abilities" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). In many traditional classrooms, this actual developmental level is what is utilized when students are given their independent work and then required to complete it on their own. The second level that Vygotsky identified was known as the "zone of proximal development" also known as "ZPD" (p. 86). This zone reveals the growth in learning that a student portrays though problem solving with assistance from a teacher or classmate. Vygotsky (1978) stated,

> The zone of proximal development. It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers [emphasis Vygotsky]. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

According to Vygotsky (1978), "the zone of proximal development permits us to delineate the child's immediate future and his dynamic developmental state, allowing not only for what already has been achieved developmentally but also for what is in the course of maturing" (p. 87). Student learning is actually a social process, and the "zone of proximal development today will be the actual developmental level tomorrow" (p. 87). Through building a sense of community via Edmodo, and working collaboratively with classmates and the teacher, Vygotsky's ZPD was exemplified and utilized in this social constructivist setting (Hunter-Brown, 2012).

During a year-long study of 13 secondary students in an English class, Hunter-Brown (2012) described how social networking, through the use of Facebook, allowed students to prosper in the social constructivist setting. She stated, "More specifically, students shared that it is a way to get students involved and allow all students to have the opportunity to participate in class" (p. 62). Hunter-Brown found through the observations and interviews that students respected their teachers when the educator was willing to try something outside of the box such as Facebook in the classroom. She also cautioned that the use of social networking, such as Facebook, also requires more planning and careful implementation. However, the benefits can be very advantageous for educators to consider a program such as Facebook, or in the case of this current study, Edmodo, in the classroom. Hunter-Brown stated, "Additionally the teacher and students reported that Facebook is easy to integrate into the secondary classroom and promotes a positive and productive classroom environment" (p. 85). In addition, Woodley and Meredith (2012) stated, "Social software tools [Edmodo] support numerous ways of learning through the sharing of resources, collaborative learning, reflective learning, and peer-to-peer learning" (p. 90). In this study, students worked together and assisted each other through the discussion boards; therefore, they grew and learned the civics course material. This social constructivist atmosphere was conducive to allow what Vygotsky (1978) described as, "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (p. 90).

Gredler (2009) described in her article the influences that shaped Vygotsky's (1978) theories and then focused on the essential part of conceptual learning within constructivism and how Vygotsky developed his own view of cognitive development that consisted of four stages of mastery and self-regulation. She stated, "This article first presents Vygotsky's unique view of

cognitive development, followed by the central framework of his theory—the stages of sign use/concept development" (p. 1). Gredler described how Vygotsky advocated similar to the behaviorist position, except in a social constructivist methodology, that students learn through the use of a stimuli, psychological tools, and signs. Within the "premastery stages," Gredler described how children try to understand complex phenomenon through symbols or signs (p. 6). As the child advances into the external regulation, they begin to associate objects with words and eventually think in concepts. The concept formation is a complex process through the use of verbal structures or words via external stimuli. Children then take the concepts and internalize them by making connections resulting in true learning by self-regulating recognition of the stimuli and categorizing it to the proper conceptual frameworks. Modern education should then draw upon Vygotsky's mastery/self-regulation theory of concepts and address them in depth instead of trying to cover a plethora of topics in a curriculum. This in-depth conceptual learning would provide for a richer and better educational experience for students. Therefore, for this current study, I needed to have the concepts planned for the goal of the lesson within the implementation of Edmodo to avoid a haphazard use of technology. A clear, concise reasoning for using Edmodo was beneficial to the students within a social networking platform to help them comprehend the essential concepts of the unit of study.

Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) emphasized Vygotsky's (1978) idea that the driving force within learning is language and is the key to collaboration. Students interact with the teacher and with each other to internalize the information and grow and mature in their learning. Once this outside or social learning has occurred, then students can internalize the information and solve problems with the new knowledge on their own. This is the zone to which Vygotsky referred. Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) took Vygotsky's theory and expanded it to a "Zone

of Collaborative Development for Moral Education" (p. 225). In this study, Balakrishnan and Claiborne worked with three different classrooms that consisted of students of Muslim, Hindu, and Christian backgrounds. Balakrishnan and Claiborne used qualitative methods to research the moral education by observing 22 students from three distinct secondary schools that were representative of the three religious groups. They stated, "The research was designed to record the moral choices the students made and the moral orientations they used in their focus group discussions" (p. 235). By expanding ZPD to incorporate moral education, Balakrishnan and Claiborne relied upon the ideology of Vygotsky by stating, "Vygotsky sought psychology that would take into account the role of consciousness in development, while recognizing the cultural, social, and historical basis of psychological functioning" (p. 228).

For this current study, and by using Edmodo, I created the constructs of the learning that Vygotsky (1978) developed and then were reemphasized within the study of Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) by being sensitive to the needs and cultural differences of Latino/Latina ESL students. As a result, the two civics teachers that volunteered to participate in the study at the individual middle schools were facilitators for student interaction and learning via discussion threads and the other tools of the program while being sensitive and mindful of the students' cultural customs and backgrounds.

Liu and Chen (2010) defined the evolutionary state of the ideology of constructivism within Taiwan by describing constructivism through the lens of culture. Their work was not necessarily a study. Instead, Liu and Chen stated, "The purpose of this paper is to summarize the evolution of constructivism and put a focus on social constructivism from the perception of Vygotsky" (p. 63). Liu and Chen described the importance of the role culture and social constructivism by stating, "Besides the active individual and the active environment, the third

essential element in the process of co-constructionism is the product of accumulation of prior

generations-culture" (p. 64). Their reasoning was to describe and justify the use of

constructivism in the classroom. In 1993, Taiwan had adopted the idea of implementing social

constructivism in the classroom. However, in 2003 it was abandoned due to the lower

mathematics test scores compared to the traditional classroom setting. The researchers argued

that constructivism could still be utilized in the classroom if the methodology of implementing it

was correctly designed (Liu & Chen, 2010). Liu and Chen stated that the reason why

constructivism is important to the classroom setting is because "In this view, the mind

development is the interaction of human body and the culture/idea/material heritage that appears

to arrange people with each other and the surrounding environment" (p. 64). Though it was a

different setting as compared to Taiwan, when working with new technologies such as the social

networking system of Edmodo, I had to keep in mind the emphasis of Liu and Chen's description

that was similar to Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) and be sensitive to cultural heritage and

its influence on Latino/Latina students.

Powell and Kalina (2009) promoted the idea that students learn through interacting with

each other and the teacher. As a result of this interaction, they can use ZPD and scaffolding to

move to the next level of learning. Powell and Kalina also described how social constructivism

embraces the diversity of students in the classroom and therefore relies heavily on language as

the foundation for learning by stating, "Social interaction is important to effective language

usage and the development of efficient communication in the classroom. Students should use

language as much as they use oxygen" (p. 245). This applies to this current study because the

utilization of Edmodo naturally lends itself to become the key component of creating a

constructivist classroom and encouraging the social interaction that Vygotsky (1978) advocated and that Powell and Kalina (2009) reemphasized.

Not all practitioners of educational theory and thought necessarily advocate and adhere to Vygotsky's (1978) seminal work. In their article, Maddux and Johnson (2010) described how the theory of social constructivism has been adopted as the foundation of educational technology. However, the researchers argued that this adoption has taken place blindly and without a critical eye (Maddux & Johnson, 2010). They contended that they do not necessarily propose to throw the theory out completely, but instead, they argued that it was time to stop and critically look at Vygotsky's theory and its place in educational technology and within the educational setting of the classroom. With this critical analysis, Maddux and Johnson (2010) stated that the cultural and governmental pressures of the time that Vygotsky (1978) wrote his theory need to be considered and then evaluated on how it can apply to the field of educational technology and for education in general today. They stated:

> This fact has led some modern educators to at least consider and to discuss the historical context within which he produced his theories, and to ask if the Russian culture and events of the time influenced him to emphasize the social aspects of learning. (Maddux & Johnson, 2010, p. 3)

Maddux and Johnson portend that, "It may be time for us to return to a more skeptical attitude. There are many unproven notions that seem to be taken for granted in our field" (p. 4). The arguments of Maddux and Johnson have caused me to put on my critical analysis lenses and to truly critique how well Edmodo worked with Latino/Latina students. As both a researcher and educator, I cannot just blindly say that the use of a social networking platform was successful because it was based upon social constructivist theory.

Even though there are some critics of social constructivism, there are many more proponents of this theory who advocate utilizing its different aspects, especially the ZPD, within educational settings. Social constructivism naturally blends itself into the second foundational aspect for the theoretical framework of this current study.

Sense of Community

The second part of the framework focuses on the sense of community which is often referred to as SOC. Similar to other age groups, students want to feel they are a part of something and not be alone and isolated. Many students will join a group that has beneficial factors through positive aspects, or they may lend themselves toward unwanted social groups just to feel they are a part of something special (Tapia, Kinnier, & MacKinnon, 2009). For various ethnic groups within the United States, teenagers have increasingly sought out the companionship of others by joining gangs since the 1920s. Tapia, Kinnier, and MacKinnon (2009) stated in a study of Mexican American adolescents that, "Traditional gangs are primarily communal, with members watching out for each other and protecting their territories" (p. 229). It is, therefore, crucial for educators to create an atmosphere within the educational setting that is conducive for students to belong to the community in order to succeed both socially and academically. If a child feels they are in a caring, nurturing atmosphere then he or she will be more likely to focus upon the learning at hand and comprehend the material in a positive manner. Several works by Rovai (2001) have focused on this aspect of belonging known as the sense of community.

Rovai (2001) identified four key components to the phenomenon known as sense of community which include "spirit," "trust," "interaction," and "learning" (pp. 34-35). Rovai

(2001) defined spirit as the "recognition of membership in a community and the feelings of friendship, cohesion, and satisfaction that develop among learners" (p. 34).

Within the classroom context, the goal to this sense of belonging is to create a conducive and caring environment for learning. The educator sets the expectations and parameters for the students to participate within; the social networking aspect of Edmodo perpetrated the building of this aspect of sense of community. Rovai (2001) continued to define the aspects within sense of community by defining trust as the "feeling that the community can be trusted and feedback will be forthcoming and constructive" (p. 34).

The feedback can then assist students to scaffold their learning as they explore the different aspects of the creation of the Constitution by building trust in each other's viewpoints in understanding. The third aspect within sense of community is interaction. Rovai (2001) described how through interaction, students build a bond with each other that is advantageous to the classroom environment. In this study, students worked together building their content knowledge with some abstract concepts that may have been too difficult to understand on their own. However, through the bonds developed, both through the classroom setting and through the social networking program of Edmodo, students were able to interact and assist each other with their learning. With the asynchronous nature of Edmodo, this feedback from both the teacher and fellow classmates was very convenient and timely for students to learn the content of civics. The final component that Rovai (2001) described within sense of community was learning. He stated that learning "is the feeling that knowledge and meaning are actively constructed within the community, that the community enhances the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and that the educational needs of its members are being satisfied" (p. 35).

Rovai's (2001) four components for a sense of community build upon each other and thereby are conducive to building a caring environment for students to both interact and learn.

In a study of 350 graduate students, Rovai et al. (2008) compared students from a Christian university with a public university. Online courses, classes that were conducted on the campus and blended learning, also known as hybrid courses, were compared between the two schools based on the idea of sense of community. There are several explanations for the phenomenon, sense of community, but there is not an accepted, universal definition to describe it. As a result, Rovai et al. utilized the work of McMillan and Chavis (1986) to define the sense of community. According to McMillan and Chavis' definition for sense of community, it is described as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (Rovai et al., 2008, p. 5).

The instrumentation of the Classroom and School Community Inventory was utilized to help measure the sense of community among graduate students for both institutions (p. 8). By using MANOVAs to examine the results, Rovai et al. found that students at the Christian university scored better for the sense of community, but there was no statistical significant difference in perceived learning between the two universities (p. 12). Even though the academic achievement as compared between the Christian university and the public university did not statistically differ, the study portrayed the idea that because of the spiritual elements of the Christian university, students were more likely to feel as a part of the university setting as compared to the public university. However, the study also revealed a better sense of community for the blended classroom for both institutions. This was an important statement and related closely to the goal of this current study by incorporating a blended learning environment

in a middle school to help increase the sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina Civics students.

In an earlier and similar study conducted by Rovai and Jordan (2004), they conducted a causal-comparative design within three courses that consisted of 51 female students and 17 male students. MANOVAs were utilized to compare the results of the Classroom Community Scale. These courses consisted of the traditional classroom setting (n = 24), fully online setting (n = 21), and a blended classroom (n = 23). Rovai and Jordan reported that, "The blended course possessed a significantly higher adjusted mean connectedness score than either the traditional or online courses with a large effect size" (p. 8). Rovai and Jordan described more in-depth the idea of blending learning by stating,

> The blended concept of learning is highly consistent with the three areas of change identified in the introduction – thinking less about delivering instruction and more about producing learning, reaching out to students through distance education technologies, and promoting a strong sense of community among learners. (p. 11)

Cardona-Divale (2012) stated that technology is changing rapidly, and one of the changes has been the use of social networking sites. These sites have been utilized in educational circles in a limited capacity at this point; and therefore, the literature to support its use has been lacking. In her "quantitative descriptive study" utilizing several ANOVAs, Cardona-Divale analyzed the two major social networking tools, Facebook and Twitter, and how they may impact SOC for college students through the theories of Vygotsky and Moore and how frequently both were utilized within the classroom setting (p. 13). Samples for a voluntary survey including the incorporation of Rovai's (2002) Classroom Community Scale were taken from a large multi-

campus public university in the northeast United States (Cardona-Divale, 2012, p. 13). The

combination of the various campuses represented resulted in a student population of

approximately 250,000 students. Cardona-Divale stated that the goal of the voluntary survey

was to have 300 students and 100 faculty members reply. When the survey was completed, 975

students and 110 faculty members responded. Of the 975 students, Cardona-Divale delineated

the type of course each student was in as "51.3% face-to-face, 21.1% online, and 27.6% hybrid

[or blended courses]" (p. 74). Females (n = 673) made up 69% of the student population who

responded and males (n = 302) made up 31% which was comparable to the make-up of the

multi-campus population. For students, 89.6% stated that they had a Facebook account.

However, only 24.2% had a Twitter account. About one-fifth of the students stated that they

spend over two hours per day on Facebook and half of them have 200+ friends. Only 13.1%

used Facebook for coursework, and then an even smaller 5.8% had courses where it was required

to use Facebook and have it count toward the grade. Statistically analyzing the results of the

survey and Rovai's Classroom Community Scale through SPSS, Cardona-Divale found that most

of the ANOVAs did not result in a significant difference for SOC between the three different

types of classes. She stated that there was "no significant difference between the Learning Scale

and the type of course $F(2, 775) = 2.1$, $p=.115$" (p. 109). The results of the statistical analysis

actually revealed a stronger SOC when the resources were made optional instead of when they

were required within the coursework. This was opposite of Cardona-Divale's original

hypothesis for the study.

Cardona-Divale (2012) also relied upon Moore's (1989) transactional distance theory.

Cardona-Divale stated that the theory focused on "three levels of interaction" that included

"learner-content," "learner-instructor," and "learner-learner" within an educational framework

(p. 19). Dialogue and distance are inversely proportional (i.e., if there is more dialogue between the teacher and student, then the distance between the two is shorter causing a greater sense of community). Cardona-Divale then described the second main theory used was Vygotsky's social constructivism and how the construction of knowledge through social interaction has been an ideal foundation for online learning. Many pertinent guidelines on how to implement Twitter and the detailed description of transactional distance theory, social constructionism and how it fits within educational technology, and the formation of the sense of community were important to the implementation of Edmodo for this current study.

Student Satisfaction and Gender

At various levels of education, student satisfaction is a very important aspect that educators must consider when designing and implementing course material. At the higher education level, professors and instructors rely upon end of the course surveys to analyze the pulse of the class and to obtain suggestions to help improve their respective courses. At the middle school and high school levels, teachers are concerned that students have a good experience which will hopefully translate into better classroom engagement. Allanson (2013) concurred by stating that educators must be concerned with how middle school students relate to each other and build a community by emphasizing a "sense of community" (p. 13). Even though it does not necessarily correlate with higher academic achievement, Drouin (2008) stated, "While SOC has been linked to student satisfaction, student satisfaction, in turn, has been linked to retention [academic achievement]" (p. 269). In a later article, Drouin and Vartanian (2010) examined how this link to retention then led to what all educators desire, an increase in academic achievement by stating, "On the contrary, when online students are given the opportunity to form

connections with the classroom community…and SOC is present within a learning environment, students are more satisfied and report higher levels of learning" (p. 149).

Gender also plays a role in the building of community; therefore, I tried to be conscious of this aspect when conducting this study. Drouin and Vartanian (2010) conducted a study at a Midwestern university with both online courses and traditional face-to-face courses. Seven face-to-face sections and two online courses of the same course in undergraduate psychology were analyzed. The purpose of their study was to explore "factors [that] contribute to students' perceived SOC and desire for more SOC in the course" (p. 151). Of the 198 students who participated in the study, almost three-fourths of them were female. Drouin and Vartanian explained the procedure of the study by stating, "After completion of the final exam, students were asked to complete a two-part anonymous survey either online within Blackboard (online students) or in their classroom (FTF students) as part of the standard course evaluation" (p. 152). The first survey was completed primarily for demographic reasons, and the second survey analyzed sense of community for these undergraduate students. The findings surprised Drouin and Vartanian because less than half of the students in traditional sections wanted sense of community and less than a third desired sense of community in the online courses. However, Drouin and Vartanian described how earlier studies reiterated their expectations about gender by stating, "Researchers have found that women usually feel a stronger sense of community than do males, specifically on the dimension of interaction or connectedness with classmates" (p. 149). When analyzing if Edmodo influences the sense of community, an effort was emphasized to ensure that all students, especially the male students, were engaged. Student satisfaction was considered while exploring how the social networking system, Edmodo, may influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics.

Interaction

To build a sense of community, within both a traditional classroom setting or in a virtual online classroom setting, there must be different levels of interaction for students. With social constructivism in mind, students need to interact with their classmates and with the teacher. Drouin (2008) explained this ideology by stating, "According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge is constructed within social contexts; learning cannot be separated from the environment within which it occurs; and collaboration within social environments is essential to learning" (p. 268). For this collaboration to occur, to build the sense of community, Drouin also stated that the levels of interaction included "student-student, student-instructor, and student-content" (p. 280). All three levels of interaction were exemplified with the use of a social networking program such as Edmodo. Students can interact with each other, the teacher, and with the content both synchronously and asynchronously (Allanson, 2013; Drouin, 2008; Shen, Nuankhieo, Huang, Amelung, & Laffey, 2008). Shen et al. (2008) stated, "The construct of sense of community has been shown by other researchers to be a replicable and important element in online education, and interaction is proving to be a key influence in promoting sense of community" (p. 33). With the sentiments of these prior researchers in mind, the current study explored if Edmodo influenced the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students by focusing on the collaboration, communicative, and critical thinking aspects of the civics content.

Similar to other aspects in life, the utilization of a social networking platform in order to influence a sense of community does have its parameters. The use of Edmodo should be done in moderation. Drouin (2008) reiterated the idea of moderation by stating that "there may be a level of social interaction that is ideal in online communities and that care should be taken to avoid exceeding that level" (p. 281). The challenge for educators is then to utilize a tool like

Edmodo in a balanced manner, to help enhance student satisfaction, and maintain the appropriate level of interaction between students and their classmates and with the teacher.

Adolescents and Sense of Community

Most of the research focusing on sense of community has been conducted with undergraduate and graduate college students (Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Rovai & Jordan, 2004; Rovai et al., 2005). However, very few studies have been concentrated in the area of adolescents and sense of community within the classroom. The studies that have been conducted focused on specific communities of adolescents, or specific programs within schools, and not necessarily on the general area of education (Howell, Thomas, & Ardasheva, 2011). Adolescence can be a difficult time for students due to their sociological and physiological changes that occur during this period of life (Dobson, 2011). Because of these troubling times, a sense of community with their peers could be an important factor in feeling as a part of the group and to achieve academically. Though there have been some studies focusing on adolescents and sense of community through social networking (Reich, 2010), a gap in the literature exists concerning teenagers and the building of a community through a program, such as Edmodo. The purpose of the current study explored, "How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino ESL students in 7th grade civics?" and assisted in erasing some of the gap.

Dobson (2011) succinctly discussed how the adolescent body changes during this very important time in a young person's life. These changes can be very awkward for students to confront, making it a critical time for the teenager to have the support of others. Laursen (2009) explored how not only the body changes but also how the adolescent's brain develops. During this development, one of the biggest needs of the adolescent is to have a safe environment that is

conducive to building a sense of community. Laursen described the safe environment and stated, "Positive youth cultures provide physical and psychological safety and are free from abuse, exploitation, and coercion" (p. 9). The goal of using Edmodo to help build the sense of community through collaborating, communicating, and critically thinking through solutions to problems was pertinent for this current study and related to Laursen's discussion of the emotional development of the teenager's mind. The discussion board threads, within Edmodo, provided an avenue for Latino/Latina ESL adolescents to work together, within the civics content, to critically think about various issues. This was in agreement with what Laursen discussed when Laursen stated that "the adolescent must be exposed to multiple opportunities to cooperate with others and develop a sense of community including respect and helping others" (p. 11).

Howell et al. (2011) studied how a program, Accountable Talk, could foster a sense of community for adolescent students. The study consisted of 101 students, between the ages of 12 and 15, in a large urban area of the Midwest. Howell et al. stated, "The data sources included a questionnaire, six whole class observations, focus group interviews, and individual student and teacher interviews" (p. 52). The study focused on social studies classes and allowed students to converse in a forum similar to the Socratic Method. Students talk and are accountable to each other to stay on task while the teacher facilitates the discussion. Howell et al. found that allowing an open discourse between the teacher and students was very conducive to building a sense of community within the classroom and stated, "In individual and focus group interviews, students commented on the respectful nature of the conversations and discussed the importance of respecting other peoples' perspectives and responding appropriately when one might disagree" (p. 52). A large component missing from this study, as it relates to the current study,

was the social networking or virtual aspect. Respecting each other's opinions on the discussion

boards was a priority, and it was encouraged that students practice respectfully disagreeing with

classmates when critically thinking about the problem or issue at hand. As a result, this was

similar in nature to Howell et al.'s study in regards to students having open discourse on social

studies topics through the medium of Edmodo.

Similar to the research of Howell et al. (2011) and Laursen (2009), Kent and Simpson

(2012) discussed how important it is for students to have a strong sense of community within the

classroom to be successful. Instead of focusing on conversation, Kent and Simpson studied how

literature, especially novels, could be utilized within the classroom to build sense of community.

They described this building SOC by stating, "In order for the young adolescent to be successful

in the school classroom, a shared sense of community must exist. The students must feel

connected to, valued by, and have influence with their peers and teacher" (p. 28). Kent and

Simpson suggested several different novels that would assist the practitioner in creating SOC

through literary works. Working through the novels together can allow students to perceive what

a teacher values and how he or she responds to different situations. With this discernment,

students can build a sense of belonging and a connection to the teacher and each other. Kent and

Simpson asserted, "A classroom community is made of groups' cultures, values, and rules" (p.

28). The goal of this current study was to utilize and implement various aspects of Edmodo to

help build a culture and sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students. This was attempted

through the utilization of a graphic novel comparing an American child with a child from

Mexico, and then students responded to each other's post concerning the content of the novel.

As indicated earlier, most of the studies concerning sense of community related to college

level students. The instruments used to assist in measuring SOC are therefore written at a

college level. Chiessi, Cicognani, and Sonn (2010) tested a smaller diagnostic tool to measure

sense of community for adolescents. However, the generalizability of their study may be limited

due to the fact that the 661 students that participated were from Northern Italy. Students

attended various types of schools as compared to the United States. Students either attended

schools to prepare them for university admission (lycee), technical schools, or vocational

schools. Chiessi et al. described how the adolescent years for students naturally provide avenues

of different transitions. These transitions include matriculating from elementary schools to

middle schools, middle schools to high schools, and then eventually high schools to universities.

In regard to sense of community, Chiessi et al. stated, "Central to the experience of S[O]C is the

quality and the multiplicity of adolescents' experiences and the experience of power, and

opportunities to influence and interpret different social roles, which are the basis of relations in

the community" (p. 278). After administering the 20-item survey, Chiessi et al. revealed

surprising results when they stated, "Scores were higher among male adolescents compared with

female adolescents; moreover, sense of belonging was significantly lower among vocational

school students than among students from lycee and technical school (Duncan $p<.05$)" (p. 283).

Even though this study was in Italy, the findings could relate to Latino/Latina ESL students and

their sense of community.

     Kenyon and Carter (2011) conducted a study exploring sense of community and

ethnicity. They stated that there is limited research concerning SOC and American Indian youth.

Their study consisted of 95 students from the northern plains of the United States. Kenyon and

Carter asserted the relevancy of their research by stating, "This study is positive because it

focuses on the strengths of AI [American Indian] culture and community, and examines both

positive and negative psychological well-being" (p. 3). The independent variable for the study

was ethnicity and the dependent variable was the students' sense of community. Kenyon and Carter stated that their findings of the ANOVAs were "significant, $F(3, 91) = 10.4$, $p<.001$" (p. 6) and "that cultural activity involvement is associated with higher sense of community, although teens might not yet feel fully affirmed in belonging to the ethnic group" (p. 6). These results were pertinent to the current study because of the focus of ethnicity. Even though Kenyon and Carter's study focused on American Indian youth, the findings translated to Latino/Latina ESL students. Through collaborating and communicating together via Edmodo, Latino/Latina ESL students had an opportunity to critically think together on issues that were culturally relevant and build a sense of community.

The former studies mentioned have focused on adolescents and sense of community. However, the social networking component of building SOC with adolescents has been ignored. Reich (2010) conducted a study utilizing two focus groups of 23 college students and 10 high school students and then meta-analyzing four different surveys exploring building sense of community through Facebook and MySpace. Two of the surveys analyzed consisted of 110 college students and 251 high school students. Reich argued that adolescents do not necessarily build a sense of community but instead have individual control of their network. The ability to block other people and their posts and having the option of taking other adolescents off their friends list was not conducive to building sense of community. Reich argued, "almost all noted that many of their 'friends' did not know or were friends with the same people in their own networks. As such, no core group could be identified" (p. 694). However, Reich's findings do not necessarily translate to this study. Reich's study focused on MySpace and Facebook, not Edmodo. Edmodo is to be used in a blended environment where students know each other and the teacher. As a result, even though Reich discussed that the social networking programs of

Facebook and MySpace do not encourage building a sense of community, this study occurred within the bound system of individual classrooms and Edmodo, thereby separating this study from Reich's.

A limited amount of research exists concerning adolescents and sense of community. There is even a more limited amount of research focusing on adolescents and the building of sense of community through a social networking program similar to Edmodo. With these aspects in mind, this current study was relevant in understanding how Edmodo could assist in creating a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students and allowing them the opportunity to openly collaborate, communicate, and critically think about civics content issues.

Related Literature

Increase of ESL Population

As stated earlier, the growth of the ESL population has continued to grow quickly in the United States. Becerra (2012) reported in a study of those of Latino/Latina or Hispanic heritage ($N = 1,503$) that "During the 2008-09 academic school year, there were 5.3 million students classified as English language learners (ELLs) in prekindergarten to 12th-grade public school classrooms, which is a 51 percent increase from the 1997-98 academic year" (p. 168). In a 10-year period, this study portrayed exponential growth among the ESL population in America's schools. Most of this increasing growth correlates to the increase of the Latino/Latina population in the United States. Becerra also stated, "Forty-five percent of Latino students in U.S. public schools are classified as ELLs [ESL], and 79 percent of ELLs [ESL] in elementary schools are Latino" (p. 168). In a separate study, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009) stated similar statistics, "Nearly a quarter of all children in the United States today come from immigrant-origin households" (p. 327). This rapid increase exemplifies the significance of this study to

help assist Latino/Latina ESL students with developing a sense of community through 21st century skills by using Edmodo.

Latino culture. Many of these new immigrants have different expectations of the educational system. The culture of the Latino/Latina population is a very tight-knit familial setting. In a qualitative study that consisted of two focus groups, parents and teachers, from the Rocky Mountain region of the United States, Good et al. (2010) stated that many Latino/Latina parents are accustomed to the teacher acting as the mother figure while the student is at school. However, in the United States, teachers do not personify the parent figure at school. These misperceptions can lead to misunderstandings between the student, family, and school district. As a result, these misunderstandings can lead to students experiencing academic difficulties (Perea, 2004).

ESL academic barriers. Becerra (2012) described the various perceptions and misunderstandings that lead to academic barriers. "This study used data compiled by the Pew Hispanic Center between August 7 and October 15, 2003, from 3,421 adults regarding their attitudes toward education" (p. 169). Of those adults, 1,508 identified themselves as being from Hispanic or Latino/Latina descent. Almost two-thirds of the participants that were involved were of Mexican heritage. Females outnumbered the males in this study by 56 to 44 percent, respectively. The participants were asked six statements to help determine the educational experience for Hispanic students as compared to Caucasian students. For each statement, Becerra stated that the volunteers responded in the following manner, "The responses to each question were recoded so that the higher values represented major reasons for low academic achievement among Latino students compared with white students (1 = not a reason, 2 = minor reason, and 3 = major reason)" (p. 171). Becerra examined the surveys and stated, "The results

of this study indicated that income, level of education, and higher levels of linguistic acculturation of the participants were related to the perception of barriers to the academic success of Latino K-l 2 students" (p. 173). A closer inspection of the correlation tests revealed:

> Although six potential barriers were explored, the barriers identified by the participants as reasons why Latino students do not perform as well as white students were that "Schools are too quick to label Latino students as having behavior/learning problems"; "White teachers don't understand Latino culture"; and "Latino parents neglect to push their kids to work hard." (p. 167)

Even though Latino/Latina students face additional academic barriers, as compared to Caucasian students, the obstacles can be overcome. In a report to the Obama Administration, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009) stated that many Latino/Latina students are able to find a way or method to advance their way through school and graduate. However, even though Latino/Latina students graduate, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco made the argument that these students do not have the necessary skills to succeed in a global economy.

Gutiérrez-Clellen et al. (2012) identified, in their study of Latino boys (n = 113) and Latina girls (n = 75) within 14 schools in California and Arizona, some of these academic barriers that Latino/Latina students face. They discussed how students need to be exposed to the English language more to overcome the language barrier. Good et al. (2010) expanded this with the findings from their two focus groups. Their study analyzed a semi-rural area in the Rocky Mountain region that had a Latino/Latina population within the school district of 65%. The two focus groups that were questioned consisted of the parents and the teachers of the Latino students. Good et al. stated that language barriers can lead to clashes between the different cultures at home and at school. Therefore, by using Edmodo in my research study, it was the

initial belief that Latino/Latina students would be able to build the sense of community and create a caring environment to assist in succeeding academically.

Civics Education

Within the last two decades, events such as the Election of 2000 have caused many Americans to stop and consider what our civic responsibilities are and how much civic knowledge we have as a society. The election brought to light the many misconceptions of the electoral process that our Founding Fathers established within the Constitution. As a result of this event, many Americans have come to the consensus that civics education should be a priority in our schools. The goal is to educate students about their civic responsibilities and duties for the republic to continue and prosper. The Florida State Legislature took action in 2010 by passing the Sandra Day O'Connor Act, also known as CS/HB 105, to ensure that this education would occur at the middle school level and not just at the 11th and 12th grades. The Florida Department of Education then created a new 7th grade civics course to help promote civic responsibility and knowledge of the philosophical foundations that the Constitution was founded upon. In addition to this new course, a high-stakes test was implemented and has already begun through a field test in the 2012-2013 school year. Beginning the academic school year, 2014-2015, 7th grade students are required and expected to pass the Civics End of Course Exam in order to matriculate to the high school (FLDOE, 2014). The actualization of a civics education has become a reality in Florida, and it is gaining momentum in other states throughout the country.

Civic participation. Many Americans, including students, are unaware of the intricacies of the Electoral College, the naturalization process, or how a bill becomes a law. Students must be taught the details of civic responsibilities and duties and provided relevant examples of how

to participate in the American society to ensure that the representative democracy or the republic will endure without collapsing into an oligarchy or dictatorship like the Roman Republic of the past. When reflecting on the role of American schools and citizenship, Feldman (2010) stated, "Imprinting the stamp of quality citizenship has long been one of the chief implicit—and sometimes explicit—missions of American public education" (p. 29). Civic participation is essential to perpetrate the ideals of the United States Constitution and fulfill the vision that the Founders had for this country. Bringle et al. (2011) examined civic participation and stated, "Civic-mindedness includes the disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community and the commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community" (p. 152). The acquisition of this knowledge will help future generations preserve the freedoms and principles of the American republic.

The focus of this study involved students of Latino/Latina descent. As previously stated, this is a rapidly growing population within both Florida and the United States. Educators must respect everyone and strive to see that all students are successful. This involves an ideology that Neufeld and Davis (2010) deemed as "civic respect" when they stated, "Civic respect is a form of recognition respect in that it is a form of respect that is owed to persons in virtue of their standing as free and equal citizens" (p. 97). Neufeld and Davis argued that this civic respect is evident through mutual respect for various individuals of different backgrounds. This was an important factor in the current study whereby the individual civics teachers, ESL consultation teacher, students, and I were representative of different ethnic groups. However, mutual respect for each other as humans was both essential for the study and, more importantly, for the common good.

An important element of civics education, that should be demonstrated by educators and taught to the students, is a constant mutual respect for the government and its officials. As citizens, we should not idly go about our lives without being involved in the governmental processes of the United States. Instead, we should look at our government with a critical eye and hold our elected officials accountable. Richey (2011) described this criticism when stating, "Constructive patriots may at times be angry and ashamed of America's actions, but they still love their country. These constructive patriots generally have traits that are healthy for democracy, and correlate with greater civic participation" (p. 1045). Richey continued by stating that civic participation "actually promotes critical thinking about the country, as well as love for it" (p. 1046). These ideals, along with the ability to critically think and analyze the actions and functions of government, should be what we as educators instill in our students, especially through a civics education. Shelly (2011) reiterated this by stating, "Progressive educators want students to learn how to organize movements and to lobby local, state, and federal government to provide solutions to address the injustices they see in their own lives" (p. 298).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. As the Latino/Latina ESL population continues to exponentially increase, it is very important to consider the needs and barriers that these students encounter. Unfortunately, one of these barriers, which can be intentionally and unintentionally thrown in front of them as an obstacle, is the pedagogy of the teacher. There are some instances when the teacher intentionally does not consider the needs of the Latino/Latina ESL student due to stereotypes of the culture. However, there are also instances when these barriers are unintentional and the teacher does not recognize the barrier (Becerra, 2012; Good et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Therefore, the needs of the Latino/Latina ESL student go unnoticed, and the student is left to struggle even more. Becerra (2012) stated in a survey of

1,485 Latino adults that 55% (n = 817) replied one reason Latino/Latina students struggle either

in a minor or major way was due to the aspect that "too many white teachers don't know how to

deal with Latino kids because they come from different cultures" (p. 171). Becerra also found in

the survey that 55.7% of adults stated, "Because of racial stereotypes, teachers and principals

have lower expectations for Latino students" (p. 171).

Journell and Castro (2011) conducted a case study within a high school located in

Chicago during the 2008 Presidential election. The high school that participated consisted of

2,500 students and approximately two-fifths of them were of Latino/Latina heritage. A 9th grade

civics course was observed during this study, consisting of 24 students. Of those 24 students,

two-thirds were male and 18 of the 24 were Latino/Latina students. Journell and Castro

described the study by stating, "the first author visited Mr. Harrison's class three to four times

per week from the start of school in August 2008 through the election in November" (p. 12).

Interviews with the teacher, observations, and a survey given to students were used to collect the

data for their study. Journell and Castro discussed how "Culturally relevant teaching grew out of

a concern for the educational experiences of underrepresented and marginalized communities

within schools" (p. 10). The teacher that participated in this study earnestly tried to relate the

content of the civics course to the cultural needs of his students. For this reason, the focus of this

current study shifted to the needs of middle school students who were from homes where English

is the second language and are of Latino/Latina descent. By analyzing and recognizing the needs

of these students and then reaching out to them with culturally relevant content to study, it allows

"educators and students the ability to relate to familiar life circumstances together and use these

experiences as the basis for connection and instruction" (p. 11). Journell and Castro not only

focused on the pedagogy but also on the Latino/Latina student when they stated, "Latino

students, specifically, are disserved by our public education system as they are severely

overrepresented in the numbers of students who "drop-out" of high school and are practically

invisible in postsecondary graduate and professional programs" (p. 11). Therefore, through the

use of Edmodo, and the focus of culturally sensitive material within the civics unit, the

Latino/Latina students in this study were able to build a sense of community with each other and

with the teacher to help create a positive educational experience.

By being sensitive to the needs of the Latino/Latina ESL students in this current study,

the positive experience should translate into creating a sense of community. Shelly (2010)

described the benefits of this sensitivity when stating, "Studies of empowerment across various

fields identify a sense of autonomy, self-belief, self-expression, the ability to work together with

diverse others, and a critical social consciousness as key factors that can enable people to achieve

things" (p. 295). Therefore, it was not only essential to teach from a cultural perspective for this

study because of its nature, but because it is the right thing for educators to practice and

implement in their classrooms on a daily basis. Journell and Castro (2011) concurred with this

statement when they wrote,

> From a civic perspective, failing to teach from a culturally relevant standpoint runs the
>
> risk of alienating those students who do not identify with the traditional narrative that
>
> paints the United States as a land of opportunity for all who reside within its borders. (p.
>
> 16)

Social Networking

Since the advent of the Read/Write Web, educators and students have found many

different avenues for collaborating. Tools such as wikis, podcasts, VoiceThread, and blogs have

been popular methods for students to collaborate and communicate with each other and their

teachers. Chandra and Chalmers (2010) described a study that they conducted with pre-service teachers using wikis, blogs, and podcasts. The wiki and podcast allowed the groups to present their knowledge to the other groups; whereas, the blog allowed the various groups to provide feedback for the work. Pre-service teachers stated that through the Web 2.0 tools they were allowed to portray "what was done," "how it was done," and "why it should be done" (p. 42). The study conducted by Chandra and Chalmers emphasized wikis, podcasts, and blogs as very popular tools for student collaboration on the Read/Write Web. With the creation of programs such as Facebook, the tool of choice for many students has become a social networking platform (Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008).

Several popular social networking platforms have emerged in recent years. Not that long ago, students were communicating through MySpace. For many adults, the social networking platform of choice was Ning. However, in recent years the platform that has skyrocketed in popularity and overshadowed the competition has been Facebook. Facebook has allowed many people to connect with old friends and family members in which they did not have contact with in years.

In Amerson's (2011) article, the "researcher used Facebook as a tool to locate potential participants and to initiate communication as part of a research study" (p. 414). Amerson described how a social networking platform, Facebook, was beneficial to utilize for finding former students and potential participants in an upcoming medical research study. One major reason for Amerson's choice of using Facebook was due to the fact that many students are using social networking platforms on a frequent basis. Many educators argue that schools need to tap into this conduit of communication to connect with students. In a study of two surveys, the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration

(NTIA) conducted in 2003 and the Pew Internet and American Life Project conducted in 2004-2006, Junco and Cole-Avent (2008) described how the surveys were utilized to determine what types of technology college students are using before and during attendance at college. The NTIA consisted of $n = 134,000$; whereas, the Pew Internet and American Life Project had the following four components: home broadband adoption ($n = 4,001$), generations online ($n = 6,403$), gender ($n = 6,403$), and a decade of adoption ($n = 2,200$). These surveys consisted of asking women and men, Latino, African American, Asian American, and Caucasian ethnicities; and, they used the subgroups of family income and education levels.

The study revealed that more and more students are contacting their future roommates via Facebook before they arrive to campus. As a result, more room changes are being requested as never seen before due to the technology (Junco & Cole-Avent, 2008, p. 4). Also, students are arriving with knowledge of how to use and even own and create blogs and to use social networking. Junco and Cole-Avent stated, "To them [college students], online connections are merely an extension of their human ability to communicate" (p. 7). Because of this digital divide between generations, college student affairs offices and faculty must learn new methodologies of how to incorporate technology into student life. Similar to Junco and Cole-Avent's assertions about the digital divide and new technology, the focus of this current study assessed the effectiveness of a social networking platform, Edmodo, and how educators can help tear down some of the previously discussed barriers for Latino/Latina ESL students by implementing this technology in the classroom.

Besides the convenience and instant gratification of social networking for many students, there are several beneficial aspects for educators to consider. Allsop (2011) described how students were able to use other Internet tools to communicate and collaborate to help solve an

academic problem instead of waiting on the teacher to help them. Allsop conducted the study in

"A considerably larger than the average primary school in London agreed to host the study" (p.

132). Twenty-nine students between the ages of nine and ten participated in the case study of

how students could utilize wikis to collaborate. Due to the aspects of being free of expenditures,

and also including security measures to help protect the identity of the students, Wikispaces.com

was chosen for Allsop's study. Students were asked to create a dictionary through the wiki to

increase their literacy skills. Video recordings were made of the students using the wiki, along

with the wiki itself, and a short survey for students to complete, which enabled Allsop to analyze

the effectiveness of the wiki for student collaboration at the primary level. Allsop cited one of

the findings of the study by stating, "Instead of sitting and waiting for a solution or asking the

teacher for help they decided to communicate directly with their peers in order to resolve the

issue" (p. 134). Allsop concluded that using a wiki was effective for collaboration by stating,

"Therefore, wikis could be seen as an effective tool to support collaborative learning and

knowledge sharing in education and facilitates group learning where students can learn and share

knowledge" (p. 136). Social networking platforms, such as Edmodo, could allow students the

same and even better opportunity to communicate, collaborate, and critically think about

problems, as compared to a wiki, thereby assisting them to build a sense of community by

depending on the elements of social constructivism (Harper, 2010; Trust, 2012). Social

networking can be advantageous to the classroom via the three aspects of a blended virtual

environment, designed interaction, and reducing the feeling of isolation.

Zone of proximal development and social networking. Some critics may argue, that

due to the asynchronous components of social networking, programs such as Edmodo do not

allow for Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Since the instructor would be

physically distant from the student, the program would not be conducive to mentoring or assisting the student to obtain a higher level of performance than what they could accomplish on their own. However, because of the sheer nature of how social networking platforms are designed, programs such as Edmodo exemplify the essential elements ZPD within a social constructivist model. Through several interviews with educators, Kist (2010) described the analogy provided by one of these educators, "Brett feels that educators should be involved with social networking platforms such as Facebook almost as a pilot instructor would need to be in the cockpit with the student pilot" (p. 99). In the virtual classroom, the instructor would still be present asynchronously through the social networking platform to assist students with their academic maturation.

The essence of ZPD within social networking is not limited to just the instructor, but it also entails the use of peer tutoring to assist each other with the processes of collaboration, communication, and critical thinking that enhances the probabilities that students would obtain higher levels of performance as a group as compared to trying to accomplish these academic feats on their own. Through the discussion threads and interaction, students can work collaboratively together to solve problems and draw closer together as a class to achieve common goals. Therefore, with instructors assisting students with problems through social networking sites such as Edmodo, and with students assisting each other with their learning, platforms such as Edmodo provide a natural and ideal avenue for educators to utilize social constructivism and ZPD. Allanson (2013) concurred with this ideology when she stated, "Because of the ease of use associated with social networking sites, their simple format, and the benefits of social interactions, they are a prime environment for social constructivism" (p. 26).

Bounded system. Because of the technological advances, and some of the dangers that these advances bring for adolescent children, many school districts put up barriers or filters to limit the types of social networking within students may interact. For many districts, websites, such as YouTube and Facebook, are blocked from classroom utilization. However, despite these barriers, many educators embrace the potential of creating a strong sense of community within the classroom and find methods to avert the roadblocks in order to use social networking. Kist (2010) described this persistence of educators when stating, "There are some teachers who at the very least seemed oblivious to organizational barriers that might deter them from incorporating social networking into their classrooms" (p. 117). For many educators, using social networking to foster the 21st century skills of collaborating, communicating, and critically thinking together outweigh the organizational barriers.

A reason why many educators find avenues around the filters, in order to implement social networking within the classroom, is because it provides a natural bounded system in which parameters can be established for classroom interaction. Creswell (2013) defined a bounded system as a case study that is "bounded by time and place" (p. 97). Because Edmodo is semi-public, through the use of codes and passwords established by both the program and teacher, this creates an ideal bounded system without the interference of outside postings and advertisements in order to analyze if an educational social networking platform can influence the sense of community through the theoretical framework of social constructivism in a classroom. Boyd and Parker (2010) described three beneficial aspects of utilizing a social networking program within the classroom. These benefits included a way to (a) "construct a public or semipublic within a bounded system," (b) "articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection," and (c) "view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p.

15). Boyd and Parker described the benefits further by stating, "A person's list of friends signals who they imagine to be a potential part of their social circle on the site" (p. 18). The perceived and possible reality of friends, within the classroom and bounded system of Edmodo, could be very important for the educational process and learning. This educational learning process was described by Boyd and Parker when they stated, "Just as book learning is important for our students, we need to broaden our definition of learning to include social experiences that are vital to maturation" (p. 28).

   Blended virtual environment. Lou, Chen, Tsai, Tseng, and Shih (2012) conducted a study of a blended learning environment by analyzing the teacher's observations and reflections, student blogs, and student discussions. Participants consisted of 46 students in Taiwan and were divided into groups of four or five (Lou et al., 2012). These students were instructed to create a learning aid for early childhood learners during the fall semester of 2010. Throughout the course, the instructor used a blended teaching method of requiring two hours per week in face-to-face class sessions and one hour per week blogging. Students usually posted two messages per week on their group's blog, and then posted at least one message on some of the other groups' blogs. Through the blogs and comment sections, the researchers revealed four major themes that came out of the study that focused on feedback largely in part to the blogging portion of the project. The themes included: (a) "learn by doing," (b) "support from teachers," (c) "team work," and (d) "interactions between group members" (p. 788-789). Students noted that it was important to have the assistance of the instructor with the blended portion of the class (Lou et al., 2012). The studies of Bekele and Menchaca (2008) and Chandra & Chalmers (2010) revealed similar results. Students performed better with frequent feedback and additional assistance from the instructor.

Within a social network platform, a blended classroom of synchronous and asynchronous communication and collaboration could reflect the results of Lou et al. (2012). A platform such as Edmodo would allow both the teacher and the students to interact and easily follow the discussion threads for the various topics of study for a unit.

Designed interaction. One key component of social constructivism is a sense of community. Social networking is an optimal tool in bridging the idea of Vygotsky's ZPD, which included the interaction between the teacher and student and between fellow students, by allowing students to build a sense of community virtually. However, this interaction has to be organized and carefully planned. Hostetler (2009) argued "against the use of technology for technology's sake and for the purposeful use of technology as a necessary part of teaching for democratic citizenship" (p. 51). Clark (2008) stated that this interaction must contain clear teacher expectations and concise feedback for students to be successful in their communication and collaboration. Social networking allows educators to foster this interaction through a variety of methodologies. Purposeful lessons could include studying other cultures and then describing them (Hirtle, 2011; Kelm, 2011). Another plausible option for designed interaction could help tear down misconceptions of other religions and help facilitate a collegiality between students of different faiths (Ahmad, 2011). For the current study, this thought process was applicable for tearing down misconceptions based upon culture. Indeed, the most important factor for the educator is to have a plan before launching students into the fray of the social networking media even if it is designed only for education such as the platform of Edmodo. Thus, students must have a designed interaction that focuses upon a goal instead of carelessly hoping that the technology will lead the way.

Reducing isolation. There can be a very advantageous aspect for students who spend considerable amounts of time on the posting boards of Facebook and other social media that then translates into better academic performance by reducing the feeling of isolation from classmates and instructors. Bekele and Menchaca (2008) conducted a qualitative analysis of 29 studies based on Internet Supported Learning (ISL) in which 13 consisted of positive results and 16 proved to have no significant difference. A clear division of the studies chronologically existed in which most of the no significant difference studies were conducted before 2002 while the more recent studies provided positive outcomes in student learning. Students were receptive of ISL because of the higher frequency of instructor feedback and the fact that learning could be done asynchronously, thereby allowing for flexible schedules. Bekele and Menchaca also found in the analysis that student achievement should not only be centered on test grades but also on project-based outcomes through the ISL. Bekele and Menchaca concluded that online learning can help reduce isolation because of the collaboration but also because of the positive interaction with the instructor. Bekele and Menchaca stated, "Regarding student achievement, the study found students in asynchronous ISL environments performed better than those in traditional ones" (p. 383). This was relevant to the current study because ISL supports the idea that Edmodo could be used to increase student participation and motivation due to the asynchronous nature of the program by providing immediate feedback and support of student learning via the discussion threads, thereby reducing the feeling of isolation for students within a class.

Similar to Bekele and Menchaca's (2008) observation, Ahmad (2011) used a quantitative correlational design for part of the study to analyze the relationship of Nigerian university students who use YouTube for social networking. It was implied the type and the amount of usage that Nigerian students utilized YouTube would impact their social behavior. In addition, it

was implied that there would be a difference in social behavior due to the gender, ethnicity, and religion of the student. The study was conducted by giving a questionnaire to 400 students that were randomly selected from what the researchers identified as the "accessible population" from six Nigerian universities (p. 36). Among the 400 students, 291 were female and 109 were male. One hundred fifty-five were Christian, 240 were Islamic, and five were of another religion. A *t*-test was conducted to analyze gender, an ANOVA was utilized to analyze for both the ethnicity and religion, and finally a two-tailed Pearson Correlation was computed for the relationship between YouTube usage and social behavior. There were significant differences for the usage of YouTube for female students as compared to male students. Also, differences were apparent based on religion with Islamic students using YouTube more than Christian students. Finally, the way students used YouTube did change social behavior when comparing the two-tailed test.

The limitations of this study included its generality for other settings outside of Nigeria. Due to external factors such as the government and religion, the results may not be the same if conducted in the United States or Western Europe. Also, some of the questions could have skewed the whole questionnaire. For example, students were asked if they used YouTube for pornography. Due to the nature and this type of question, the male students in particular could have answered questions dishonestly throughout the survey. However, Ahmad concluded that the use of YouTube in the classroom setting had positive aspects by stating, "A student may feel not going to his/her real class instead might engage on the online lecture" (p. 39). Ahmad added that students could reduce isolation because "YouTube provided avenues for audio visual self-expression by sharing and revealing feelings, passion, experience, values and creeds through posting and downloading various categories of video clips" (p. 40). With these capabilities of social networking and the decrease in students feeling isolated and alone, this reduction led in a

limited capacity to a better and stronger development for a sense of community within this current study.

Adolescents in an Online Environment

Rapidly advancing and emerging technologies appeal to the middle school student. Smartphones, PlayStation 4, and Nintendo Wii U are only examples of the changing technology that represent a multi-billion dollar industry (Kücklich, 2005). The different types of game consoles and smartphones allow easy access for students to tap into the virtual or online world. Using platforms such as Edmodo in the classroom should not be an abnormal experience for many of today's adolescents. Educators should purposefully embrace these new technologies, including social networking, to encourage self-reflection, to engage student learning, and to foster a sense of community within the classroom.

Self-reflection. One of the beneficial aspects of using a social networking platform, such as Edmodo, within the classroom is to encourage and require a student's self-reflection on both the content of the course and the building of a community. Similar to the traditional classroom setting where teachers have set rules and policies of how the classroom will function, instructors must model appropriate behavior for interacting with fellow classmates within the virtual world of social networking (Booth, 2012). Students must be aware that if they are to foster a positive community, they must be cautious in how they post their remarks to each other within the discussion threads of Edmodo or any other social networking platform that educators may utilize. Campbell (2009) described this awareness when stating, "Self-reflection means thinking about one's own behavior and then being able to modify it accordingly" (p. 99). Students must therefore be cognizant of the fact that they cannot rashly type out a message and hit the enter key

or return key without first thinking through and reflecting upon what they have typed. Once it has been submitted to cyberspace, it is very difficult to take back.

Educators not only emphasize and focus upon online behavior but also they desire students to partake in self-reflection of their learning. Edmodo provides an opportunity for students to learn and reflect on the material being learned beyond the four walls of the traditional classroom. With asynchronous access to material, students can easily review the lessons and discussion threads to clarify difficult material while being able to post their own reflections of the lessons for their peers to comment on and assist in their academic growth. Allanson (2013) described the benefits of asynchronous learning when stating, "Social networking can be described as the best of both discussion boards and blogging combined, as people connect by voicing their opinions or commenting to others" (p. 47). These comments and opinions then enhance the learning experience by allowing students to reflect on the material during their own time and at their own convenience.

Engaged learning. Self-reflection and the implementation of various technological tools within the classroom enhance and encourage student learning (Campbell, 2009; Hur & Oh, 2012; Hutchinson & Henry, 2010; Kerr, 2009). For students to be successful within a traditional face-to-face, virtual, or blended classroom setting, they must be engaged with their learning. Campbell (2009) described a way to ensure engagement when stating, "Self-regulation increases student motivation and engagement by enabling students to customize and take control of their own learning through conscious knowledge of effective strategies and choices" (p. 98). Engaged learning not only increases student motivation, but it is also in alignment with the new Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS). Within the History and Social Studies content for CCSS, the standard, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.6, states, "Use technology, including the

Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently," and standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.10 states, "Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2012). By implementing Edmodo into the pedagogy of the classroom for students to collaborate, communicate, and critically think about civics, some of the requirements of CCSS were satisfied.

In a study of adolescent students, Hur and Oh (2012) commented on how the utilization and implementation of laptops within the classroom increased student engagement. Hur and Oh described how forty students, in a middle school that was dedicated to educating only boys within Korea, were given the laptops while the study was conducted in 2005. Technological savvy English and Science teachers volunteered to participate and were asked to create lesson plans to be delivered via the laptop medium. Several aspects, including scores, reflections, and surveys, were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of laptops in the classroom. Surprisingly, Hur and Oh described how student engagement increased with the laptops, but overall student test scores did not have a significant difference as compared to students who did not receive the computers. However, Hur and Oh described the culture of Korea and the large participation in private tutoring. The extra assistance from tutors may have skewed the results of this study. Hur and Oh concluded, "The increasing use of mobile devices such as iPads and Smartphones calls for new research on mobile learning" (p. 310). The newer and advanced technology may enhance student learning and engagement, thereby having implications for the crux of this current study of analyzing the building of sense of community via Edmodo.

The use of a social networking program like Edmodo combined the self-regulation of Campbell (2009) and the use of laptops or computers in the classroom as recommended by Hur and Oh (2012) to increase engaged learning. An encouraging aspect of this engaged learning is that the utilization of the different Internet tools allows an avenue or conduit for students to freely ask questions, increasing achievement (Hur & Oh, 2012; Hutchinson & Henry, 2010). For this study, a focus of interest was reflected with one of the research questions by showing how well this use of technology translated to the Latino/Latina ESL students engaging in civics education. A major concern for this engagement and for the building of a sense of community within the classroom was an aspect that Hur and Oh (2012) identified when stating, "Analysis results indicated that students were highly engaged in the laptop activities at the beginning of the project, but interest decreased as the project continued" (p. 304). A focus of building sense of community through the influence of Edmodo was analyzed by exploring if the Latino/Latina ESL students waned in their engagement and discussion as the unit proceeded by critically scrutinizing both the interviews of this case study and the discussion threads. Like Hur and Oh observed in their study, student engagement impacted the building of a sense of community within the virtual social networking platform of Edmodo.

Technological Barriers

As with many different programs and new tools to assist teachers with improving pedagogy in a classroom, the utilization and implementation of social networking is not without its difficulties. There are two large hurdles that many districts, schools, and teachers encounter when trying to use new technology such as Edmodo within the classroom. The two barriers of Internet accessibility and teacher support will briefly be analyzed, and then the impact of employment skills and the building of a sense of community will be discussed.

Internet accessibility. Even though the market for new technologies seems to be constantly skyrocketing, there are unfortunately some remnants within the American society that still do not have access to them. Of those technologies that many take for granted is Internet accessibility. Obviously, the biggest factor in determining the ability to have access to the Internet is one's socio-economic status. Hutchinson and Henry (2010) cited a 2003 study by Reuters that "indicated that approximately two thirds of low-income homes had Internet access versus 98% of high- income homes" (p. 70). Interestingly, Hutchinson and Henry also discussed how African American students had more interaction with Internet activities while at school as compared to Caucasian students. When the school day is completed, female adolescents tend to have more interaction online than their male classmates. Hutchinson and Henry also stated that an additional barrier to this accessibility is the location of the computer lab within schools. Unfortunately for many schools, computers are very limited within the classroom with usually only the teacher's laptop or desktop; therefore, this presents a physical barrier to being able to utilize a program such as Edmodo. With these factors in mind, there were some limitations for this current study due to the accessibility of the Internet at home for the Latino/Latina ESL students. Therefore, the anticipated interaction on Edmodo for these students occurred while the students were in the classroom.

Teacher support. Another barrier of analyzing the impact of Edmodo, on building the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students, was the teacher within the classroom. Not every educator embraces the idea of implementing and exploring new technologies. Instead, many consider them a nuisance and a waste of precious time when they could be using tried and proven pedagogical methodologies to ensure student learning. Hur and Oh (2012) stated that many teachers believe that it takes more investment of time into developing computer-based

programs and lessons than it does to create a traditional lecture. For a social networking

program like Edmodo to be successful in the classroom, let alone to help build a sense of

community, there must be buy-in by the teacher in the classroom. Hur and Oh (2012) described

the idea of buy-in by the teacher when stating, "First, teacher support is the key to fostering

positive learning outcomes in ubiquitous learning environments" (p. 309).

Not only do teachers have to demonstrate enthusiasm for a program like Edmodo to

succeed, but there needs to be purposeful and meaningful activities for students to be engaged in.

Students cannot be taken to a computer lab and set free to explore the Internet without guidance

and direction from their instructor. Kerr (2009) described the guidance of the teacher when

stating, "It is recommended that educators use an instructional design model that is learner-

centered. The needs of the learner should be the driving force in the design of online courses"

(p. 8). Kerr continued with this emphasis of the teacher being the driving force by creating

activities that include topics that would be of interest to the student, not necessarily to the interest

of the educator. Teachers must ensure that the standards are met and that the appropriate content

is taught. Edmodo provides a convenient outlet for educators to create discussion topics within

the parameters of their curriculum maps to be flexible and allow students the opportunity to

engage in activities that are both educational and build a learning community while fostering a

sense of community.

Employment skills and the classroom. The changing workforce of the 21st century

requires schools and teachers to ensure that students are receiving the proper tools to succeed in a

global economy. Barriers, such as Internet accessibility and the resistance of some teachers to

use technology in the classroom, must be confronted in order for students to work together in a

virtual environment to hone the necessary skills needed for tomorrow's jobs (Hutchinson &

Henry, 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). The old methods of completing things individually are quickly dissolving, and the advancement in technology in the realms of business and education demands more and more cooperation between people to solve today's and tomorrow's challenges. Building a sense of community not only assists in eliminating isolation in a classroom but it provides a way for students to work together.

The barriers of Internet accessibility and teacher resistance to embrace and implement technology in the classroom must be overcome or the skills that students need will not be practiced. Hutchinson and Henry (2010) conducted a study of 7th grade students in 12 different middle schools evenly divided between the northeastern United States and the southeastern United States and they stated, "The schools were selected because their student populations exhibited characteristics associated with high dropout rates, such as low SES, large minority populations, high participation rates in free and reduced-price lunch programs" (p. 64). With the 12 schools combined, 1,025 students participated in the study. The purpose of the study was to explore where and how often at risk students access the Internet, ascertain the types of activities in which they engage when accessing the Internet, and explore the 21st century skills of at risk students for "Internet-based reading, writing, and communicating" (p. 64). The instrument used to obtain the data included mostly Likert-type questions on a five-point scale and some open-ended questions. Hutchinson and Henry described an interesting result of this study by stating, "A post hoc analysis using the Bonferroni procedure indicated that African Americans, Asians, and Caucasians used the Internet more frequently outside school than Hispanics" (p. 67). As a result of this limited access for Latino students, as compared to other ethnicities, Hutchinson and Henry (2010) stated, "This fact may also place minority students at an even greater risk for unemployment, as they are unable to develop the digital literacies required for the workplace of

the twenty-first century" (p. 63). The sentiments of Hutchinson and Henry have dire

consequences for Latino/Latina ESL students if they are not allowed to practice and participate

in environments such as Edmodo. Learning to navigate the Internet, and to work collaboratively

in a social networking platform, will assist Latino/Latina ESL students with the employable

skills needed in the future and at the same time influence the building of a sense of community.

Hutchinson and Henry also stated, "Additionally, although Hispanic students did not differ from

other groups in their school frequency of use, they scored significantly lower than Caucasian

students in all areas on the measure of online reading comprehension" (p. 71).

The implications of barriers to technology in the classroom, lack of some educators'

support for technology, and the impact of not utilizing tools such as Edmodo will more than

likely impede the success for Latino/Latina ESL students in their academics and in their future

workplace. They will not have acquired the necessary communicative, collaborative, and critical

thinking skills necessary to achieve at a higher level academically and when they are employed

in the future. This exemplified the significance of this study and the need to explore if a social

networking programming such as Edmodo can influence the sense of community.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Social constructivism and sense of community served as the foundation for this collective

case study because of the social networking aspects of Edmodo. Based upon this foundation,

sense of community was explored because of its importance of the feeling of belonging to a

group and for the students' academic success. The theories of the sense of community and social

constructivism have been thoroughly researched. However, how sense of community can be

influenced through a social networking platform, such as Edmodo, has scarcely been researched

with a paucity of resources on the program itself, let alone its influence on groups. Therefore, this study tried to assist in filling this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This collective case study explored the influence of the social networking platform known as Edmodo on the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students by utilizing the 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Due to the newly mandated high-stakes testing for the content area of civics, it is important to discover methodologies and pedagogy that can better assist this rapidly increasing portion of the student population. The remainder of this chapter will outline the collective case study design, the research questions, participants, the setting, procedures, the role of the researcher, and how the data was collected and analyzed.

Design

For this study, the qualitative approach utilized was a "collective case study" as defined by Creswell (2013, p. 99). Creswell defined the characteristics of a collective case study by stating,

> In a collective case study (or multiple case study), the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site. Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue. (p. 99)

This approach was valid for this study for several reasons. First, the rationale of this choice focuses upon the fact that I endeavored to understand a current, real-life issue of using Edmodo in the classroom to explore its influence on the students' sense of community. Secondly, parameters for a bounded system included a virtual classroom setting through Edmodo for

Latino/Latina ESL 7th grade civics. Originally designed, this collective case study focused on three different cases via three middle schools. However, due to the decision of one of the schools to withdraw from the study the week before it was conducted, the result was two cases instead of three. The students utilized a curriculum unit which was approximately three weeks in duration within their civics classrooms at two separate Central Florida middle schools. The three-week time frame allowed the participants to respond to the same discussion topics at both schools by studying the same concepts due to the pacing of the district's curriculum map. Yin (2009) delineated the characteristics of a collective case study as compared to a case study by stating, "Each school might be the subject of an individual case study, but the study as a whole covers several schools and in this way uses a multiple-case [collective case] design" (p. 53). Finally, the one issue of the sense of community through the utilization of Edmodo was chosen and then two cases via the two middle school civics teachers, one ESL support teacher, and their Latino/Latina ESL students were selected to carry out the study.

The collective (multiple) case study parameters were also aligned with those defined by Merriam (2009) and Yin (2009). Merriam (2009) stated that these types of studies can be defined as "the process of conducting the inquiry (that is, as case study research), the bounded system or unit of analysis selected for study (that is, the case), or the product, the end report of a case investigation" (p. 54). However, one case may not reap the compelling results that are necessary for a study. Instead, the researcher may need to study several cases in order to explore and discern a clear picture of the phenomenon. Merriam commented on this issue of case studies by stating, "The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 49). Two teachers in two separate schools made this study more robust than if I were to study just one civics teacher's classroom. Yin

(2009) would concur with Merriam (2009) and the premise of this study. Yin (2009) described how using several cases to study provide for a more ideal situation for the researcher by stating, "The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 53). With the parameters and structures described separately by both Merriam and Yin, this current study fell into the necessary guidelines of a collective case study.

Research Questions

Two aspects served as the foundation on which this study was designed and how the research questions were developed. The research questions were essential for scaffolding this study to assist in the exploration of utilizing a social networking platform in order to build a sense of community for students. The first aspect that assisted in creating the research questions was the work of Stake (2010) and his recommendations of crafting research questions when he stated, "That means, choose a research question about something people know a lot about, then find connections and interpretations that help readers realize they didn't understand the complexities" (p. 72). The second aspect that was essential for developing the research questions was the theoretical framework of social constructivism, ZPD, and sense of community. In recent years, sense of community has been explored, and the advantages of using a social networking system have begun to be studied. However, the research questions below assisted me in trying to understand the phenomenon of building a sense of community by using Edmodo. This desire to explore sense of community and the use of Edmodo is aligned with what Stake recommended for creating research questions when Stake stated, "And you should ask questions that have novelty, something of your own curiosities, eventually to link to what others have done, but something you can call your own" (p. 75).

Three questions, which were written in agreement with Stake (2010) and several previously mentioned studies, shaped this current study. The questions were as follows:

RQ1: How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino ESL students in 7th grade civics?

RQ2: How does Edmodo influence the development of a sense of community for Latino ESL students through the collaborative and communicative aspects of the social networking platform?

RQ3: How does Edmodo influence student engagement with the content material for Latino ESL middle school students?

Participants

Two different classes were examined for the current study. Therefore, two different civics teachers, in two different middle schools, in a large Central Florida school district were interviewed and observed. The civics teachers were chosen based upon the cooperation of the school and the willingness of the teacher to participate in the current study. As mentioned, the original intent was to conduct the study within three middle schools, but one of the three schools withdrew from the study the week prior to its implementation. Selection of the teachers was accomplished with the assistance of the district's Social Studies Specialist.

Because the nature of this study focused on Latino/Latina ESL students, one of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL) teachers who supported the civics teacher in a consultation model was also included in the interviewing and observations. As with the original intent of having three schools in the study, the plan was to have the ESL consultation teacher involved at both school sites. However, the ESL teacher at School A declined being involved the day of the first interview. Therefore, the study was completed with just the civics teacher at School A and the civics teacher and ESL teacher at School B. In reality, the two cases were

done inversely of each other. The civics teacher at School A took the lead and carried out the

activities without the assistance of his ESL consultation teacher. At School B, the ESL

consultation teacher took the lead and used the civics teacher as a support to complete the

activities. The usual capacity of the support teachers is to visit the classroom twice per week,

within this particular Central Florida district, to assist the ESL students with their academic work

and to ensure that the student comprehends the material and instruction. Finally, four

Latino/Latina ESL students at School A and three ESL students from School B (seven total

students) were interviewed in a focus group before and after the use of Edmodo and also

observed interacting with the social networking program. Table 1 depicts the demographics of

the participants for this study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Teachers	7th Grade Students
School A	1 Caucasian Male Civics Teacher	3 Latino Males from Puerto Rico
		1 Latina Female from the Dominican Republic
School B	1 Caucasian Female Civics Teacher	2 Latino Males from Puerto Rico
	1 Latino Female ESL Support Teacher	1 Latino Male from the United States
Total	3	7

The sampling procedure consisted of a particular type of convenience sample in what

Creswell (2013) defined as a criterion sampling in which "all cases...meet some criterion" (p.

158). Selection of the participants was determined by those who qualified for ESL services,

according to the aforementioned state standards, were of Latino/Latina heritage, and based from the recommendation of both the civics and ESL support teacher for each school. The teachers at the two individual schools were given the opportunity to assist in identifying the four to five ESL students that participated in the current study because they were familiar with the students and parents involved. This method of selection sampling based on particular criterion complied with the standards of those suggested for qualitative case studies within a bounded system. Merriam (2009) defined the bounded system when stating, "The 'what' is a bounded system (Smith, 1978), a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can 'fence in' what I am going to study" (p. 40). The boundaries for these two case studies were the two individual civics educators and their classrooms that included Latino/Latina ESL students within each of the two Central Florida middle schools. Merriam (2009) also stated, "For it to be a case study, one particular program or one particular classroom of learners (a bounded system), or one particular older learner selected on the basis of typicality, uniqueness, success, and so forth, would be the unit of analysis" (p. 41). The individual classrooms of educators and students from the two middle schools, who volunteered to participate in the study, with Latino/Latina ESL populations, comprised the individual cases in which to study. This convenience sample was therefore utilized "because it is an instance of some process, issue, or concern" (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). As a result, even though this was a convenient sample, it still complied within the standards as recommended by Merriam.

Setting

The setting for this qualitative case study was a large Central Florida school district. For the 2014-2015 school year, the district had approximately 61,000 students and served an area about the size of the state of Rhode Island. Tourism, agriculture, and education are the main

economic activities for this district. Over the past decade, the *Education Information &*

Accountability Services Data Report by FLDOE (2012) reflected the trend for that particular

district comparative with the rest of the nation due to the increase of ESL students. Between the

2002-2003 school year and the 2011-2012 school year, the total number of ESL students for this

district increased from approximately 1,900 students to nearly 3,100 students.

The two schools were deliberately chosen within the district because of their unique

make-up of Latino/Latina students. Both Schools A and B are located in the largest city within

the district. Latino/Latina ESL students that attend both schools were mainly of Puerto Rican

heritage with some students of Dominican Republic heritage. These two schools represented the

main Latino/Latina groups within the district and were representative of the district's ESL

students. Table 2 helps to portray the demographics of the two schools for this current study.

Demographic data for each school was obtained through the Florida Department of Education's

(2013) 2012-2013 *Public School Accountability Report.* The demographics are as follows:

Table 2

School Demographics

School	Total Number of Students	% Economically Disadvantaged		% of Latino Heritage		% of ESL Students	
		2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12
A	1209	74.3	73.3	41.1	38.5	11.1	9.7
B	1105	67.6	65.9	38.3	37.5	7.7	7.2

Procedures

While analyzing the articles or related research, I completed the procedures and the

needed paperwork to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A) from

Liberty University and the permission to perform a study within the Central Florida school district. This approval was granted from both the University and the School District in the month of May 2014. The district's Social Studies Specialist was contacted to assist with recruiting schools, and letters were sent to those principals. The specialist assisted by identifying which civics teachers to recruit for this study. A recruitment letter was sent to both the principal and teachers of the recommended schools. The school recruitment letter that was sent to the principals is located in Appendix B. The principal emailed my University email account identifying if they accepted the invitation to participate in the current study. In July 2014, the two principals responded and agreed to allow the research to be conducted in the fall of the 2014-2015 academic year. Then, the recruitment letter was sent to the targeted civics teacher for each school that had agreed to participate. This letter is located in Appendix C. Teachers were asked to provide their planning period to assist with scheduling the times to meet for the interviews. Once they agreed to participate, a consent form (see Appendix D) was sent to both the civics teachers and ESL consultation teachers to complete. For teachers who were willing to participate in the study and who were unfamiliar with the format and usage of Edmodo, a short video tutorial was provided for them. The video entitled, *Edmodo Tutorial (Basic) for Teachers*, was created by Morin (2013) and published on YouTube. This short 10-minute video only covered the basics of how to create an Edmodo classroom for teachers, how to post messages to the class, assign classwork, and create libraries of links, images, and other resources. Because I managed each Edmodo classroom, this information was provided for the teachers to be familiar with the process but was controlled by me.

After the schools were identified and the principal and teachers consented to participate, a parental recruitment letter was sent to the civics teachers who had accepted to participate to

assist with recruiting parents of 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students. Because the focus of the study centered on students who qualified for ESL services, the recruitment letter for parents was provided in both English and Spanish. These letters are represented in Appendices E and F. The civics teacher then sent the recruitment letter home to the parents of the ESL students. Students were purposefully selected based on qualifying for the State of Florida ESL services. Therefore, the same recruitment letter was used for both the parents and the students. The reason for this procedural step was because of the specificity of the student. Only students who met the requirements of being an English as a Second Language student and who were of Latino/Latina heritage were selected for the study. Once the parents responded to the recruitment letter, the teacher sent home the parental consent letter and student assent letter to obtain the parental and student signatures. The letters and forms were printed both in English and Spanish and are represented in Appendices G, H, I, and J. These procedures for recruiting and obtaining consent to participate in the study adhered to the procedures submitted to Liberty University's IRB and were approved by the committee. Again, the approval letter is represented in Appendix A.

Once consent and assent were granted, the interview process and observations were conducted. Participants were first required to answer seven questions in a focus group for teachers and then separately for students as depicted in Table 3. Because this is a collective case study, there were two teacher focus groups consisting of the one civics teacher for School A and one civics teacher and one ESL consultation teacher for School B. Also, there were two student focus groups consisting of Latino/Latina ESL students from each school. Each teacher focus group interview and student focus group interview were completed in a timeframe of approximately 45 minutes due to the structure of the district's bell schedule.

The focus group interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Member checks were utilized by allowing the participants the opportunity to check for accuracy. The teacher focus groups occurred in the civics teacher's classroom during their planning period at each of the two participating schools. The student focus groups occurred at one of the conference rooms at each participating school during their lunch period with food provided. The intent of these focus group interviews was to determine the familiarity of Edmodo and their ideas about sense of community. These recordings were stored in a zipped folder with a password lock to ensure confidentiality. Using Audacity, the audio recordings were available to be utilized to transcribe the interviews. Also, because each individual had a pseudonym, that person could have been easily deleted from the transcripts if they had opted to withdraw from the study. While listening to these recordings, I then transcribed them into the proper protocols similar to Appendix K. The students and teachers who participated in this current study were designated in the transcripts as Student A1, Student A2, etc., or Teacher A1, Teacher B1, etc., to maintain confidentiality. The letter designates which school, and the number distinguishes which student or teacher. For the teachers, Teacher 1 represented the civics teacher and Teacher 2 correlated with the ESL consultation teacher. A code book was kept to help identify the participants. However, the code book was stored separately from the transcripts and observation notes in a locked cabinet. The only individual who has access to the true identity of the participants is me as the primary investigator (PI). Observation notes, letters, consent/assent forms and any other documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet for at least three years. At the end of that period of time, all documentation will be shredded and destroyed.

The standardized focus group interview questions for both students and the teachers are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions for each Focus Group of Teachers/Students

	Questions
Before Edmodo Use	1. Students – If you have used a social networking program in school, what were some examples of the tasks or problems you completed? What program did you use?
	Teachers – If you have used a social networking program in your classroom, what were some examples of the tasks or problems you asked students to complete? What program did you use?
	2. In your opinion, how important is it for a student to "feel" as a part of the group to succeed academically?
	3. In your opinion, how important is it for students to collaborate together on a common problem or issue to feel as a member of the group?
	4. In your opinion, how important is it for students to be able to communicate to feel accepted as a member of a group?
	5. In your opinion, how important is it for students to work as a team to critically think about and solve a problem?
	6. Students – In your opinion, how important is it to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to become an informed citizen within the American form of democracy?
	Teachers – In your opinion, how important is it for students to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to become an informed citizen within the American form of democracy?
	7. Students – In your opinion, how important is it for your teachers to use content that reflects your culture?
	Teachers – In your opinion, how important is it for you to use content that reflects the students' cultures?
After Edmodo Use	8. Students – How did Edmodo make you feel like part of the group or team?
	Teacher – In your opinion, do you think Edmodo allowed the students to feel like part of a team?
	9. Students – In your opinion, how did Edmodo help you work with other classmates?

Teacher – In your opinion, how do you think Edmodo helped students to collaborate with the civics content?

10. Students – In your opinion, how did Edmodo help you to communicate with other classmates?

Teachers – In your opinion, how did Edmodo help students to communicate with other classmates?

11. Students – As a middle school student who is a speaker of English as your second language, please describe how Edmodo increased or decreased your engagement with the classwork?

Teachers – In your opinion, do you think Edmodo increased or decreased student engagement with the classwork?

12. Students – As the unit continued over the course of a few weeks, please describe how the use of Edmodo caused your engagement in the classwork to increase, stay the same, or decrease.

Teachers – As the unit continued over the course of a few weeks, please describe how the use of Edmodo caused student engagement in the classwork to increase, stay the same, or decrease.

13. Students – In your opinion, please describe how Edmodo was helpful or not helpful in learning new vocabulary terms within civics.

Teachers – In your opinion, please describe how Edmodo was helpful or not helpful in student acquisition of learning new vocabulary terms within civics.

14. Students – In your opinion, please describe if and how Edmodo helped you learn the information for this unit of civics.

Teachers – In your opinion, please describe if and how Edmodo helped students learn the information for this unit of civics.

After the initial pre-study interviews, I then observed each individual school while students were working on the Edmodo discussion thread posts on iPads in the classroom. During these observations, I provided a map of the computer labs or classrooms and located where each participant was located to help portray the educational environment in which this study occurred.

Similar to the interviews, I kept notes and then transcribed them into protocols as portrayed in

Appendix L. Again, students were designated as Student A1, Student A2, Student B1, Student

B2, etc. for the corresponding school and student.

Once I completed the two individual observations and students responded to both

discussion threads, the post-study interviews occurred. Similar to the pre-study interviews, both

the teachers and students were not interviewed during academic time. Instead, students were

interviewed during lunch, and teachers were interviewed during a time that was convenient to

them. The interviews were transcribed into protocols, again similar to Appendix K. The purpose

for interviewing the educators was to explore their perceptions of how a social networking

platform, such as Edmodo, could foster and influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina

ESL students. Students were interviewed to investigate if Edmodo influenced their sense of

community through collaboration, communication, and critically thinking about the two different

discussion board topics. The questions for the post-study interviews included questions 8-14

listed in Table 3.

The discussion threads (see Appendix M), utilized for the exploration of sense of

community by using the social networking platform, Edmodo, were created based upon the

curriculum map for civics to assist students with collaborating, communicating, and critically

thinking about the essential questions for a given unit. The focus of the two discussion threads

were centered on the organizing principle of evaluating how the United States government

creates and implements foreign policy with other nations. The first discussion thread allowed

students the opportunity to evaluate eight foreign policy goals and then determine which two are

the most important and describe why. Then they described why they chose the two least

important goals. The second activity to incorporate a discussion thread required students to read

a graphic novel. This novel depicted the day in the life of an American child and a child in

Mexico. Students then responded by evaluating the exploitation of child labor and labor in other

countries. Once the transcripts, memo notes from the observation, and discussion threads were

compiled, I then was able to code and analyze for themes concerning the influence of Edmodo

on sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students.

The unit of study that the participants engaged in was developed based on the district's

curriculum map and pacing guide along with Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State

Standards. The unit activities were developed and then adapted to fit within the pacing guide by

me and then disseminated to the two civics teachers. Using Edmodo, the district's textbook, and

supplemental materials for civics, I developed the unit activities in a way that allowed for access

of the material through the Edmodo site. The activities previously described by using

supplemental materials were conducive to discussion boards based on the unit of study regarding

foreign policy. This allowed the opportunity for students to engage in discussion and try to solve

the problems presented collaboratively by using critical thinking skills. Between the pre-study

and post-study interviews, students collaborated through Edmodo by answering the two

discussion board threads described in more detail at a later point. Using the screen-capturing

software known as Jing, I then took snapshots of the discussion boards to analyze them for

collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. In addition, I analyzed them to ascertain the

environment of the virtual classroom and evaluated them for how well students interacted during

the process. These screenshots were provided in similar fashion to that of Appendix N.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the protocols were created for the observations,

and screenshots were taken of the discussion boards, I then began the process of analyzing the

data and establishing categories, patterns, and generalizations of the findings. Additional figures

similar to Figure 1 were created to cross-analyze the information to assist in exploring if the students' sense of community was influenced by the use of Edmodo.

The Researcher's Role

Currently, I am an American Government teacher with 9thh grade and 12th grade students in a large school district located in Central Florida; however, the majority of my career centered on middle school education. I taught Social Studies at the middle school level from 1996 until the 2013-2014 academic year. In addition, I have taught in the school district that was the focus of this study for over 18 years. Also, I have taught the same content of civics that was the focus of the current study for the 2010-2011 through 2012-2013 academic years. However, of the two schools selected, I have not permanently taught in one of them. The other school selected was where I taught from 1996-1999 and the administration and faculty has changed since that time period. As stated, I currently teach at the high school level, thereby making the focus of the study more of an objective nature instead of a biased one.

The content area that I teach is Social Studies, and I have a specialist degree in Educational Technology. This study blended the two degrees together by utilizing Educational Technology through social networking (Edmodo) and the content area of civics to explore the phenomenon of students' sense of community in a virtual classroom. Also, through district workshops and district department meetings, there was a high probability that I would personally know the teachers involved in the case study; however, the teachers that were actually involved were not acquaintances of mine. Finally, due to the fact that I do not presently teach at the sample schools, I did not have any type of association with the students involved in the study. As a result, the study was not impacted by any association with the other educators involved in the current study.

During this study, I was the main instrument to collect and analyze the data. The idea of the human as the instrument originated with other researchers. Stake (2010) stated that "the most valuable instrument for qualitative research is the researcher-experiencing an event or listening to a person with special experience or browsing through records" (p. 101). I listened, observed, interviewed, and then discerned the information from the data to develop themes and generalities about how, if at all, social networking, through the educational LMS Edmodo, influenced the building of a sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students. Merriam (2009) further explained the human instrument when stating, "Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive" (p. 39).

Data Collection

Three main forms of data collection were obtained during this qualitative case study. Interviews of the teachers, ESL support teacher, and students were accomplished both before and after the study was conducted. In addition, I observed students using Edmodo with iPads in the classroom while taking notes, and I created a map of each of the classrooms to better understand the atmosphere of the study in which the students participated. Stake (2010) stated, "At the time it is encountered, the qualitative researcher makes some guess as to whether or not a particular one is valuable enough to hang onto" (p. 89). Discussion board threads from Edmodo were taken from the screen-capturing software program known as Jing. These threads gave detailed descriptions of the community building for the students when working with the civics content. With all three of these forms of data, I was then able to analyze the information and discern the

generalizations of how social networking, through the use of Edmodo, influenced the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students.

Interviews

Interviews were a very important means in which to collect data for the qualitative study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Due to the practicality of completing this study within the school district's framework of 45-minute periods, and the issue of transportation for middle school students, focus groups were the ideal method of conducting the interviews. Middle school students usually depend on the school bus for transportation home, or they depend upon their parents to pick them up late in the afternoon. Also, teachers are contractually allowed to leave after the school day has ended. As a result, conducting interviews after school was not an option. As mentioned earlier, a time that was convenient for the educators was set aside during their planning periods to interview them and student interviews were conducted during their lunch time, with lunch provided, therefore ensuring that instructional time was not disrupted. Merriam (2009) examined the benefits of focus groups when stating, "Thus, as with any other data collection method, focus groups are to be used when this is the best way to get the best data that addresses your research question" (p. 95). Because of the several intangibles involved with this study, the best methodology of interviewing both the adults and students was focus groups.

There are no steadfast rules for conducting a focus group interview. Merriam (2009) expounded this idea when writing, "Although there are no hard and fast rules about how many to include in a group, most writers suggest somewhere between six and ten participants, preferably people who are strangers to each other" (p. 94). The current study deviated from this recommendation in respect that there were not six to ten participants within each focus group. Instead, the focus groups varied between one and four participants depending upon if it was a

focus group of teachers or students. In addition, the participants were acquainted with each other instead of being strangers. However, even though the current study had some deviations from what Merriam suggested, it was still a prudent way to obtain important data. Patton (2002) described how advantageous focus group interviews can be when stating:

> Unlike a series of one-to-one interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. (p. 386)

Even though there is a possibility of getting a little more in-depth within one-to-one interviews, the practical aspects of the study dictated, and thereby concurred with Merriam's sentiment, that focus groups should be utilized.

The two civics teachers and the ESL consultation teacher involved in the study were interviewed focusing on their perception of the influence that the social networking platform Edmodo had on the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL civics students. Two separate interviews through two small focus groups of the civics teacher and ESL consultation teacher were provided for each case, one at the beginning of the study and one after the study was completed.

Also included in the interview process were the three to four students from each school's class who were Latino/Latina and qualified for the ESL support, therefore, bringing the total number of students interviewed to seven student participants. These students were interviewed within a small focus group exploring how Edmodo influenced their sense of community within

the content area of civics and how it assisted in helping them to collaborate, communicate, and critically think about various problems. Two separate interviews through small focus groups were provided for each case, one at the beginning of the study and one after the study was completed.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore and analyze the research questions to discover any connections with social networking and the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL civics students. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) described the importance and relevancy of the interview process. They stated, "The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees" (p. 314). In order to encompass these different aspects of the interviewing process, the interviewer must be flexible and willing to go where the interviewee is leading in the discourse. This flexibility adhered to exploring the meaning of life experiences and included questions that allowed the interviewee to feel comfortable with the process (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Price, 2001). Polkinghorne (2005) described the process of being flexible and exploring the beliefs and experiences of the interviewee as a "dialectic conversation" (p. 142). Polkinghorne stated, "The conversation consists of a give-and-take dialectic in which the interviewer follows the conversational threads opened up by the interviewee and guides the conversation toward producing a full account of the experience under investigation" (p. 142). As a result of the suggestions of DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), Polkinghorne (2005), and Price (2001), Table 3 outlined the questions that related to the research questions that were asked and investigated.

Questions 1-7 were used to help portray the initial picture before the study of how important collaboration, communication, and critical thinking as a team were for creating a sense

of community. Also, I wanted to obtain information of the teachers' and students' prior usage of

any social networking platform within an educational setting. However, I particularly wanted to

explore if the teachers and students had previously used Edmodo and what type of tasks they

accomplished if they had used it before. As mentioned earlier, the questions were included in

Table 3.

After using the program over a unit of study for civics, questions 8-14 were given to

analyze how Edmodo influenced the sense of community for the students. The questioning

provided a methodology of exploring the overall aspect of sense of community and then broke it

down into the smaller aspects of collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. These 14

questions were a great foundation on which to build upon for the focus group interviews. More

questions were added as it was necessarily deemed as the study and interviews occurred. Stake

(2010) stated that "With most groups I find eight to be about the right number of interpretive

questions for an hour" (p. 97). Because the middle schools in this particular Central Florida

school district are divided into 45-minute periods, including lunch time, dividing the questions

into seven before students used Edmodo and then utilizing the final seven for after they have

collaborated together as a community through Edmodo was an ideal amount of questions for

them to respond to. The flexibility to change questions and add them was important to explore

the sense of community by using a social networking platform. Stake (2010) suggested that this

flexibility is important "especially with interviews, but in surveys as well, we can sometimes

push respondents to sharper concentration by asking them to examine and respond to a specific

statement, a story, an artifact, a quotation, or some such" (p. 97). As the process continued, short

stories and other scenarios materialized that were utilized in the interview process.

As the interview process progressed, I used the software known as Audacity to record the focus group sessions with the two sets of civics teachers and the ESL consultation teacher and the two focus groups of students. The recordings were stored in a zipped folder and password protected to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Merriam (2009) stated, "Of the three basic ways to record interview data, the most common by far is to tape record the interview" (p. 109). This same principle was utilized by using a tablet with a microphone to digitally record the interviews similar to a tape recorder. With Merriam's second recommendation for recording interview information, I was also able to take notes during the sessions to record anything that was beneficial to the analysis of the data such as facial gestures, body language, and the general reactions to questions. As the researcher, I needed to consider the cultural differences and language barrier that existed between the students and me.

The body language and gestures that students exhibited were a result of anxiety from speaking to an adult of another ethnicity and language. The context of the situation was, therefore, considered when analyzing these transcripts later for categorical aggregation. To create accurate notes when transcribing these recorded sessions, I used what Merriam (2009) called "line numbering" in the margins to allow for quick access for referencing different aspects of the interview to analyze the data (p. 110). Merriam also suggested that the creation of the transcribed notes should include "a wide enough margin on the right-hand side of the pages for you to add notes or codes as you analyze the transcript" (p. 110). Appendix K provided a template of how the protocols were established for each focus group interview. The date, place, and focus group were listed and then the verbatim transcripts were provided. As suggested by Merriam, large margins to the right were used to assist in categorical aggregation and to establish patterns within the data.

Observations

Once the individual students per school were identified for the interviews, I observed them while using Edmodo for a unit of study within the civics content. These observations followed protocols as identified by expert researchers in the field of qualitative case studies (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). Similar to the interview protocols, the observation protocols were represented in Appendix L and allowed sufficient space to take notes, create maps of the classrooms, and to analyze the data. Stake (2010) stated about observations in that it is "The first responsibility of the observer is to know what is happening, to see it, to hear it, to try to make sense of it" (p. 94).

In order to accurately and richly portray the observations, an observation protocol was followed in order to take the field notes. Creswell (2013) stated that the protocol has a few essential elements that should be present when the researcher takes field notes. Creswell stated, "It has a header giving information about the observational session, and then includes a 'descriptive notes' section for recording a description of activities" (p. 169). Merriam (2009) expanded this definition by describing that "Field notes can come in many forms, but at the least they include descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments" (p. 137). These field notes provided a way to vividly and deeply describe and define the people and setting of the investigation. Accurate and richly developed notes were necessary for future researchers to be able to duplicate the study at hand. Merriam (2009) stated, "Field notes should be highly descriptive…By highly descriptive I mean that enough detail should be given that readers feel as if they are there, seeing what the observer sees" (p. 130). Not only should field notes be descriptive, but they should also be reflective (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Reflective comments are "on thoughts about the setting, people and activities" and "can include the

researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypothesis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 131). Both the descriptive and the reflective notes should not paint a picture with a lot of gray area that causes confusion, but instead as Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated, "Observers should strive to write field notes that are detailed and concrete, not vague and overgeneralized" (p. 281). Finally, in order to create an accurate portrayal of the observation, the researcher should include a visual description or diagram of the setting (Gall et al., 2007; Merriam, 2009).

While the students were using Edmodo to complete the unit of study for civics, I observed and took notes on what was occurring. Merriam (2009) emphasized the importance of these field notes when she stated, "Even if the researcher has been able to take detailed notes during an observation, it is imperative that full notes in a narrative format be written, typed, or dictated as soon after the observation as possible" (p. 129). General impressions of how easily the students were navigating the site and their overall comfort level of using the program to build a sense of community for learning was analyzed and noted. Stake (2010) also noted that because the main instrument of recording and observing what is occurring is the researcher, one is then able to adjust and "probe" the situation to garner a deeper understanding of the phenomenon which in this study would be the building of a sense of community (p. 91).

Because the study entailed two separate schools, I observed students in their respective classrooms using Edmodo at each school, thereby allowing for at least two separate observations. These observations assisted in supplementing the interviews and discussion board threads with rich, thick detail, thereby adhering to the structure of case studies as outlined by Stake (2010). Stake stated, "Most qualitative researchers prefer observation data-information that can be seen directly by the researcher or heard or felt-to other kinds" (p. 90). I observed how "engaged" they

were with the material and if they seemed to be responding well to their peers through what the

students posted on Edmodo to explore its influence on the sense of community among

Latino/Latina ESL students. The observations and interviews were announced to ensure that the

teachers had access to the iPads for those particular days. Each observation and focus group

interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, the length of a typical class period within a school

day.

Discussion Board Threads

Appendix M contained the full description of the discussion board threads that were used

to explore the sense of community via the use of Edmodo. An example of the two discussion

board threads included a requirement for students to evaluate and judge eight possible foreign

policy goals for the United States government. Students then described and posted on Edmodo

which of the eight were the two most important and why. In a second paragraph, students then

described why they chose the two least important policies. Students then responded to at least

two of their classmates through Edmodo. This activity was aligned not only with the district's

curriculum map but also with the Common Core standards in writing. These standards included

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1, "Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant

evidence," CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.4, "Produce clear and coherent writing in which the

development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience," and

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.5, "With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop

and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new

approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed" (National

Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2012).

For the second discussion board post, students read the graphic novel, *Happy Birthday: Feliz Cumpleaños*, from Remy, Patrick, Saffell, & Clayton (2013). This graphic novel compared the day in the life of a child in the United States and a child in Mexico. As previously discussed, this was an ideal resource to utilize due to its flexibility to use with Edmodo and its culturally relevant content. Students then wrote a paragraph on Edmodo discussing the following questions, "Should American companies who manufacture products in developing countries do more to prevent the exploitation of children?" and "Should they pay their adult employees a higher wage so that their employees' children do not have to work?" (Remy et al., 2013, p. 8). This activity was aligned with the Common Core standards that included CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.3, "Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events), and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.5, "Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2012). Both discussion board threads were relevant to the course, and thereby conducive to sustained discussion for students instead of posting and then forgetting about the material. Material that was relevant for the students increased the longevity of the discussion (Chan et al., 2009; So, 2009).

The discussion and interaction that the students provided for the discussion threads posted through Edmodo were used as data to better understand the influence of Edmodo on sense of community through collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. So (2009) stated that when using discussion board threads appropriately "asynchronous discussion forums can function as mediating tools to support reflective writing, critical thinking, argumentative reasoning and collaborative knowledge building (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994), which are all

important skills to be fostered for 21st-century learners" (p. 144). The goal of the analysis of these posts was to synthesize how students utilized the tool to help build a team or community within the blended virtual environment of Edmodo. How students collaborated, and then creatively worked together, to come to a solution to the problem was scrutinized to better understand if there was an influence of Edmodo, by utilizing the 21st century skills of communicating, collaborating, and critically thinking about a problem, on the sense of community. I looked for common themes from the discussion board threads and then, with the combination of the interviews and observation notes, made generalizations about the impact of Edmodo on the sense of community.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

Mining Data from Documents

Notes of the observations, transcripts of the pre-study and post-study focus group interviews, and discussion threads were used to code the results. Merriam (2009) described this as the process of "mining data from documents" (p. 139). This technique of qualitative analysis was very similar to a common approach in quantitative studies known as content analysis. Merriam (2009) stated that in qualitative studies, this approach looks for the "coding of raw data and the construction of categories" that are within various forms of data (p. 205). She continued by stating, "I have chosen the term document as the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (p. 139). Though some researchers may question the application of using discussion threads from Edmodo to discern the codes, Merriam stated that a medium such as a social networking could be utilized. She stated:

E-mail, listservs, newsgroups, chat rooms, wikis, blogs, and other interactive

environments allow people who have never met to encounter one another and even

establish relationships conducted primarily through online contacts. These interactions,

still somewhat ill-defined within our society, are of obvious interest to qualitative

researchers. (Merriam, 2009, p. 156)

Therefore, the codes garnered from the discussion threads were then used, along with the

interview transcripts and observation notes, to analyze for categories and patterns that enabled

me to identify the generalizations of the influence of Edmodo on students' sense of community

for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students.

Categorical Aggregation

Creswell (2013) defined categorical aggregation when stating, "The researcher seeks a

collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge" (p. 199).

This process was completed by analyzing the two sets of focus group interviews for the civics

teachers and ESL support teacher and the two sets of focus groups of students. First, categories

were analyzed from within each of the two cases. Common categories were then examined

between the various interviews or across cases to analyze and determine if the use of Edmodo as

a social networking tool does or does not have a direct influence on sense of community. This

process was important to me because it allowed for the opportunity to synthesize common

themes that emerged from both the interviews and discussion board threads by focusing on the

influence of Edmodo on students' sense of community to increase student learning through

collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

The within-case and cross-case analysis followed the constructs of case studies as

proposed by Yin (2009). Yin stated, "One possibility starts with the creation of word tables that

display the data from the individual cases according to some uniform framework" (p. 156). As the analysis of this study was conducted, I created a 2X2 table that contained the categories for each case. It looked similar to that of Figure 1.

	School A	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher		
Students		

Figure 1. Cross-case analysis of categories for the sense of community.

Yin (2009) stated that in using a chart, similar to that of Figure 1, was advantageous to the researcher because "In this way, the technique does not differ from other research syntheses—aggregating findings across a series of individual studies" (p. 156). Creating a word table assisted me in analyzing the categories, and to determine if there were any similarities or glaring differences that should be explored in more detail in future research. Yin (2009) stated that this in-depth analysis is interpretive and open for differing perspectives. He added, "An important caveat in conducting this kind of cross-case synthesis is that the examination of word tables for cross-case patterns will rely strongly on argumentative interpretation, not numeric tallies" (p. 160). Therefore, this cross-case analysis was essential in determining if Edmodo does have an impact or influence on the building of a sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students.

Establish Patterns

Creswell (2013) stated that the researcher uses the technique of establishing patterns to analyze data in case studies to "look for a correspondence between two or more

categories…showing the relationship between the two categories" (p. 199). For this study, the

inclusion of categorical aggregation was implemented to portray relationships between the focus

group interview transcripts, observation notes, and discussion board threads to analyze patterns

or connections to better understand if there was truly an influence for using Edmodo on students'

sense of community.

Yin (2009) described the establishing of patterns as "pattern matching" and defined it by

stating that "Such a logic (Trochim, 1989) compares an empirically based pattern with a

predicted one (or with several alternative predictions). If the patterns coincide, the results can

help a case study to strengthen its *internal validity*" (p. 136). This technique was important to

better visualize the patterns in what Creswell (2013) stated as a "2X2 table" (p. 199). The table

allowed for better understanding through a visual by graphically illustrating the connections

between the categories.

Naturalistic Generalizations

Creswell (2013) stated that by "analyzing the data, generalizations that people can learn

from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases" (p. 200) can be

synthesized. By analyzing the focus group interview transcripts, observation notes, and the

discussion board threads, it was my goal to be able to identify general applications of social

networking through Edmodo and its influence on students' sense of community through

collaboration, communication, and critical thinking to increase student learning. Yin (2009)

called the generalizations as "explanation building" (p. 141). He stated, "Here the goal is to

analyze the case study data by building an explanation about the case" (p. 141). Yin added to

this by stating, "To 'explain' a phenomenon is to stipulate a presumed set of causal links about it,

or 'how' or 'why' something happened" (p. 141). Therefore, by explaining the phenomenon and

discerning the generalities of this collective case study, together they assisted me in determining

if Edmodo was truly an effective tool to influence the sense of community for 7th grade

Latino/Latina ESL civics students.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is essential to qualitative studies because there is not a statistical backing

to verify findings and Merriam (2009) stated, "Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative

research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (p. 209). Therefore, the

researcher must provide in detail why the qualitative study is trustworthy. Trustworthiness can

be established through credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility was addressed through triangulation and peer reviews. The probability of

transferability was increased by the provision of describing the study through thick and rich

details. Finally, dependability was established through the examination of my bias and through

what Stake (2010) described as "progressive focusing" (p. 129). Merriam (2009) also stated that

"validity and reliability [trustworthiness] are concerns that can be approached through careful

attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed,

and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 210). Therefore, the

various aspects of trustworthiness will be briefly described.

Triangulation

According to Creswell (2013), this process allows the researcher to "make use of multiple

and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (p.

251). This process increased the reliability of the study because it allowed me to analyze

different individuals in the study to see if the evidence was consistent. This consistency was

scrutinized between the focus group interviews of the two sets of civics teachers and the ESL

consultation teacher, the two focus groups of three to four students each, the discussion thread posts between teachers and students, and finally among the observation notes. This optimized the study and made it more robust by triangulating the patterns, themes, and generalities. By analyzing these multiple sources of information, the results were in compliance with Merriam's (2009) discussion of Denzin's (1978) "four types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings" (p. 215).

Analyzing the data from several angles ensured that elusive themes or patterns did not go undetected. If the data were given only a cursory look, the researcher could overlook an important aspect of the study that needed to be clarified, expounded upon, or explored further. Stake (2010) stated that this careful analysis through triangulation is beneficial to the researcher even if the results are not what were anticipated. He stated, "If the additional checking confirms that we have seen it right, we win. If the additional checking does not confirm, it may mean that there are more meanings to unpack, another way of winning" (p. 124). Upon further analysis, instead of the results being contrary to the hypothesis of the study, it may mean that there simply are more intricacies to the phenomenon. Stake (2010) added, "Triangulation sometimes helps the researcher recognize that the situation is more complex than first realized" (p. 125). As a result, triangulation was important to my study to ensure robust results.

Peer Review and Member Checks

The technique of peer review allowed me to have what Creswell (2013) identified as an "external check" on the study (p. 251). This external check assisted me in determining if my generalizations and patterns were consistent and legitimate. Two peer reviewers were utilized,

and they identified other themes that I missed or critiqued my arguments that were not accurate, thereby making the study more reliable.

In addition, not only did outside reviewers analyze the information, but the two civics teachers, the ESL support teacher, and the seven students were allowed to review their focus group interview transcripts through a technique known as member checks. Stake (2010) described member checking as, "presenting a recording or draft copy of an observation or interview to the persons providing the information and asking for correction and comment" (p. 126). This allowed the participants an opportunity to make sure that the information being conveyed was both accurate and reflected their voice in the study instead of solely the voice of me. This accuracy was essential in conveying the correct information of the study. Stake (2010) suggested, "The researcher should persist in trying to get that confirmation or correction" (p. 127). As a result, between the peer reviews and member checks, the goal was to identify and eliminate any inaccuracies and irrelevant themes and ensured that participants' voices were portrayed instead of the researcher's voice.

Transferability

The methodology of the study, data collection, how the data was analyzed, the setting, and every aspect including the general description of the participants and the school setting will be discussed in-depth in the next chapter to provide a thick description. This description will allow other future researchers the opportunity and ability if they choose to replicate the study in a similar situation. Due to the thick description of the study, it allowed for credibility and the increase of transferability for the results.

Dependability

At the outset of the study, readers will know my position and possible bias in the study. As an educator who advocates blending technology in the classroom, the reader will know that I may have a tendency to see the positive and overlook the negative of technology such as Edmodo in a classroom setting. This is important for other researchers to know in case my own personal biases skewed the findings of this qualitative collective case study. This also assisted in building the trustworthiness of the current study. I have taught in the school district that will be the focus of this study for over 18 years. Also, I have taught the same content of civics that was the focus of the current study for three years between 2010 and 2013. However, of the two schools selected, I taught permanently in one of them from 1996-1999 and I never taught permanently at the other school, nor do I currently teach in those schools, thereby making the focus of the study more of an objective nature instead of a biased one.

The content area that I teach is Social Studies, and I have a specialist degree in Educational Technology. This study blended the two degrees together by utilizing Educational Technology through social networking (Edmodo) and the content area of civics to explore the phenomenon of students' sense of community in a virtual classroom. Also, through district workshops and district department meetings, there was a high probability that I personally knew the two civics teachers involved in the case study; however, the result was that I did not personally know either of them. This was mentioned because of the possible familiarity between me and the teachers participating in the case study, but this fact ended up not being a factor to the outcome of this study. Finally, due to the fact that I do not presently teach at the sample schools, I did have any type of association with the students involved in the study.

Progressive Focusing

Throughout the process of conducting the interviews, taking observation notes of the students using Edmodo in the classroom, analyzing the discussion threads, and cross analyzing the data of the two cases, I was consciously attentive to the details. All aspects of the study were considered and reconsidered. Stake (2010) described progressive focusing when suggesting, "That includes the growing knowledge of our research question, our methods, our sources of data, and whatever helps us with interpretation" (p. 129). These details helped in shaping and guiding my study as I continued to utilize the methodological approach for working through the various steps until the study's culmination. Stake stated, "The meanings of things need to be reconsidered all during the research" (p. 129). At the study's conclusion, an accurate portrayal of the 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students' experiences through a social constructivist setting of using Edmodo was analyzed and relayed to help further implement and utilize social networking platforms to building a sense of community. Stake concluded the idea of progressive focusing by stating, "In the end, pretty much, we tell the story that seems most meaningful to ourselves" (p. 131).

Ethical Considerations

Negative results could have impacted my relationship with colleagues of civics courses in the district. Therefore, I used pseudonyms for all participants and identifiable names. A second consideration that was dealt with was the issue of conducting a study with minors. Therefore, an assent form was provided for parents to read and to consider allowing their child to participate in the study free of any consequences if they elected not to participate. Due to the nature of the study, there was not a present physical or emotional danger for the participants. However, there was always the possibility that an adolescent student could have posted to the discussion thread

something hurtful or inappropriate. As the administrator of the Edmodo site for this study, I had

the capability to delete such posts and to address any unforeseen incident with the classroom

teacher. The teacher and school administration could have then administered the proper

jurisprudence needed for individual cases. Fortunately, this extreme did not apply to the study.

Finally, all transcripts were stored through password-coded files to prevent other people from

reading the responses of the participants.

Summary

This collective case study was conducted within a large Central Florida school district.

Two different middle schools volunteered to participate in the study. Three teachers (two civics

teachers and one ESL consultation teacher) and seven Latino/Latina ESL civics students within

the two schools also agreed to help with the study. The crux of the study focused on three

research questions to help explore the possibilities of the social networking system known as

Edmodo in influencing the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL civics students. Data for

this current study was obtained via three avenues. First, teachers and students participated in

pre-study interviews and post-study interviews. These interviews consisted of seven questions

each. Secondly, I then observed the seven students using Edmodo in the classroom to complete

activities in the civics content. The third method of obtaining data was by analyzing the various

discussion board threads that the students posted online via Edmodo. These three means of data

were then coded, categorized, analyzed for patterns, and then the generalities of the study were

ascertained.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Three discussed the methodology of the current study and how the data was obtained and analyzed. This chapter will focus upon the participants that agreed to assist with the study. The goal of this discussion is to paint a picture of the participants' personalities along with their interactions with Edmodo and their thoughts as to what extent the use of the social networking system influenced the sense of community. The civics teacher at School A is discussed first and then the two teachers at School B will be described. After the descriptions of the teachers, the four students at School A are described followed by the three students at School B.

Once the participants have been portrayed, the focus of this chapter will then shift to the results of the study. First, the method of analyzing the data will be discussed along with the charts that depict the categories for both sub-groups at School A and School B. Then, the figures that represent the cross-case analysis will be examined. These figures are very similar to a Venn diagram with some variation. Categories that are unique to each school are provided along with the categories that were present within both cases. Thirdly, figures of the taxonomy used to analyze the patterns are depicted. The taxonomy would prove to be very beneficial in establishing the four generalities of the study. Finally, the results of each research question will be analyzed with accompanying figures to visually explain the positive and negative attributes for each question. As a whole, it will be argued that though Edmodo was very beneficial in influencing the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students, it will also be clear that the results were inconclusive and further research needs to occur in the area of social networking and the students' sense of community.

Participants

Chapter Three included the demographics for the participants who agreed to assist with this study. The purpose of the following portion is to help create a rich picture of each participant to better understand their background and how it impacted the study. A description of each participant follows.

School A Teacher 1 (TA1)

The civics teacher at School A was a young, Caucasian male who was in his second year of teaching. At first, he was apprehensive of participating in the study because of his limited experience in the profession. After agreeing to participate, he then emailed me to withdraw from the study the week before it was to be conducted. However, he then changed his mind and agreed to go ahead and proceed with assisting with the research. Early in his pre-study interview, TA1 quickly addressed the issue of being a young teacher and following district guidelines. He was a professional who appeared to be one who wanted to please his superiors. In his interview, he stated:

> TA1: Currently, ummm… as a second year teacher, uhh.. I have not been able to use directly a social networking site. Uhh… It is something that I would like to eventually down the road. However, being faced with the curriculum map and on a time schedule, it is hard to fit in things like that. But, as best as possible. I think it is definitely be helpful, but just with the way it works it's hard, pressed for time.

This teacher was very concerned with abiding by the district's curriculum map and keeping pace. As a result, he wanted to ensure that his students met the standards and were prepared for the end of course exam later in the academic year. He was very practical and

concerned with the job that he was doing, teaching civics to 7th grade students. This was very evident in his pre-study interview when he stated:

> TA1: They have a right to vote, well a responsibility to be informed to vote. And, they have duties to obey the law. In seventh grade civics, it is hard to press on seventh graders the importance of government so early on when it doesn't mean anything to them. But, that's my job and that's the goal in mind. Uhh… It's, they are learning about it and I hope it's one of those things that they don't learn about and forget. They… need to understand, well I hope they understand, that without their voice in the future, that this American, and you said American democracy, will not continue.

School B Teacher 1 (TB1)

The civics teacher at School B was more experienced in the teaching profession than TA1. She was Caucasian and was concerned with making connections with her students of all ethnicities. TB1 stated that she has been an educator for 18 years with 16 of those years helping Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students. This concern was especially true for Latino/Latina students who qualified for ESL services. She reiterated on a few occasions in her interviews this concern of creating a connection or relationship with students of a different ethnicity and of a different language.

> TB1: Yes… umm… And I've told you about the big smile I always get the first time I tell them… in Spanish… to write your name here please… [*Later in the interview*] They feel like you care enough, almost, like you know… like okay here is somebody I… I am going to be able to relate to.

The civics teacher was very jovial in the interviews and provided quite a bit of laughter when answering the interview questions. In regard to the research, she took a laissez-faire

approach to the task at hand. Originally designed, this study would have had the civics teacher take the lead role in implementing the activities with the ESL teacher serving as a support role in assisting the ESL students with completing the different portions of the study. In this case, TB1 basically passed the baton to TB2 and allowed her to complete the activities with the students.

School B Teacher 2 (TB2)

The second teacher involved with the study at School B was the ESL consultation teacher. She was in her early thirties and of Latina descent like many of her students. TB2 indicated that she had been an educator for eight years. Because of her common heritage and her position, she took the role similar to what Good et al. (2010) described in their research of the Latino/Latina community expecting teachers to become the child's parent at school. TB2 was the consummate professional and truly cared for her students by becoming the students' parent away from home. This was evident when she stated that she was trying to go above and beyond her classroom duties by learning Portuguese to better connect with one of her students. She stated:

> TB2: Or, right now I have even… uhh… I am trying to learn a little bit of Portuguese because I have a student with Portuguese background. So, it, it is… you make that connection. Bringing in that text or that example from their own country. So they can compare it to what's here. So, I think… basically… it gives them the reassurance that you as a teacher care for them.

Throughout the interviews and observations, TB2 translated between Spanish and English for me and the two students who spoke only Spanish. She made sure that the students understood clearly the questions and that they could input on the discussion board threads of

Edmodo their original thoughts by helping them translate from Spanish into English. A perfect example of this assistance is as follows:

> TB2: Yes…. It depends on the problem. Can we give him an example so I can…
>
> PI: Go ahead… That is fine.
>
> TB2: Okay… *TB2 proceeds to give an example in Spanish. SB3 answers in Spanish. TB2 then translates the answer of SB3 back into English.* So, the example that I gave him… If I give you a task in math, I gave you a problem to solve, is it really important that you communicate with you friends to try and solve this problem, or not? He said yes that it is really important because if I don't communicate my thoughts on how to solve this problem, we will not achieve an answer as a group.

School A Student 1 (SA1)

When preparing for this study and researching the existing literature, it was very apparent that the role of gender could be an important factor in how well a sense of community could be established for Latino/Latina ESL students in a middle school classroom. Researchers such as Rovai (2001), Chiessi et al. (2010), and Kenyon and Carter (2011) described how differently male and female students may respond and how sometimes it may be academically and socially challenging for male students. As a result, my intended desire for the study was to have approximately an equal representation between the two genders. This reality did not transpire, and SA1 ended up being the only 7th grade female Latina ESL student to participate. Surprisingly, the opposite of what was thought of to be true when entering the study was to anticipate having more female students than male. Instead, only one female student participated.

This student was a very quiet student with me and did not interact with me during the interviews. When she did respond, it was to her fellow classmates for the majority of the time

and this was usually in Spanish. There were several instances while interviewing the focus group that SA1 interacted with the other three male students by addressing them in Spanish. In the pre-study interview, she stated that she was originally from the Dominican Republic. Even though she was somewhat shy around me as the researcher, it could be easily perceived that SA1 was very popular with the other students in her class while observing her class when they were using Edmodo.

School A Student 2 (SA2)

The second student that volunteered for the study was a 7th grade Latino male who was small in physical stature as compared to other adolescent males his age. He mentioned that he and his family were from Puerto Rico. With SA1, he arrived first to the pre-study interview and was very quiet. For most of the interviews, he sat in the background and intently listened to his classmates respond to the questions. After perusing the transcripts, he had very limited interactions or responses to the interview questions or discussion board threads. When responding to the discussion board threads, he was correcting other students' behaviors by telling them to stop playing. However, he would then post smiley faces on Edmodo and not focus on the question to be answered in the activity. The discussion threads revealed this interaction of being off-task within the classroom observation and discussion board threads.

School A Student 3 (SA3)

The third student from School A was very extroverted in nature compared to many of the students in the study. In the pre-study interview, SA3 stated that like the other boys from School A, he was also of Puerto Rican heritage and his family had moved to the United States. He seemed to be very comfortable relating to other students and to adults. When he entered the room, he definitely took the lead and had the respect of the other students. His physical

appearance was one that would remind one of a young football player much like a linebacker. He had very broad shoulders and appeared to be somewhat athletic. Not only did he have the appearance of an athlete, he also exuded confidence and was not afraid to interact with me. At one point in the interview, I was asking the students a question and he responded with the following:

> PI: Okay… Alright, the next question. In your opinion, how important is it for students to be able to communicate to feel accepted as a member of a group?
>
> SA3: You ask hard questions.

In the post-study interview, SA3 was not shy or hesitant about asking for assistance in understanding the question. Similar to the pre-study interaction above, the interaction occurred as follows:

> PI: Okay, okay. Alright, your next question. As a middle school student who is a speaker of English as your second language, please describe how Edmodo increased or decreased your engagement with classwork? So, how did Edmodo help you increase your engagement with classwork or how did it help decrease?
>
> SA3: Can you be more specific?

Because of his outgoing nature, he was a very delightful young man to work with while completing this study.

School A Student 4 (SA4)

The last student in the study from School A initially walked in at the same time for the pre-study interview as SA3. This duo would remain in place throughout the research. Similar in stature to SA2, SA4 was smaller in physical appearance as compared to other 7th grade students. In the pre-study interview, he indicated that he, too, was from Puerto Rico. His personality was

one that was also outgoing, and he fed off the interactions with SA3. Together, they provided

the most detail about the study for School A. An example of this dependency on each other and

being very open to communicate with me is as follows:

PI: How did Edmodo make you feel like part of the group or team? And, if so, how? How

did it make you feel a part of the group or team? And, if so how? Go ahead…

SA2: Because to learn how to ask questions to your friends. Like when you can ask a

question, you can write to them on it. On Edmodo.

SA3: You can ummmm… you can like… If you don't understand… you can ask ques…

like if it is hard, you can ask to other students or you can ask a teacher…by that website.

PI: Okay…

SA3: Or, you can help your friends to… help with a problem.

PI: Okay… You can help with friends. Do you want to add anything? *SA4 shrugs no.* No,

okay, that's fine.

SA1: It can help you out with ummm work. You can ask other friends through Edmodo.

PI: So you can ask other friends within Edmodo with your questions.

SA1: Yes.

PI: Okay… Go ahead…

SA4: Ummm… You can study. Like if you have a test you can study and on Edmodo you

can with a friend at home.

PI: Okay… You can at home through Edmodo? *SA4 indicates yes but not verbally.*

Have any of you done any follow up work on Edmodo at home?

SA3: I study through Edmodo for language arts at home.

PI: Your language arts you use Edmodo…

SA3: Yeah… *SA4 also indicates yes…*

School B Student 1 (SB1)

School B had only 7th grade male students who participated. SB1 indicated in the pre-study interview that he was born in the United States but had lived for two years in Puerto Rico. After this two year period, his family then moved back to Florida. Unlike the other two students at School B, SB1 could speak and write English and did not depend on a translator for the study. He was very polite and was willing to assist when possible with translating for the other two students. This job of translating did not go well, but his willingness to do so portrayed his pleasant personality. For example, at one point in the interview the following occurred: *SB1 translates the question for SB3. The translation without the teacher does not go well. So, I resorted finishing the other two questions with SB1 and then finish the three questions with SB2 and SB3 when TB2 returned.* SB1 completed all of the activities for this study and was very compliant and pleasant to work in completing the tasks.

School B Student 2 (SB2)

The last two students in the study were non-English speakers and needed TB2 to translate for them throughout the study. SB2 was again a very pleasant and polite young man to work with and indicated that he was originally from Puerto Rico. When TB2 translated the questions for him into Spanish and when TB2 would prompt him for more information, he provided some very in-depth answers to the questions. Probably because of the language barrier, SB2 was somewhat shy and reserved in the interviews but added some great insight into what he thought about Edmodo and social networking in developing or building a sense of community. Two examples follow portraying his responses. The first response occurred in the pre-study interview and focused on civics:

TB2: It is important… it is important. Why, why is it important? *SB2 responds with a longer answer. TB2 then translates it into English.* Okay, okay… if you don't know the government, how would you know what to do if you are outside in the streets? If you are out and you do not know how to react or how to act?

The second example focused on using Edmodo in collaborating with other students. TB2 translated for SB2 and then responded in English for him. This response came from the post-study interview:

TB2 translates again for SB2. SB2 asks for clarification. TB2 repeats the question for him. SB2 responds a little at a time and TB2 translates.

TB2: I had to read what others had written and read the birthday ummm…. novel. *SB2 then continues to answer.* And then respond. And then put together what some, what others thought and what I thought. I had to compare.

School B Student 3 (SB3)

Similar to SB2, SB3 was originally from Puerto Rico and was a non-English speaker. He relied on TB2 to translate for him and to assist him in typing his answers in Edmodo. TB2 worked with both SB2 and SB3 by writing particular words that both students wanted to know in English on a notepad so they could input them on the discussion board threads. SB3 was a tall, slender young man with a very kind and polite personality. As the study progressed and he became more comfortable with me, he opened up a little more and did not depend on TB2 100% of the time. A very interesting incident occurred during the post-study interview that made me wonder if a part of the translating was a guard or personal barrier erected by SB3 to help him feel safe in academic situations. A brief synopsis of the situation is as follows:

At this point, TB2 had to let her next class into the room. The recording was paused for a moment to allow the students in. During this period, a very curious thing occurred. While the PI was waiting, SB3 looked at me and asked if this was a computer. He pointed to my tablet and was very curious about it. I stated that it was a tablet that ran Windows 8.1 and he was very enamored by it and talked in plain English. When TB2 returned, I then restated that last question to restart the interview.

As can be seen, as soon as TB2 reentered the room to assist, SB3 went right back to depending on the translating to complete the interview. He completed the tasks along with the other two students from School B and added more detailed information in the discussion board threads.

Results

The first step in the process of analyzing if Edmodo influenced the sense of community for Latino/Latina civics students was to carefully read the transcripts. Within this process, I then coded the transcripts and then numbered the occurrences that each code appeared within each data source. Appendix O depicts the codes identified for each data source and then the number of times that code was denoted in the analysis. Figure 2 depicts the categories that were deduced from the number of occurrences of the codes and synthesizing similar codes into one general category for each of the pre-study interviews for both schools and subgroups for each case.

	School A	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher	• Role of the Teacher • Role of the Student • Cultural Influence • Citizenship and the American Government • Sense of Community/ZPD • Content Relevancy	• Social Networking • Sense of Community/ZPD • Role of Language • Cultural Influence • Role of the Teacher • Role of the Student • Citizenship and the American Government
Students	• Cultural Influence • Social Networking and Technological Barriers • Sense of Community/ZPD • Citizenship and the American Government • Role of Language	• Role of Language • Social Networking • Cultural Influence • Sense of Community/ZPD • Role of the Teacher • Content Relevancy • Citizenship and the American Government

Figure 2. Categories from within each case for the pre-study interviews.

A similar process was used for creating the categories for each case for the observations. The observations did not produce as many codes and categories as the interviews. The end result was very compelling in distinguishing the theoretical application of Edmodo in building a sense of community as compared to the practical application when contrasting the interviews and observations respectively. Figure 3 portrays these categories for the observations.

School A	School B
• Role of the Teacher	• Role of the Teacher
• Social Networking/Collaboration	• Social Networking
• Sense of Community/ZPD	• Role of Language
• Barriers	• Sense of Community/ZPD
• Novelty Affect	• Content Relevancy
• Cultural Influence	• Cultural Influence

Figure 3. Categories from within each case for the observations.

Finally, Figure 4 and Figure 5 display the same synthesis process of creating categories from the codes for both the discussion board threads for both activities and the post-study interviews with both schools and subgroups, respectively. Those categories that were ascertained from the codes in Appendix O are identified in Figures 4 and 5.

School A	School B
• Social Networking	• Social Networking
• Content Relevancy	• Content Relevancy
• Lack of Student Engagement	• Citizenship and the American Government
• ZPD/Questioning	• Sense of Community
	• Cultural Influence
	• Critical Thinking

Figure 4. Categories from within each case for the Edmodo thread discussions.

	School A	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher	• Deficiencies of Edmodo • Content Relevancy and Accessibility • Teacher Efficacy • Sense of Community/ZPD • Use of Edmodo for Reading • Technical Barriers • Role of Language/Vocabulary Acquisition • Use of Technology • Social Networking/Collaboration • Blended Learning	• Sense of Community • Social Networking • Vocabulary Acquisition • Role of the Teacher • Student Engagement • Cultural Influence • Blended Learning • Technical Barriers • Deficiencies of Edmodo • Content Relevancy • Use of Technology • Longevity
Students	• Social Networking • Sense of Community/ZPD • Academic Achievement • Parent Involvement • Role of Language/Vocabulary Acquisition • Role of the Teacher • Blended Learning • Exaggerated Role of Technology	• Role of Language/Vocabulary Acquisition • Sense of Community/ZPD • Social Networking • Increased Student Engagement/Self-Esteem • Reading • Blended Learning • Content Relevancy • Distractions

Figure 5. Categories from within each case for the post-study interviews.

After analyzing the codes for categories within each case, the next step in the process was to then complete a cross-case analysis of each data source between the two schools. This produced a chart similar to the one alluded to earlier by Creswell (2013). The final product of each pre-study interview, observation, discussion board thread, and post-study interview resulted in a variation of a Venn diagram. The charts that were created for the pre/post-study interviews differed from those created for the observation and discussion board thread because it was naturally conducive to depict each subgroup of the study (Teachers and Students) for both cases as compared to just portraying each case for the observations and discussion board threads. Figures 6-9 illustrate the cross-case analysis for both cases by showing the different categories for each case and then the similar categories. They are as follows:

	School A	Both	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher	• Content Relevancy	• Role of the Teacher • Role of the Student • Cultural Influence • Citizenship and the American Government • Sense of Community/ZPD	• Social Networking • Role of Language
Students	• Technological Barriers	• Cultural Influence • Social Networking • Sense of Community/ZPD • Citizenship and the American Government • Role of Language	• Role of the Teacher • Content Relevancy

Figure 6. Cross-case analysis of the pre-study interviews.

School A	Both	School B
• Barriers • Novelty Affect	• Role of the Teacher • Social Networking/Collaboration • Sense of Community/ZPD • Cultural Influence	• Role of Language • Content Relevancy

Figure 7. Cross-case analysis for the observations.

School A	Both	School B
• Lack of Student Engagement	• Social Networking • Content Relevancy • Sense of Community/ZPD	• Citizenship and the American Government • Cultural Influence • Critical Thinking

Figure 8. Cross-case analysis for the Edmodo discussion threads.

	School A	Both	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher	• Content Accessibility • Teacher Efficacy • Use of Edmodo for Reading • Role of Language	• Deficiencies of Edmodo • Content Relevancy • Sense of Community • Technical Barriers • Vocabulary Acquisition • Use of Technology • Social Networking/Collaboration • Blended Learning	• Role of the Teacher • Student Engagement • Cultural Influence • Longevity
Students	• Academic Achievement • Parent Involvement • Role of the Teacher • Exaggerated Role of Technology	• Social Networking • Sense of Community/ZPD • Role of Language/Vocabulary Acquisition • Blended Learning	• Increased Student Engagement/ Self-Esteem • Reading • Content Relevancy • Distractions

Figure 9: Cross-case Analysis for the Post-study Interviews

Once the patterns were established and analyzed, the last step in the analytical process to determine if Edmodo could influence sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina civics students was to carefully discern any generalizations from the study. In order to accomplish this task, a taxonomy or hierarchy of the patterns was created. From this taxonomy, I was able to delineate the overall themes or generalizations for this study. To explain this taxonomy, Figure 10 depicts the overall patterns of how the patterns were placed within the hierarchy. Then to clearly examine how each pattern was placed within the taxonomy, Figure 11 transposed the individual patterns and listed them within the overall general graph of Figure 10.
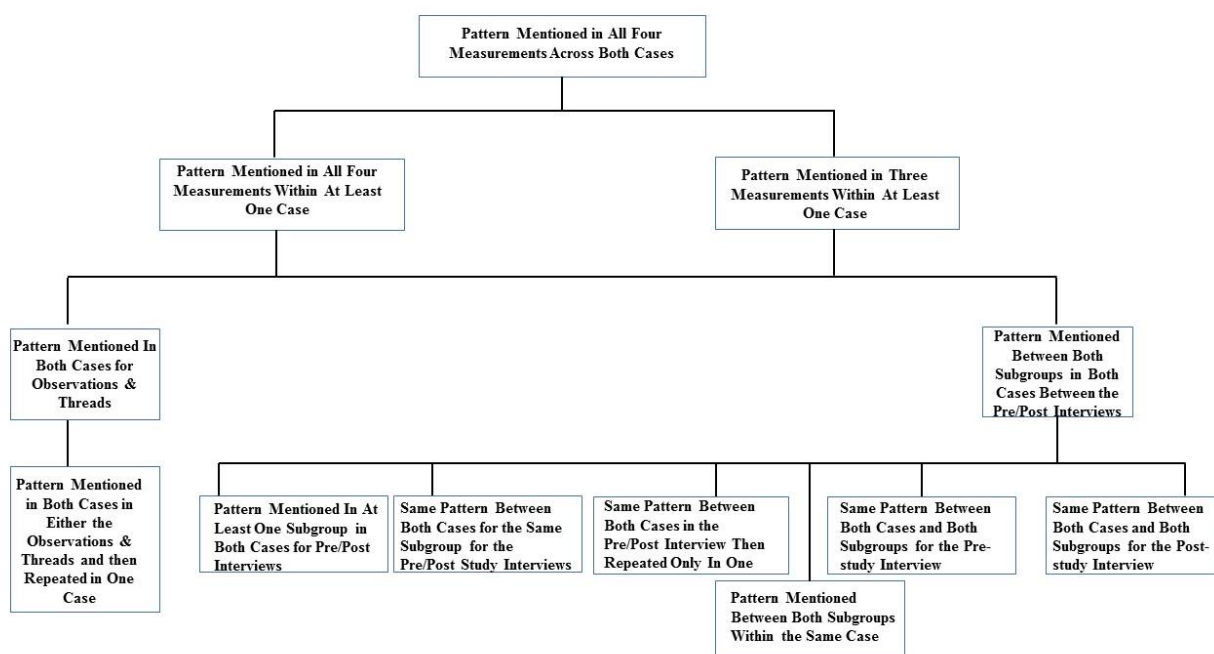
Figure 10. General terms of the taxonomy of patterns.
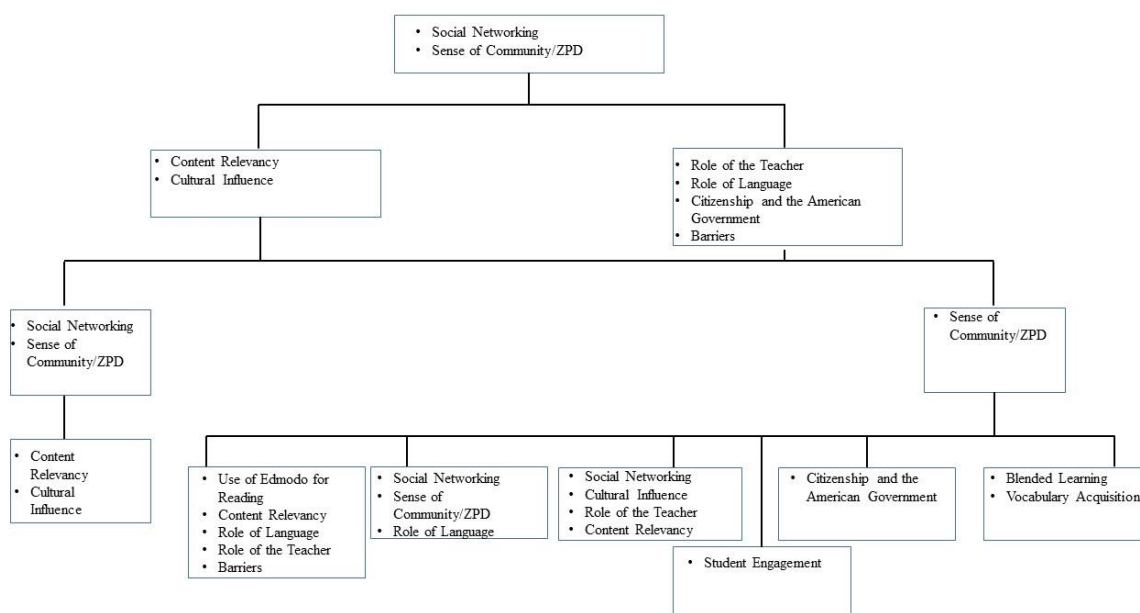
Figure 11. Individual patterns within the taxonomy.

After carefully examining these patterns, the study was broken down into four generalizations. These included Sense of Community/ZPD, Social Networking, Content Relevancy, and Cultural Influence. For the remainder of this study, these four generalizations will be discussed in greater detail. Many of the other underlying patterns will fall within some of these generalizations and will also be included to richly describe how they impacted these four main themes of the study. These generalizations will be examined by analyzing how the participants interacted with Edmodo in order to create a sense of community within the civics classroom.

Four main themes or generalities emerged while analyzing the data sources and eventually synthesizing the information. Other themes were prevalent and helped to support the four main generalities of the study. The two generalities of sense of community/ZPD and social networking that were garnered from the analysis were present in all four data sources (pre-study interview, observations, discussion board threads, and post-study interviews) across both cases.

The other two generalities of content relevancy and cultural influence were also in all four sources, but they were only prevalent in one of the two cases. Combined, the four generalities assisted in answering and filling the gap for the three research questions. The following will examine the four generalities of sense of community/ZPD, social networking, content relevancy, and cultural influence and how they answered the questions. The theme of sense of community/ZPD was very useful in answering the first research question while social networking provided some illumination of the second research question. Together, content relevancy and cultural influence assisted in answering the final research question. In Figure 12, I took the dominant part of the taxonomy as represented in Figure 10 and Figure 11 and combined them to assist in focusing on the four themes that prevailed in the study. When analyzing the figure, it can be discerned that it consisted of the top two tiers of the taxonomy and eliminated the right portion of the second tier. As a result, the second tier with two of the generalizations only depicted the left side and omitted the right portion with the patterns that were present across only three of the data sources. These four generalities are depicted Figure 12.
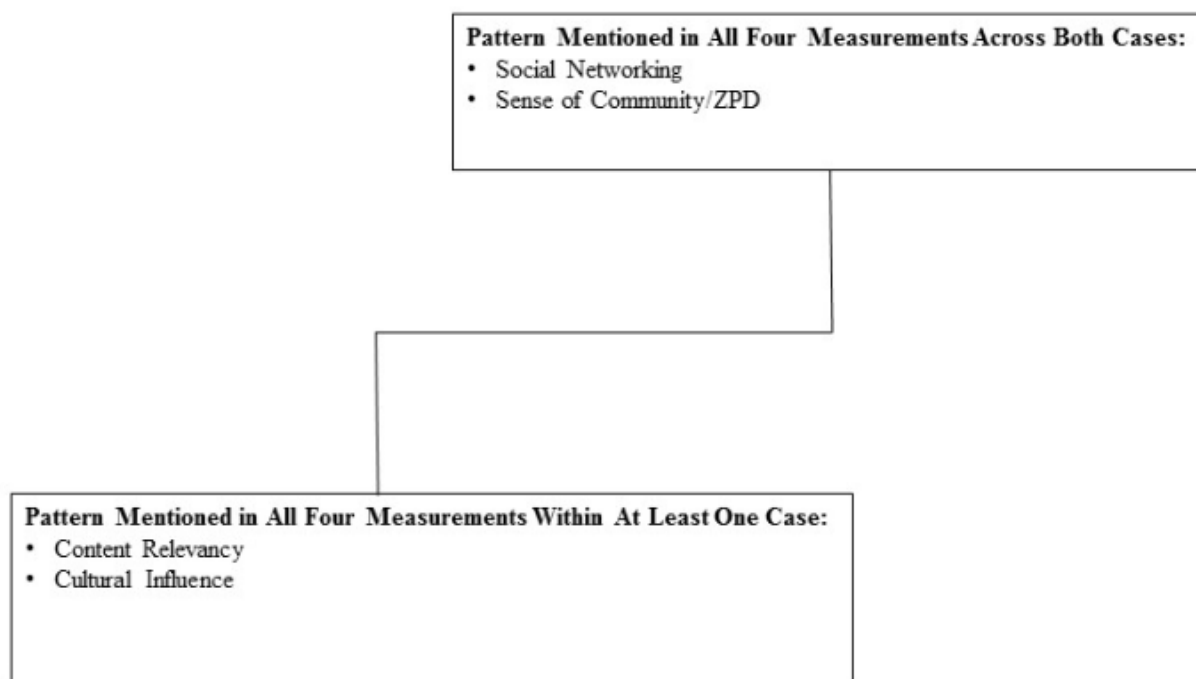
Figure 12. Adaptation of the taxonomy to reveal the generalities.

Research Question 1

The first research question derived from the literature was, "How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics?" The hypothesis going into the study was that Edmodo would influence the sense of community for students. Unfortunately, after completing the analysis, the results were inconclusive without a definitive answer to the question. There were several positive attributes that would definitely lean toward Edmodo creating a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students. Among these positive attributes were the fostering of ZPD in the classroom, an increase in student motivation, increased student self-esteem, feeling included in the group, and a venue for asking questions and clarification. However, there were also some negative attributes that could be taken otherwise and therefore were not definitive in clarifying the picture of a social networking platform assisting in creating a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL

middle school students. These negative aspects included the perception of the lack of a sense of

community, mixed reactions among the participants, and the perspective that the building of

SOC was not necessarily important. Figure 13 provides a visual depiction of the positive and

negative attributes of the research focusing on if Edmodo could influence the development of

SOC for Latino/Latina 7th grade ESL civics students.
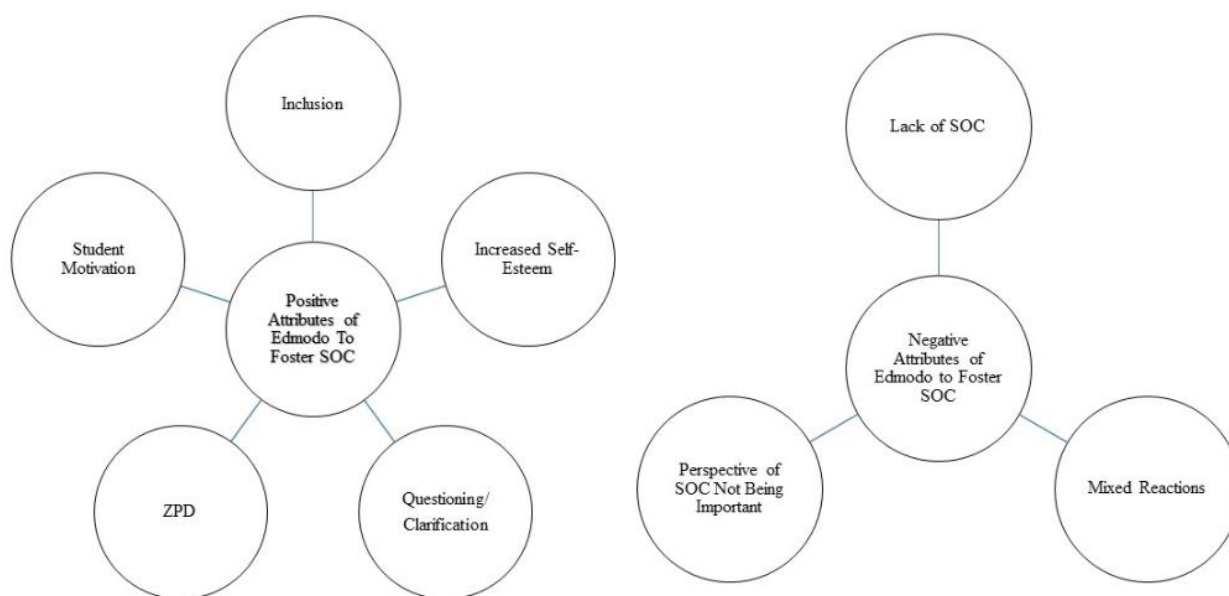
Figure 13. Positive/negative attributes of Edmodo in developing SOC.

In this study, there were some instances that definitely leaned in a positive direction for

answering the first research question. The encouragement of creating a sense of community

through the zone of proximal development was accomplished both within the teacher-to-student

and student-to-student interactions via a social networking platform. For School B, the sense of

a team existed within this study. There were several instances that exemplified this

characteristic. For example, during the observation of the Edmodo activity that occurred at

School B, the relationships that were growing between TB2, SB2, and SB3 were very evident

even when the teacher had to attend to other students. These two students were able to continue

working because of the assistance that TB2 had left in place for them to succeed with the

Edmodo activity. I noted:

At 1:15, TB2 left SB2 and SB3 to talk to the other seven students in the room. She left a

translator open on an iPad for SB2 and SB3 to use in case they had a question of what an

English word meant.

At 1:25, TB2 rejoined SB2 and SB3 to translate the two activity questions. TB2 then

explained to SB2 and SB3 what it meant for American corporations to have factories in

other countries in order to have cheaper labor costs.

As mentioned earlier, TB2 watched and assisted her three students very closely to ensure

their overall success. Not only had she created this encouraging atmosphere for learning by

leaving tools such as translators open for the students to use, she also assisted them and

prompted them in the interviews and activities. The students at School B responded by stating

that Edmodo did help create a sense of community:

TB2 translates the question into Spanish for SB2. SB2 responds to the question in

Spanish and TB2 then translates his answer.

TB2: Okay, it did make me feel like a part of the group. *TB2 then asks again in Spanish*

for clarification of his answer. SB2 responds. When we had to read the questions and

answer them, *SB2 then continued to answer in Spanish,* we had to read what others had

written, and why they had written that and then answer.

Later in the same post-study interview, SB3 stated that he liked using Edmodo and that it made

him feel a part of the team.

SB3: Okay, it made me feel a part of the team. *TB2 then asked for more detail in Spanish. He gave a longer response and then TB2 translated it into English.* Because when I saw what other people had posted, I like them. I like the posts.

Two important aspects of creating a sense of community in this current study was motivation and feeling included in the group. The civics teacher at School A pointed out in his pre-study interview that students need to feel included in the group to be motivated to work. He stated:

TAI: Uhh… Greatly important. It… It's important for me not to kind of push out the like almost… not push out, not have the students feel pushed out. Especially, socially because if they are pushed out and they feel like they can't…. I don't know…join in with other students. There's no motivation, there's no progression of feeling the need to continue what you are doing, to have that belonging in class.

This motivation was created by being included or belonging to a group. In this study, the method that was used for students to feel they belonged was the use of the social networking platform known as Edmodo. Both teachers TB1 and TB2 agreed with TA1 that students needed to feel they belong in order to be productive. The two teachers stated:

TB1: Well, very much so. Even if they are not understanding the language, they need to be at least able to feel included.

TB2: I feel the same way. I think that it is extremely important for students to feel a part of the group. When they feel a part of the group, that's, their success becomes a part of the group's success.

Once students felt they belonged, their self-esteem or confidence grew. With this increased sense of self-efficacy, students were then more willing and eager to contribute to the

discussion and problem solving. By using the social networking system of Edmodo, it allowed students to work within the ZPD and gain confidence in their work. In the observation of SB1 using Edmodo, this increased self-awareness and growth in self-esteem was very obvious. I stated during the observation:

> SB1 asked for clarification for Question 2. After telling him the meaning of the question, he was emphatic about his answer. He then started typing. Then, he replied to the second question. After this was accomplished, he then jumped in and tried to reply to what other students from School A had posted for this activity. SB1 was very intent on answering the questions.

The final positive characteristic that surfaced during the analysis of Edmodo influencing the sense of community was the ability to seek clarification and to make inquiries with their teachers and other classmates. Students at School A stated that they enjoyed using social networking via Edmodo to help ask questions and to increase their understanding of assignments and classwork. SA3 described this characteristic when he stated: "You can ummmm… you can like… If you don't understand… you can ask ques… like if it is hard, you can ask to other students or you can ask a teacher…by that website." SA1 reiterated this point when he stated, "It can allow you to ask questions in class, it can let you ask others questions."

Creating an atmosphere within the blended learning environment of the classroom and the utilization of Edmodo appeared to be successful in creating a sense of community for most of the participants involved. Edmodo allowed a vehicle for increasing student motivation in working and making them feel they belonged to a group by increasing their self-esteem and allowing for a soundboard to ask questions to clarify the content. However, not all of the participants believed that Edmodo could or did create a sense of community. Because of this

aspect, the findings or results for the first research question are inconclusive. There were many

positive aspects of implementing Edmodo in the classroom to create a sense of community, but

there were also some drawbacks. For example, student SB2 stated that he did not need a social

networking platform to feel he was a part of a community or group. He stated:

> TB2: *Addresses SB2 for his response. She translates the question and I can hear the*
>
> *word "Facebook" in the question.*
>
> SB2: Yeah….
>
> TB2: He doesn't believe that he needs the Facebook or any social network to feel a part
>
> of the group.

The civics teacher at School A concurred with SB2. He bluntly, and without hesitation, stated

that Edmodo did not create a sense of community for his students when he said:

> TA1: Honestly, no at the time. Especially with those two activities…. Uhhh… They…
>
> were fairly lost with that, with Edmodo. I like the idea… the only thing that would make
>
> it like a team, I like the idea of setting the documents on it, they can click on it, go to it,
>
> read it, ummm… But… it just… it didn't seem to have that team exercise to it. They
>
> needed combined together. To do the activity together kind of thing, they worked
>
> individually, if they had to. But, overall, if there had to be something individual then it
>
> would probably be great.

The two teachers that participated at School B exemplified the confusion of a clear and

definite answer to the first research question. TB2, who was more involved with the activities

and working with the students, believed that Edmodo did accomplish the goal of creating a sense

of community for the students. However, TB1, who took a more laissez-faire approach to the

study, had an unclear view of Edmodo's influence on the sense of community. During the post-study interview, TB1 and TB2 stated:

>PI: Thank you again to both of you and I appreciate your time and all your efforts in making this successful. I appreciate it. The first question…. In your opinion, do you think Edmodo allowed the students to feel like a part of a team?
>
>TB2: In my case, yes. I still have where they are planning on reading other students' comments as they were posted on each of the assignments.
>
>TB1: They didn't even mention it to me. So, I can't address that.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "How does Edmodo influence the development of a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students through the collaborative and communicative aspects of the social networking program?" As compared to the first research question, the results of the second question were more definitive. The analysis revealed many positive results that supported the second research question. These positive results for the communicative characteristics included language, student feelings, translating information, feedback, and a communication venue for parents. The positive results for the collaboration characteristics included real life applications, better understanding, various perspectives, and content specific material. Even though there were many positive aspects, a few minor results that had negative aspects were present. These negative aspects included the needs of introverted students, content specific aspects, and student interaction. Figure 14 represents the positive and negative aspects of the second research question. The positive aspects of the collaborative characteristics of Edmodo will be discussed first, followed by those of the communicative characteristics and the few negative aspects.

	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Collaborative Characteristics	• Better Understanding of the Content • Compare Ideas Asynchronously • Multiple Perspectives • Future Job Skills	• Introverted Students May Not Want to Reply • Lack of Student Interaction • Content Dependent
Communicative Characteristics	• Communicate Feelings • Increased Vocabulary • Feedback • Communicate with Parents	

Figure 14. Positive and negative aspects of the communicative and collaborative characteristics.

Between the pre-study interviews, post-study interviews, observations, and the discussion board threads, many positive attributes emerged supporting the ideology that the collaborative aspects of the social networking system, Edmodo, assisted in influencing the development of SOC for ESL students. First, the study revealed that by using Edmodo, students gained a better understanding of the content by working together through the SNS. To illustrate this point, the conversation between TB1 and TB2 at School B and me confirmed this idea.

PI: Okay… Third question… In your opinion, how important is it for students to collaborate together on a common problem or issue to feel as a member of the group?

TB2: I believe that when they collaborate together, they get ummm…

TB1: A greater result, a greater understanding…

TB2: Mmmm hmmm… A better understanding, a better result in their task. I think that their language, they communicate better, and they might even teach other at that point when the teacher is not present in the groups.

By working together, students could continue moving forward with the material even when the teacher was not by their side to assist them. Instead, by creating this sense of community and working as a team, students themselves helped to foster the idea of ZPD and continued to assist each other with learning the new material. SA3 and SA4 at School A reiterated this point when they stated:

SA4: If you are confused, you can go on Edmodo and post something…

PI: Okay…

SA3: It helps me because I get to spend more time on it in class… So like, I can use it. I can work more on it and learn more.

PI: Sort of on your own time? Is that what you mean?

SA3: Yeah…

With this increased understanding and growing sense of community, students from the two different schools were able to compare their answers and responses even though they were not attending the same class. This asynchronous setting allowed them to increase their understanding of the material by comparing their ideas through the social networking system of Edmodo. SB2 portrayed this aspect in the post-study interview and then in the same interview, SB3 reiterated this point later when they both stated:

PI: Okay, very good. The next question…. In your opinion, how did Edmodo help you work with other classmates?

TB2 translates again for SB2. SB2 asks for clarification. TB2 repeats the question for him. SB2 responds a little at a time and TB2 translates.

TB2: I had to read what others had written and read the birthday ummm…. novel. *SB2*

then continues to answer. And then respond. And then put together what some, what

others thought and what I thought. I had to compare.

Later in the interview…

SB3: Okay, so so because, because we were from different schools, I could see what they

were commenting. If it was the same thing that we were doing here, and by their posts

we could see, I could see if it was the same or if it was different or how they did explain

it.

Through collaborating via Edmodo, students were able to interact with each other about

an issue in civics and analyze it from multiple perspectives. As the teachers involved discussed,

this interaction allowed the students to use technological skills that will be necessary in the

future workforce. TB1 and TB2 illustrated this when they stated:

TB2: And also, it is something that we are trying to train our students to do because we

want them to be team workers in their real life. Once they leave school, they need to be

able to collaborate with somebody else in a workspace.

TB1: Mmmm hmmm…

TB2: So, we are trying to make group work extremely important and collaboration even

more important for them. That they are part of the group and they are responsible for

something in that group.

TB1: Exactly, give them the group work and group responsibility, but individual as well.

TA1 agreed with the two teachers at School B. By putting them in groups, students could look at

a problem from multiple perspectives. TA1 stated:

TA1: I like that because you can get different perspectives of each student. Uhh… If you

make a group and you have them work on a common problem, such as right now we are

talking about rights and responsibilities of a citizen. When you start talking about

responsibilities, it is the things that you should do. Well, if you ask all the students things

that you should do, one person's perspective may be different.

Both of these discourses from the teachers were from the pre-study interviews. During and after

the study occurred, this aspect of collaboration came to fruition for the students. For example,

students from School B responded in agreement with what the students from School A had

posted earlier on the same civics topic. After the assignment was completed, the discussion did

not end. Instead, the students at School B continued the discourse with TB2 even though it was

not posted online. The analysis of different perspectives went beyond the virtual walls of

Edmodo and allowed the students to grow. TB2 stated:

TB2: Well, actually kids were reading *laughter…* the comments and they were like "why

would they say that?" and "What does that mean?" And they were interacting a lot with

what they were seeing in Edmodo and not only on what they responded, but what others

were responding as well.

TA1 stated that after completing the activities with his students, one of the positive

elements of collaborating through Edmodo to create a sense of community was the advantage of

making content specific documents for civics readily accessible to students. This accessibility

allowed the collaboration to be enhanced and advantageous for students to collaborate. He

commented:

TA1: Very well… Umm… If I could, myself, involve it with the students more… I, like

I was saying, I liked how you can add certain documents on it and they can talk to each

other. That was really cool. They didn't do the team thing as much because… umm… they just could not delve deeper into what each other was saying. But, that was really neat. But just the fact that with civics, you can add documents on there, they can talk to each other, they can look at a document, respond. And, if they had to, with the proper training, after maybe a couple of units of practice, or more practice with it, then they could kind of work together, respond to each other.

The collaborative part of building a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL civics students was only one aspect to this research question. Communication between the students was the second part that was also investigated. Similar to the collaborative aspect, the communicative one revealed several positive characteristics for using Edmodo again making the results for the second research question more definitive than the first. Students were able to communicate their feelings through the use of Edmodo, and it allowed students who are naturally introverted to participate and to voice their opinions. As a result, Edmodo helped increase the sense of community by serving as a sounding board for students who normally do not participate in class activities to respond to the civics content via the discussion board threads of the SNS. The interaction between TB2 and SB1 and me illustrated this important aspect of Edmodo:

PI: Okay, very good. In your opinion, how did Edmodo help you to communicate with other classmates?

SB1: Because I am usually shy. But, now I am not.

PI: Okay.

TB2: Can you express, can you express things better when you are writing than talking? So, did Edmodo help you express better in writing?

SB1: Mmm hmmm…. *Indicating yes.*

Not only did communicating with other students via Edmodo help them to evaluate and consider each other's feelings, it also helped them with vocabulary. Because this study focused on Latino/Latina ESL students, the language barrier could hinder the success of the students in understanding the content. Edmodo assisted in tearing down this barrier and increasing student learning. The students at School A reiterated this idea when they stated:

PI: How important is it to communicate with each other in order to feel a part of the group?

SA4: It is important because you can remember it longer.

PI: Okay… remember it longer. Anything else?

SA1: Yes, you can find like, (voice becomes inaudible for a moment)… I've got this though.

SA4: You can learn like, ummm…, if you speak, ummm… that language, you can translate it.

PI: Translate? Okay… Very good.

SA1: Yeah.

The teachers at School B agreed with this assessment of communicating and helping each other. The teacher stated:

TB1: I think that goes right back to the other question. I think it is very critical for them. It raises their understanding, it increases their self-esteem; their language knowledge improves. Because they have to understand the vocabulary that goes into that problem. And, by sitting with other people, that helps that vocabulary…

This was a very important part of the communicative aspect of Edmodo, especially for ESL students.

Two other positive attributes of the communicative portion of Edmodo in creating a sense of community included feedback and communication with parents. The first attribute was not surprising, but the second one was not anticipated. Students were the primary focus of the study in creating a sense of community, but it was the students at School A that discussed how Edmodo assisted with keeping their parents notified of what occurred in the classroom when they stated:

PI: Okay… Very good. Very good. Ok, next question. In your opinion, how did Edmodo help you work with other classmates?

SA1: That if you forget something, you can go on Edmodo… and you can… get information.

PI: Okay…

SA2: If you have homework, you didn't write it down, you can like go onto Edmodo and see what homework.

PI: So, so it sort of serves as a reminder of what you need?

SA2: Yeah…

PI: Okay…

SA4: And one of the advantages of Edmodo is parents can look…

PI: So, communication with your parents? Not just with each other.

SA4: Mmmm hmmm… *Indicating yes.*

Together, the collaborative and communicative aspects of Edmodo assisted in creating a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students. As stated, there were several different facets that created a positive experience. However, there were a few negative attributes that were mainly identified by TA1 and TB1. TA1 contradicted what SB1 stated earlier in regards to

introverted students. TA1 stated that instead of a social networking program like Edmodo

helping with introverted students to participate, they may not want to respond when he said:

TA1: The other way would be again, if they don't learn well in groups or in social

aspects, or social kinds of communication, because I have students like that who read

better by themselves than they do out loud. And, that's just the case for some, not

everyone, but that's why in some cases when I do group activities I let them pick their

group. They pick their own groups, maybe they want to learn by themselves, maybe they

work better with each other. It's just one of those things. I can go on… I guess uhh…

The civics teacher at School B commented on the lack of collaboration and communication for

her class. Instead, she stated:

TB1: I didn't…. I didn't really have much interaction with them while they were on

there. So…

PI: Okay.

TB1: Actually, she (TB2) handled it. *Laughter…* She handled it well.

The students for TB1 stated that the interaction through Edmodo depended on the content

and specific task at hand. If it was a project or content area that was conducive for interaction

through Edmodo, then they would prefer to use it. However, this was not always true. The

students stated:

SB3: Responds to the question to TB2 and states that it all depends. *TB2 asks SB3 in*

Spanish to give more detail. SB3 responds with about a 15-second response to the

question. TB2 translates it as Okay… it will all depend on the subject. He says that if it

would be science, then he would rather work on his own. But, if it was math, then he

would rather work with a group.

PI: Okay…

TB2 then translates the question again in Spanish and directs to SB2. SB2 then responds to the question with about the same time frame as SB3. TB2 responds in Spanish for clarification.

TB2 translates for SB2: So, again, it will depend on the project that they had to do.

PI: Okay… Depends on the project.

TB2: It depends on the project, depends on the subject. *TB2 asks the student a question in Spanish and then in English…* Do you think that it is important to collaborate at school?

SB1: It depends on, if it is a research project where we have to research a lot as a group to find out, but if it is a written project I wouldn't want it.

Because of the contradiction concerning introverted students, lack of interaction for TB1, and the idea of interacting based on content specific problems or projects, the results for research question two were not completely conclusive, even though the positive attributes far outweighed the negative attributes.

Research Question 3

The third and final research question focused on "How does Edmodo influence student engagement with the content material for Latino/Latina ESL middle school students?" Of the three questions explored in this study, this question had the most definitive conclusion that Edmodo influenced student engagement. Through the utilization of Edmodo, student engagement increased. Figure 15 illustrates the positive aspects of how Edmodo influenced student engagement as compared to only one negative characteristic. With only one negative

aspect that was revealed in the various sources of data, the positive attributes heavily outweighed the negative. As mentioned, this led to the clearest evidence of the three research questions.

Positive Attributes of Edmodo Influencing Student Engagement	Negative Attributes of Edmodo Influencing Student Engagement

• Increased Engagement
 	
    o Increased Learning
 	
    o Varied Pace
 	
    o Increased Reading in the Content
 	
• Culturally Connected
 	
    o Cultural Perspectives
 	
• Content Relevant
 	
• Culturally Sensitive
 	
• Future Employment
	• Distractions of the iPad's Camera Option

Figure 15. Positive and negative attributes of Edmodo influencing student engagement.

Two important factors that related to this increased engagement centered on two of the generalities that emerged from the data. These two generalities were cultural influence and content relevancy. As depicted in Figure 12, the multiple variations of the patterns concerning culture could be addressed by one generality, cultural influence. Therefore, when analyzing the data, these variations were then condensed into the one generality. Both sub-groups of teachers and students identified before the study and then reiterated again after the study that Edmodo influenced student engagement. One of the main contributors for Edmodo to have a positive impact on student engagement was that it provided a change in pace and variety to the classroom activities. Edmodo was another tool that the teachers at both schools used to diversify their

pedagogy in the classroom by providing content that was relevant to the students. In the post-study interview with TA1, he stated:

> TA1: *Sigh…* Ummm… Again, I would have to say increased. Because, when it was lesson focused, they did still socialize with each other. They still kind of worked together in a way just because it wasn't necessarily on the iPad, but they worked together outside in the classroom. Hey, I wrote this or something. In other words, certain students were talking about the lesson, who were responding to it, and did slightly respond to what each other were saying. So, I would say if anything, a moderate increase for engagement, especially because there was that different…. You know….
>
> PI: Okay…
>
> TA1: Change of pace in the class.

As a result, not only did Edmodo impact the change of pace within the four walls of the classroom, but it impacted the student conversation outside of it and encouraged an ongoing dialogue of the relevant content of the lesson.

When this ongoing conversation persists and student engagement increases, the positive result is that it could impact student learning in a positive way. Not only did Edmodo influence student engagement and sense of community as shown by the evidence from both cases, but it also assisted in student achievement both synchronously in the classroom and asynchronously outside of the classroom. The students at School A stated in their post-study interview:

> SA4: If you are confused, you can go on Edmodo and post something…
>
> PI: Okay…
>
> SA3: It helps me because I get to spend more time on it in class… So like, I can use it. I can work more on it and learn more.

PI: Sort of on your own time? Is that what you mean?

SA3: Yeah…

By increasing engagement and students interacting with each other and their teachers about relevant content via Edmodo, the evidence portrayed how the seven ESL middle school students took more responsibility for their learning. The teachers at School B described this advantage of utilizing relevant content with Edmodo in the post-study interview when TB2 stated:

TB2: The more the students, it's hands-on with their education that will be better, they will have learned it. If they were able to be really uhhh be the owners of their own education, then I think, I think that's what technology does. It gives the opportunity to the students to be able to get their hands on what they really want to learn. So, as long as they are engaged and they are participating actively in their communities, technology, Edmodo, then yes it will help them increase their learning.

Earlier in the same interview, TB2 also stated:

TB2: I think that it did increase because when we would have students, we would be more interactive and have students umm use Edmodo as umm a learning tool and not only for social interaction. And, with kids that are so with technology, they are eager to get their hands into something so they can find it, post it. So, for me it would increase engagement.

The students also concurred with this assessment. By using Edmodo, it increased their engagement and the need to read the material carefully. Student SB2 stated in the student post-study interview:

TB2 then translates the question into Spanish for SB2. SB2 began answering the question in segments as TB2 translated the answer for him.

SB2: I was more attentive than the past in Edmodo because when I was reading, it was important and then I had to remember everything so I can answer correctly.

PI: Okay. As the unit continued over the course of a few weeks, please describe how the use of Edmodo caused your engagement in the class to increase, stay the same, or decrease.

TB2: Okay… *TB2 then began to translate the question into Spanish for SB2. SB2 answered and TB2 translated it back into English.*

SB2: Okay, I think that Edmodo can help me increase my engagement in class. *Pause…. TB2 asks, "Okay? Yes?"*

SB2: Yeah…

To attract students to use Edmodo in the civics classroom, teachers need to make sure that the content is relevant and that it connects to and is sensitive to the students' culture. The research of Becerra (2012) and Journell and Castro (2011) alluded to the fact that if students do not perceive that the material is pertinent to their everyday lives, then they will not be motivated to learn the material. On the other hand, if the material is compelling and students do see an advantage for learning it, the engagement will only naturally increase. Making content relevant to students and making it pertinent to the influence of their own culture to increase engagement was evidenced in the interaction between TB1, TB2, and SB2 in the pre-study interview. The group stated:

TB1: That is so hard to do in civics. *Laughter… SB2 then begins to talk more in Spanish about this topic.*

TB2: Okay, SB2 is giving me the example that in his civics class with TB1, she's explaining what the government is. She's using examples for him to understand.

TB1: But they are not necessarily from his culture.

TB2: The examples that you are giving them, it is…

As seen in this interaction, not only was the content relevant, it was culturally appropriate as suggested by Journell and Castro. Students could connect with the content and therefore engage in the activities. TA1 agreed with this ideology. He stated in his pre-study interview that he likes to find opportunities to compare other countries to the United States and how the governments are similar and different. When doing this, he would use the students' countries of origin when possible, thereby using the influence of the students' cultural background. He stated:

TA1: So, I would like to compare it that way. In the sense that, okay, this is where other countries got the idea. Or, this is where we got the idea. And, compare them that way instead of well we follow this, they follow that. Or, give an article, they'll be related a little bit more in my opinion to what their country's doing. But, again, this is U.S. history, or U.S. government, a history of United States government. So, that's my focal point. As much as possible. And, we can incorporate it, that would be great.

The teachers at School B concurred with TA1. They stated that by allowing the students to post things on Edmodo and to respond to each other helps them engage with the material. Again, this increased engagement that is culturally sensitive assisted the students with taking ownership of their learning. TB1 and TB2 stated in the post-study interview:

TB1: Civics is difficult even for our English speaking students, and to have no background in it… *pause…* magnifies that 100-fold. It really does.

PI: Okay.

TB2: I think that if we have the opportunity to ummm explain as a whole class and then have them respond to that in Edmodo. *A cell phone begins ringing in the office, TB2 continues answering the question…* Then I think it would be a better, a better setting. But just give it to them on their own….

The second activity that students responded to on Edmodo took this into account. It was an activity that was culturally sensitive to the Latino/Latina heritage and included a very timely and relevant topic and setting that focused on child labor in Mexico. Students could identify with the material because of the influence of their own culture, thereby making it meaningful to them. TB1 and TB2 stated the following about this particular activity:

TB2: It was culturally, it was culturally sensitive, absolutely. When after we were done, they ummm came up to me and they talked about it. And, they even reflect on it. Linguistically, well we have the barrier, the barrier of the language in there. But ummm, culturally, yes they could pretty much relate to all of this that was happening where "I know somebody who has gone through this exact thing" *relating to the story about child labor in Mexico.*

By creating content and activities that were relevant to students and that are culturally sensitive, another positive attribute occurred. Students at School A stated in the pre-study interview that it could help with future employment. By working together, students stated that they can learn the necessary skills and language to work in America. The students stated:

SA3: Ummm… Like, you can learn new things. You can learn new things. You can learn how to change things and how they act.

PI: Okay… So, what do you mean by changing things?

SA3: Like, umm…, your language. How do get a job here. School, a job of what you are

going to be.

PI: Okay, like new opportunities then?

SA3: Mmm hmmm (indicating yes).

There was one negative aspect that appeared while analyzing the data sources. In the

interviews, students and the teachers stated that Edmodo did increase student engagement at both

School A and School B. However, after closer examination, some of the students were not

completely engrossed in the activities and were off-task. This was definitely witnessed during

the observation at School A. Because students were using iPads to access Edmodo, they were

taking advantages of many of the other technological features. Several times during the

observation, I noted: "During this time, SA3 was on the camera option of iPad taking pictures of

his fellow classmates instead of logging into Edmodo." The teacher at School A identified and

addressed these distractions during his post-study interview. He stated:

TA1: If I had to make an observation… uhhh… as far as accessing the Edmodo, it was a

little… and I think the lesson could have gone a lot smoother without… Kind of the…

setting them up…. And I don't know if it was because it was on iPads or if it would have

been easier on the computers… that could have been it…

This was the one negative aspect that was prevalent during the observations and was discerned

during the analysis. However, even though this negative persisted, the evidence of the positive

aspects of having relevant content and culturally sensitive material as suggested by Journell and

Castro (2011) allowed students to be more engaged with civics by using Edmodo.

As has been seen in previous figures, and as has been discussed, the results for the third

research question were more robust than the previous two research questions. However, there is

one aspect of the results that should not detract from the findings but must be honestly discussed. The theme or generalization that assisted in answering each of the first two research questions were mentioned in all four measurements and across both cases. In contrast, even though there were nine positive results and only one negative characteristic for the third research question, both generalizations of content relevancy and cultural influence were mentioned in at least three of the measurements of the pre-study interviews, observations, discussion threads, and post-study interviews for one case instead of all four measurements across both cases. As a result, Figure 12 depicted that these two generalizations were on the next tier down from sense of community/ZPD and social networking. Analyzing Figures 6 – 9, revealed that content relevancy was mentioned in all four measurements for School B but only in three measurements instead of four for School A. Cultural influence was once again mentioned in all four measurements for School B, but only in two measurements for School A. Even though both generalizations were not in all four measurements across both cases, the overwhelming positive attributes thereby make the findings of the final research question more definitive than the previous two research questions.

Summary

After coding the transcripts, observations, and discussion threads and then analyzing them for patterns, themes, and eventually generalizations, the gap in the literature was partially filled. Research question one focused on the sense of community, and the analysis revealed that the zone of proximal development was fostered by the teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction. With this fostering of ZPD, student motivation increased along with a growing sense of self-esteem. Research question two then turned to the element of social networking via using Edmodo and focusing on the communicative and collaborative characteristics. Students were

allowed to compare their dialogue not only within the classroom but to collaborate with another

school to perceive different perspectives of the same issue. Also, the second question uncovered

the aspect that Edmodo could be a useful tool to communicate with parents, provide feedback to

students, and to increase their academic vocabulary. This last aspect was very important for

Latino/Latina ESL students. Finally, research question three analyzed how Edmodo influenced

student engagement especially through relevant content and being culturally sensitive and

focused. Increased student engagement led to increased student learning and more time reading

the content. All of these were very positive attributes of how Edmodo could influence the sense

of community for ESL middle school students in civics. However, there were some drawbacks

or negative attributes such as being off task that led to the final analysis that the overall results of

this case study were inconclusive. In the next chapter, a closer examination of the theoretical

application and the practical application will be discussed along with implications and

suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose and goal of this collective case study was to explore if the phenomenon of sense of community could be influenced by the social networking program, Edmodo, for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students. This investigation was accomplished through the assistance of two middle schools within a large district of Central Florida. In this final chapter, a brief summary of each of the three research questions will be reviewed followed by a discussion of how the study related to previous research. Implications of how the results applied theoretically, empirically, and practically will then be examined. Also, even though this study tried to fill in the gap in literature concerning social networking and the sense of community, there were several limitations that prevented this expanse to be completely covered. Finally, this chapter will discuss future recommendations for other researchers to consider and then two takeaways of the study will be discussed to complete this study.

Summary of Findings

After interviewing both students and teachers, observing the use of Edmodo within the classroom at both schools, and analyzing the discussion board threads via Edmodo, four generalities emerged. They included sense of community/ZPD, social networking, content relevancy, and cultural influence. The analysis of the data for the research questions revealed these generalities. Research question one focused on sense of community, research question two centered on social networking, and the last question dealt with content relevancy and cultural influence.

The first research question investigated, "How does the social networking system, Edmodo, influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students in 7th grade civics?"

By scrutinizing the data, there were several positive results that were discerned for this question. First, the evidence of the case study suggested that Edmodo could be very useful in creating a sense of community for ESL students when there is a strong teacher presence to ensure that the zone of proximal development is fostered. This fostering of ZPD then led to students being motivated to work in the content material of civics and to feel included in the group. The final positive result that was revealed was that with assistance of each other and the teacher, along with the feeling of belonging to the group, students' self-esteem strengthened. They were willing to comment and participate in the activities because of this growing confidence. However, the final results were not definitive because of some contradictory or negative aspects that deemed the results as being inconclusive. The civics teacher at School A (TA1) stated that he did not believe that Edmodo created a team or a sense of community for his students. While observing the actual use of Edmodo in the classroom and analyzing the discussion threads, this sentiment appeared to be true. At School B, the consensus was mixed between the two teachers. The civics teacher (TB1) did not feel like it necessarily created a community whereas the ESL consultation teacher (TB2) stated that she believed that it did. The final deduction for this first question was that it could not clearly be answered; therefore, the results remained inconclusive.

After a somewhat disappointing analysis of the first research question, the second research question provided stronger results. This question explored, "How does Edmodo influence the development of a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students through the collaborative and communicative aspects of the social networking platform?" By working together and communicating between each other and between the different schools, the evidence suggested that the students gained a better understanding of the material and appreciated each other's different perspectives of the same topic. Examining the various perspectives allowed the

students to explore different issues from alternate angles or views. This was clearly stated in an

earlier example by the second teacher at School B (TB2) when she indicated that her students

wondered why other students would state what they did on the discussion board. Other positive

results of the collaborative and communicative aspects of Edmodo allowed students to express

their feelings and to examine these feelings of fellow classmates. Also, communicating and

working together allowed students to increase their vocabulary, thereby assisting with their

language acquisition. The evidence of the case study revealed that this was especially true for

the second and third students at School B (SB2 and SB3). Parents could also take advantage of

the asynchronous characteristics of Edmodo and keep up-to-date with what had transpired in the

classroom. This was a surprising positive element of the communication portion of Edmodo.

Even though the second research question had more clarity than the first, there were still

a few negative traits after reviewing the data and evidence of the study. First, the interaction was

somewhat limited in the activities. Students did not necessarily respond completely to the

discussion prompts as was hoped for at the outset of the study. In addition, the content of the

Edmodo activities was not completely aligned with what was occurring in the civics classroom

due to the pacing guide of the district. The final results were better than the first but still

somewhat inconclusive in nature.

The third and final research question focused on exploring, "How does Edmodo influence

student engagement with the content material for Latino/Latina ESL middle school students?"

Of the three research questions, this last one had the strongest conclusions to support the

hypothesis that Edmodo does influence student engagement. Even though the practical aspect of

students being distracted by the technological devices detracted from the results, the rest of the

evidence was very compelling. If the content of the activities was relevant and sensitive to the

students' culture, and if it was relevant to their schooling and future, then students were very likely to participate in the activities via Edmodo. It could then be argued that Edmodo does increase student engagement.

Previously mentioned in Chapter Four, the two generalities of content relevancy and cultural influence were mentioned in at least three of the measurements within one case instead of in all four measurements across both cases. The reason both themes were found in only one case for all four measurements is probably because of the smaller environment of School B that help foster a stronger sense of community. The ESL consultation teacher at School B was of Latina heritage and she worked diligently to work with the three students at School B to ensure their success in the activities. The significance of content relevancy was important in three of the measurements across both cases with this theme only being identified during the observation at School B. Cultural influence was important within both cases in the pre-study interviews and during the observation. However, cultural influence could only be identified at School B for the discussion threads and post-study interviews. Again, this was largely due to the fostering of the zone of proximal development for School B with a 3:1 student to teacher ratio. It could reasonably be speculated that School A would have had similar results and the two themes would have been present in all four measurements if the civics teacher at School A could have had the assistance of the school's ESL consultation teacher. With an advocate present to support the students at School A, a better environment would have existed to help foster a stronger sense of community for the Latino/Latina ESL students. Instead of a 3:1 student to teacher ratio, the civics teacher and the students at School A were trying to accomplish the activities in a 25:1 ratio. As a result, the goal became more of completing the task and moving on with content relevancy and cultural influence being lost in the activities.

Discussion

Technology rapidly changes over time. Students enjoy using the technology in the classroom to learn the content material. However, because of the rapid change, sound pedagogy should be the goal of the educator not just the device or platform itself. The principles that were used in this study through Edmodo could and probably will be used by other platforms and means in the future. Already, I have seen a paradigm shift in popularity from using MySpace to using Facebook for social networking. For the field of education, the growing popular choice of social networking has been Edmodo (Nee, 2014). Nee explained the appeal of Edmodo to educators by stating, "It [Edmodo] is specially built for the teachers and students for them to use in the classroom. Edmodo is more secure if compared to 'Facebook' and 'Twitter'" (p. 73). Caution must be used when creating activities for students to participate with social networking platforms like Edmodo to help build a sense of community. As Liu and Chen (2010) stated in their research, educators must provide activities and lesson materials that are culturally relevant and sensitive. There must be a purpose to the means. Journell and Castro (2011) agreed with this sentiment and reiterated the importance of providing culturally relevant material. This current study tried to approach this important aspect by providing activities that Latino/Latina ESL middle school students could identify and relate to when responding to the discussion threads.

Along with purpose and relevant material, Latino/Latina ESL students need the extra support to help them overcome additional academic barriers that other students do not face. Educators must be cognizant of what students are capable of completing on their own. These abilities can vary by student and by the stage of development similar to what Piaget (2008) identified. On their own, the activities of this study would have been very challenging and with

very limited results for the students. This coincided with Vygotsky (1978) and his idea of the actual development level. ESL students would have and did have difficulty responding properly in an academic methodology to the discussion board prompts. TB2 stated in her post-study interview:

>PI: Okay. Ummmm…. Thinking about the activity that I observed the other day with them, *Pause…* Especially for the non-speakers,

>TB2: Mmmm hmmmm…..

>PI: that you have, do you think they could have of *pause…* finish that activity on their own?

>TB2: *Emphatically…* No. They need that teacher's support. Especially my non-speakers, my non-speakers need that reinforcement. Even though I have the means to give them a translator, and I know that they do the same in the civics class, there is also a lack of background knowledge, not only in the language, but the topic itself.

Vygotsky (1978) went on to state that students perform at a higher level when they receive assistance from others. In this case study, students received assistance mainly from the teacher and then minimally from other classmates. When students work and build knowledge with other people assisting, Vygotsky referred to this phenomenon as the zone of proximal development or ZPD. The observations and discussion board threads clearly illustrated the difference between students performing within their actual development level and ZPD. Students at School A struggled to complete the activities with appropriate and academic results while the students working with TB2 at School B were able to give more in-depth responses. The methodologies of a strong social constructivist classroom as advocated by Vygotsky and also by Allanson (2013) were clearly illustrated in the contrasts between the two cases. This allowed students at School

B to feel as part of the group with each other and with students at School A. However, the transcripts revealed that the students at School A did not replicate these same feelings towards the students at School B.

Chapter Four analyzed the results as depicted in the taxonomy of the four main themes revealed in the study that included sense of community, social networking, content relevancy, and cultural sensitivity and relevancy. There were other factors that played important roles in supplementing the four main findings. Before discussing the implications of this study, three major supporting aspects will be discussed as they related to previous researchers. The role of language, the role of the teacher, and citizenship and the American government will be analyzed.

Role of Language

With the advent of the high-stakes testing for civics in the state of Florida, Latino/Latina ESL students, along with every 7th grade civics student in the state, will be pressured to perform at a higher standard than was expected in the past in order to matriculate to the high school level. A big difference between ESL students and other students is the language barrier that exists in their learning. As examined earlier, Becerra (2012) stated that these language barriers translate into academic barriers preventing ESL students from performing to their maximum capabilities. Becerra also examined, through surveys, the relationship of the Latino/Latina community with school personnel in America. The results garnered revealed that this community believed that there were stereotypes of Latino/Latina students that persisted among many professional teachers. In a social constructivist classroom as described by Vygotsky (1978), the teacher should be there to help create a nurturing environment within the classroom. This nurturing environment then can lead to what Rovai (2001) described as the sense of community.

Even though the role of language can hinder the academic achievement of students, there were some positive aspects concerning language that appeared in this study. Balakrishnan and Claiborne (2012) stated that language is key to student performance and academic achievement. Once ESL students can overcome this barrier, they are bound to succeed and gain confidence in their work. To help students accomplish this goal, Gutierrez-Clellen et al. (2012) stated that students need to be exposed more to language to overcome the barrier. In this case study, Latino/Latina ESL students needed to be exposed to the English language in order to succeed. Teachers at both schools agreed with this ideology that students needed to be exposed more to the English language, and they concurred that Edmodo did an excellent job in accomplishing this goal. In his post-study interview, TA1 stated:

> TA1: *Sigh....* Uhh… Because it presented them, I would say helpful. Because it presented them with the new content. It… presented them with using those words in their responses. So, they had to show a little bit of evidence, or some evidence at all. And… they had to be forced read it, they were forced to open the document, to look at these stories and respond to it based off of what it was asking. So… I would say, yeah… helpful. Just kind of helped them work together with those vocab words.

From a hands-on practical point of view, the events analyzed during the observation at School B depicted this idea of Edmodo enhancing students' vocabulary through the activity that they were engaged with each other. TB2, SB2, and SB3 specifically utilized the translator and working together to understand key concepts to complete the activity. After completing the activities, both TB1 and TB2 agreed that not only could Edmodo be implemented to help create a sense of community but it could also be used to increase vocabulary in the content. With this increased

vocabulary, ESL students can overcome the barriers as mentioned by Becerra (2012). The two teachers stated in their post-study interview:

> TB2: Vocabulary, of course it can increase vocabulary. Ummm…. in again another tool that we can, that we can use for students umm to make achievement. Not only they can engage in vocabulary, *TB2 was interrupted by a student that walked into the office. TB2 and TB1 asked the student to please leave the room.*
>
> TB1: Not just studying the vocabulary, but the concepts. You know, it's another way for them to be exposed to the concepts and have another explanation. You know, then also, seeking help from peers is much less intimidating than seeking help from Miss. You know. And, and they really enjoyed it. It gives them that excuse to interact too.
> *Laughter…*

Initially going into the study, the whole original intent was to examine to see if Edmodo could influence and help shape the sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students. A surprising and unexpected positive outcome was that Edmodo could be used to help reduce the language barrier. Both students and the teachers that assisted them agreed that Edmodo was a useful tool with vocabulary acquisition. Using Edmodo to promote a sense of community or team can lead to beneficial characteristics later in the lives of the students. TB1 and TB2 exhorted this point when alluding to preparing students for the future workforce when they stated:

> TB1: I think that goes right back to the other question. I think it is very critical for them. It raises their understanding, it increases their self-esteem, their language knowledge improves. Because they have to understand the vocabulary that goes into that problem. And, by sitting with other people, that helps that vocabulary…

TB2: And also, it is something that we are trying to train our students to do because we want them to be team workers in their real life. Once they leave school, they need to be able to collaborate with somebody else in a workspace.

Role of the Teacher

The second important factor to help support the findings was the importance of the role of the teacher. As Vygotsky (1978) described, for the ZPD to exist and to be successful, individuals must have that social component with a peer or an adult present. The interaction and collective knowledge helped students to move beyond the actual development level and grow in their learning. Alluded to earlier, Kist (2010) described the analogy of a teacher acting as the pilot instructor and the student played the role of the flight student. Chandra and Chalmers (2010) would agree with this analogy when they described how students need this extra support to be successful. What transpired in this case study revealed the importance of the role the teacher plays in fostering a sense of community, even within a blended environment.

The teachers who volunteered to participate in this study were very amiable to work with and had the same demeanor towards their students. However, the atmospheres of the classrooms were definitely not the same when observing the students working with Edmodo. TA1 had more of a classroom manager approach to teaching. He was very kind and very concerned with how his students performed. When it came to working with Edmodo, he presented the information and then took more of a whole-class approach. Hur and Oh (2012) described that teachers need to demonstrate enthusiasm in order for students to be successful. TA1 tried diligently to exude this enthusiasm. I noted, "At this point, TA1 begins reading the instructions of the activity to the whole class. SA2 had already read the instructions and was trying to move ahead." TA1 stated, "It's a comic book guys. It's a good one."

The teacher tried to relate to the students to increase their engagement and willingness to complete the activity by mentioning the comic book. The goal of the activity was to generate discussion about child labor in Mexico and to help build a sense of community. All four students at School A provided very limited, if any, responses to the activities. In large part, this may be attributed to the atmosphere of the classroom.

In contrast, the atmosphere at School B was more of a social constructivist approach. The smaller class size setting was more conducive for this kind of classroom. TA1 had many students within a portable classroom. TB2 had only 10 students in a large classroom with three different tables that could seat 10 students. Therefore, this setting allowed TB2 to work side-by-side with her students. Again, the original intent was for SB1, SB2, and SB3 to work on these activities on Edmodo within the civics classroom. However, if this would have occurred, it would have been in very similar circumstances to the setting at School A. Instead, the activities were reserved for time with the ESL consultation teacher in the smaller setting. TB2 definitely played the role of the pilot instructor in Kist's (2010) example. As a result, the analysis of the discussion board threads portrayed responses from the students at School B that were more in-depth and more conversational than the responses of students at School A.

Edmodo can be a wonderful tool for generating communication and discussion between students. However, as witnessed, the teacher played an integral role in establishing a sense of community and a security net for the students to succeed. In particular, the two non-speaking English students (SB2 and SB3) knew they could turn to TB2 for help and guidance. Their results were thereby impacted in a positive way.

Citizenship and the American Government

One of the initial goals of the Sandra Day O'Connor Act (CS/HB 105, 2010) for the recently created civics course at the middle school level was to instill civic responsibility in students. Students need to know how the American system of government is structured and functions. Richey (2011) stated that students need to critically think about the nation. Latino/Latina ESL students have a unique perspective that they can add to the American landscape. As TA1 stated in his pre-study interview, students can compare and contrast their government of origin to that of the United States. As mentioned in the participant profile, only one of the seven students was originally from the United States. TA1 later stated in his post-study interview that a benefit of using Edmodo was having an accessible clearinghouse for teachers to post important government documents for students to peruse and analyze. In the post-study interview, TB2 stated that students were asking why some students thought the way they did about child labor in Mexico and how they interacted about this issue. Edmodo thereby served as a conduit for this open civic discussion among students. Not only could a sense of community be created, but an honest, open discussion about government could result.

With this open discourse on American government and the building of a community through Edmodo, a phenomenon that Neufeld and Davis (2010) identified as civic respect could prosper. Students could learn to respect the different levels and aspects of the American system of federalism. Students at School A stated in their pre-study interview that one of the important benefits of learning about the American system is to know how it works, and thereby being able to procure future employment. Shelly (2010) identified this as empowerment. Learning through the use of Edmodo, Latino/Latina ESL students could gain necessary skills and knowledge to help them prosper as future adults within the American culture.

Implications

The results depicted in Figure 10 and Figure 11 show several outcomes to this study. In a limited way, Edmodo did help increase the sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL civics students. Also, the results portrayed how Edmodo could be used to implement an educational social networking platform within the classroom by incorporating content relevant material that is also sensitive to the students' culture. A key element in creating the desirable sense of community that Rovai (2001) described was doing so within a social constructivist classroom as described by Vygotsky (1978). It was important that teachers and students interacted in a setting that was conducive to fostering the ZPD. Edmodo could be a conduit in which ZPD is encouraged in a blended classroom setting, thereby increasing the sense of community. To help support the four main themes, the roles of language and the teacher and the education of the responsibilities of American citizens also surfaced in the study. As a result, there were theoretical, empirical, and practical implications that applied to the results of this study. These three types of implications will now be addressed.

Theoretical Implications

Rovai (2001) identified and described four major aspects of fostering a sense of community for students. These four factors were spirit, trust, interaction, and learning. This study concentrated on the use of a social networking program known as Edmodo to explore if it could help build the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students that were in enrolled in 7th grade civics. This focus added the element of ethnicity to the sense of community as described by Kenyon and Carter (2011). Though their study centered on American Indian students, this case study focused on Latino/Latina ESL students, thereby including the language aspect with ethnicity. By analyzing the pre-study interviews and post-study interviews across

both cases, students and teachers concurred that Edmodo could indeed theoretically increase or build the sense of community for ESL students.

Students enjoyed the variation in instruction which led to their willingness to try to use Edmodo in the classroom. Hur and Oh (2012) stated that using computers could lead to an increase in engaged learning. In the post-study interview with the teacher from School A, TA1 reiterated this point by stating:

> PI: Okay… Ummm… the next question is… In your opinion, do you think Edmodo increased or decreased student engagement with the classwork?

> TA1: Increased. Specifically because it was different. They logged in and said okay, cool, iPads. Because it was with iPads. I am sure it would be the same on a computer, you are in a different area, you are doing a different thing. So… specifically could that be contributed to Edmodo? *Laughing*... I don't know. But, could it be just contributed to having iPads or something different in front of them? Instead of just a book, or notes, or a game. Maybe, if you use you know… you put a game on Edmodo, a connection between that, and then they respond to that game. That could increase… just the whole… the change of pace would be different. I think that is why it increased.

Theoretically, Edmodo helped increase the sense of community for students in this case study because it encouraged them to be involved in the activity. As a result, especially within the smaller classroom setting at School B, the four aspects that Rovai (2001) identified were addressed. The self-confidence or spirit of the students increased as the unit moved on. Trust and interaction between the teacher and students were again witnessed at School B which led to students learning the content and vocabulary for civics.

Empirical Implications

As previously discussed, social networking programs such as Edmodo could theoretically increase the sense of community for students. Through the collaborative and communicative components of the program, students can synchronously and asynchronously build relationships with each other to create a sense of a team. Theoretically, this is the case.

Unfortunately, the empirical data does not necessarily back up this claim. Similar to the findings of this study, previous empirical research has found that social networking programs such as Facebook have had inconclusive results. There have been positive findings and there have been some confusing results. Chiessi et al. (2010) described an instrument that was used in their research to help measure SOC for adolescents. However, this instrument was designed for students in Northern Italy. This type of instrument would need to be adapted to help measure SOC for American adolescents. In addition, Shi-Jer et al. (2012) found that the Internet could help enhance student learning. This could include social networking platforms similar to Edmodo. The researchers' suggestions included centering the learning on projects instead of just the traditional test. By incorporating project-based learning, students could use Edmodo to complete the tasks within the content and simultaneously build relationships or a sense of community.

For the Latino/Latina ESL student, the use of Edmodo could assist in building a sense of community, helping academically, and increasing their skills for future employment. Hutchinson and Henry (2010) found in their research that African American students, Asian-Americans, and Caucasians used the Internet more frequently outside of the schoolhouse walls than Hispanic or Latino/Latina students. In their research, they stated that this could lead to a greater risk of unemployment because of the rapidly increasing role of technology in the workplace.

Latino/Latina students need to have this experience of using technology in the classroom. In this case study, Edmodo was an avenue for this type of exposure for ESL students. Using Edmodo in the classroom could help build a sense of community and a confidence of using computers or technology to complete academic tasks, thereby resulting in better employment skills for the future.

The idea of utilizing Edmodo to create SOC in the classroom is noble, but the empirical research is not clear in supporting such a notion. The current study was empirically inconclusive in supporting the idea that Edmodo created SOC in the classroom; therefore, more research in this area is needed. Mentioned earlier, empirical research focused on if social networking influences the sense of community is very limited. The studies that have focused on this aspect and on the impact of the Internet on education have had mixed results. For example, Bekele and Menchaca (2008) studied Internet Supported Learning. They found that the end results as compared to the traditional classroom setting had no significant difference in the outcomes. These were results for the Internet in general terms. More specifically aligned with this study, Rovai et al. (2008) compared the sense of community for a public university to a private, Christian university. Even though the blended classrooms at both universities revealed better outcomes, there was no significant difference for SOC. In a similar study using the Classroom Community Inventory that Rovai designed, Cardona-Divale (2012) found that the use of Facebook and Twitter did not have statistically significant differences in creating a sense of community. In this case study, students were able to communicate their ideas about content in civics, thereby strengthening a sense of community. However, the results of their posts were very limited in scope and did not provide a plethora of detail. Instead, some of the students were more distracted by other aspects of using the iPad and Edmodo. For some of the posts, students

entered emoticons instead of replying to the prompt. As a result, the findings of this current study concurred with earlier research. There were positive or supporting characteristics that revealed that Edmodo could influence the sense of community for students, but the negative aspects caused the findings to be inconclusive.

Practical Implications

Of the three types of implications for this study, the practical implications were probably the most pronounced in the results. Vygotsky (1978) advocated for a social constructivist classroom and Allanson (2013) concurred with this sentiment by using Edmodo. Hur and Oh (2012) stated that using technology in the classroom can increase student engagement. Theoretically this was the case and the feelings of the participants going into the study. This was also the initial hypothesis. However, due to reasons that will be discussed in this section, the results of this current study were inconclusive and did not clearly support Hur and Oh's idea that technology could increase student engagement in the classroom.

As Cardona-Divale (2012) concluded in her study of Facebook and Twitter, the practical use of Edmodo in the classroom did not provide conclusive results that its use could influence the sense of community for students. As TA1 described the activity that was observed at School A, the novelty effect of using iPads probably detracted from the positive results of Edmodo. Students were too enamored in using an iPad instead of actually completing the task at hand. The camera option was a favorite aspect of the iPad instead of concentrating on the discussion board threads. Options like the camera caused distractions for the students. In addition, logging into Edmodo proved to be problematic for students at School A, and this became a second distraction. In his post-study interview, TA1 stated:

TA1: I thought it was oh cool, I can introduce an iPad with them… I think that made it a

little more hectic with getting them logged in and started and reading this lesson and….

Kind of working with it. And, the second time was actually a lot smoother. Just because it

was kind of given to them and they knew a little bit more about how it is set up and….

So… an opinion would be to work with it earlier on… or maybe three lessons would have

been right on… something like that.

Because this study covered a relatively short time period and because it was toward the

beginning of the year, students were not accustomed to using the iPads and Edmodo. They had

major difficulty trying to log in and complete the tasks, and they were interested in taking

pictures of themselves and their friends. An important impetus to assist in avoiding this type of

student behavior would be to have a set of rules and expectations already established for proper

usage of the various types of technology in the classroom.

The events during the observation at School B depicted a different situation. From a

social constructivist standpoint, the situation at School B was ideal. Students at School B did not

have the distractions that were prevalent at School A. Students were not taking pictures; they

were engaged with the activity. However, from a practical standpoint, students at School B had

an advantage that many students in a general education civics classroom would not have, a small

ratio of students to teacher. Instead of being in a class of 25 students, the three students were

able to work side-by-side with TB2. This is not practical in most classroom situations.

Because of the diabolical differences of School A and School B and because of the

different situations involved, the practical implications of using Edmodo were not definitive in

building a sense of community in the classroom. If Edmodo could be implemented at the

beginning of the school year and carried out consistently through each semester, then it

theoretically could have a positive impact. However, since this was a short "snapshot" of two different classroom situations over a three-week period of time, the practical conclusions of using Edmodo were not clearly defined.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

This study was designed to assist in filling the gap in the literature focusing on if a social networking program like Edmodo could influence the sense of community. For this study, the sense of community was centered on 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students in civics. The goal was partially met. A major contributor to why the goal of filling the gap was not completely met was the three main limitations of the study. These limitations included the design of the study, the volunteers, and the self-reporting bias that was present. These limitations will be discussed.

Design

At the outset of this study, the goal was to have two subgroups (Teachers and Students) and three cases or schools. As a result, this would have been a variation on Creswell's (2013) design of a 2 X 3 cross-case study. However, within a week of the study proceeding, one of the three schools decided not to participate. After an emergency call and collaboration with my committee, it was agreed to proceed with only two schools. This resulted with a 2 X 2 cross-case study instead of a 2 X 3. Only two schools with the two subgroups participated. This caused the limitation of the study to not be quite as robust as it could have been with three schools involved instead of only two.

A second limitation within the design of the study centered on the curriculum content itself. Originally, the study would have taken place in the spring of the academic year. However, after several setbacks, the study was not conducted until the fall of the next academic year. The Social Studies Specialist for the district approved of the teachers involved to change

the order of the curriculum map in order to make the study successful. The teachers did not

concur. Instead, they wanted to concentrate on the pacing of the curriculum map to ensure that

students were prepared for the state end of course exam. Changing the discussion board threads

and activities would have caused a change from the IRB of the University, thereby delaying the

study more. After reviewing the curriculum map and state standards, the activities involved were

able to loosely fit within the topics of the first two units of the year instead of the ninth unit

because of the state standards that they covered. This was not the most ideal situation, but it

allowed the study to proceed. It would have been more optimal if these two activities could have

been implemented with Unit 9 of the curriculum map instead of the first two units. Unit 9

focused on the foreign policy of the United States and those institutions that influence it such as

the United Nations. In contrast, the first two units focused on the origins of government and the

roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens. The state standards for both activities

on Edmodo could be applied to either Unit 9 or Unit 2. However, the content focusing on

foreign policy would have been more ideally utilized in Unit 9 instead of how it was applied in

this study which was centered on the content of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. For

example, part of the first Edmodo activity (see Appendix M) stated:

> With today's advancements in technology, such as cell phones, satellite television, and jet
>
> airplanes, our world has become a smaller place. Also, the United States continues to be
>
> a nation in which the rest of the world watches for direction on various issues because of
>
> its role as a superpower. As a result, it is very important for the President and members
>
> of Congress to have a foreign policy. Review the following foreign policy goals:

 As a result, even though the activity adhered to the state standards for both units, this activity

would have been better implemented in Unit 9 instead of Unit 2.

The third limitation of the design of the study concerned the timeframe of the study. This was a short three-week study to analyze if Edmodo could influence the sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students. The brevity of the study limited its overall scope of the topic. Ideally, it would be conducive to conduct a similar study over a longer period of time, possibly a year or two. A longitudinal study may have different results because students would overcome the novelty effect and incorporate the use of Edmodo into their everyday activities within the classroom.

Volunteers

The second major limitation of the study was the volunteers that participated in the study. After the third school withdrew from the study, it was hopeful that the major complications would have passed and it would be smooth sailing. This was not the case. Instead, TA2 would have been the ESL consultant for School A. On the day of the pre-study interview, she withdrew and did not want to participate. This changed the composition of the study for School A. Being presumptive, the results of School A may have been more similar to those of School B if the ESL consultation teacher would have been involved. This is only speculative, but plausible.

School A was not the only one impacted by its volunteers. There were two different aspects with School B that were not anticipated. Alluded to earlier, TB1 did not take the lead in this study and delegated the activities on Edmodo to TB2. As a result, the students did not complete the tasks in their civics class but instead in their ESL consultation class. This allowed for a better atmosphere for the students to concentrate, but it was not the intended setting for the study. Also, School B had two students that mainly spoke only Spanish. This required TB2 to translate for the two students. The interviews did not have the natural discourse between the

students or participants and me. Instead, a delay in interaction was the reality because of the wait time due to translating from English to Spanish and then from Spanish back to English.

With the different aspects at both schools, the volunteers provided an unintended limitation to the study. I was grateful for the willingness of the participants to be involved. However, it did not proceed as planned.

Self-Reporting Bias

The final major limitation included me as the human instrument analyzing and cross analyzing the data sources. A preconceived bias existed going into the study that centered on the positive aspects of implementing and utilizing a social networking program like Edmodo in the classroom. With my background in Social Sciences and Educational Technology, my tendencies were to see the positive elements of using technology in the civics classroom. As the study proceeded, I tried using the critical eye of a qualitative investigator to ensure its trustworthiness and dependability. Even though there were many positive findings as described earlier, the critical eye found areas that made the findings inconclusive. However, the human instrument may have caused a limitation in analyzing the data, and thereby overlooking more negative aspects of using Edmodo in the classroom.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Future Research

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As technology improves and changes, the idea of fostering a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL civics students via a social networking platform will need to continue to be investigated for classroom integration. Therefore, there are several recommendations that will be suggested in this section for future research. These suggestions will focus on theoretical, empirical, and practical applications for future research. Finally, this section will also address future implementation of a social networking platform such as Edmodo to build a sense of

community for Latino/Latina ESL students by focusing on four different stakeholders. They include students, teachers, school administration, and central office personnel. Within the discussion for these four stakeholders, suggestions for how to incorporate the software and hardware will be addressed.

Because of the qualitative nature of this study, there are several recommendations for future research in the area investigating if Edmodo can influence the sense of community for 7th grade Latino/Latina ESL students in the civics classroom from a theoretical perspective. Three main areas should be considered when researching this phenomenon. All three areas should have three different aspects included to ensure a more robust study to investigate the role of Edmodo in developing a sense of community. First, instead of two schools being involved with the study, at least three middle schools that agree to volunteer to participate should be utilized if possible. Secondly, within these three schools, both the civics teacher and the ESL consultation teacher should be involved with the civics teacher taking the lead. Finally, a longer period of time to study the impact of Edmodo would be highly recommended instead of just one unit covering a three-week timeframe. Edmodo should be introduced at the beginning of the academic year and then used consistently thereafter to ensure that the novelty effect dissipates. Again, this current study was only a three-week window in order to analyze the impact of Edmodo. Thinking of the development of sense of community from a theoretical perspective, if the educator implemented and consistently used this tool throughout the academic year, the sense of community for those students would be very interesting to analyze.

There are two recommendations for future research that could make this study more robust empirically. The first area to consider for future research would be to explore how blended classrooms compare to traditional face-to-face classrooms that do not utilize the use of

technology. Several different aspects could be implemented using a mixed methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative research. Similar to this study, the researchers could interview and observe the three different schools and the two different types of classrooms. For the quantitative portion of the study, once the state test for the end of the year has been vetted, *t*-tests could be used to compare the performance of the blended and traditional face-to-face classrooms along with an adapted inventory for adolescents used by Rovai (2001) to measure sense of community.

A second study could focus on a research question similar to this current study. The question that could be asked and investigated would be, "How does the virtual bounded system of Edmodo influence if at all the interaction of classmates within their social circles?" This question would not only focus on Latino/Latina ESL students, but on the class as a whole. Exploring this could once again use a mixed methods approach to studying this phenomenon. For the quantitative aspect, the adapted and vetted inventory of Rovai (2001) could be used to compare different groups across several schools to determine if there was a significant difference in the *t*-tests or ANOVAs. For the qualitative portion, the interviews, observations, and discussion board threads could be analyzed over at least a year-long period of time.

A practical recommendation for future research was inspired by comments in the post-study interview with the civics teacher from School A. He stated:

> TA1: And I don't know if it was because it was on iPads or if it would have been easier on the computers… that could have been it… And I… I was thinking… just down the road for another kind of experiment or something… you know, maybe on the computers would have been better, or if you recommended it to anyone else computers to start out with. Something that they could focus right in front of them instead of something that

they could carry around and move all over the place in a classroom setting. Plus, in a

different environment, they act differently. It was still the same environment and they

just had something else in front of them… it changed the instruction up… but, I think that

with a different setting the could have been a little more productive.

After analyzing these comments, a suggestion for a future study would be to focus on

Latino/Latina ESL students using Edmodo in the classroom via iPads and then different

classrooms implementing Edmodo via a computer laboratory setting. The difference in setting

and the lack of mobility with the ease of using the camera options of the iPad may yield more

positive results for using Edmodo to create a sense of community in the civics classroom.

With a longer timeframe, the proper school personnel involved, and more schools willing

to participate, there are at least three different studies that could occur as a result of this current

study. The first study centers on blended versus the traditional classroom. The other two would

explore the idea of social circles and building a sense of community and the consideration of the

type of technology used.

Thus far, the recommendations described have been centered on research. The following

recommendations are for schools who wish to incorporate a social networking platform like

Edmodo into the classrooms to help build or foster a sense of community for students.

Recommendations for the four distinct stakeholders involved will now be discussed.

Students

When using technology in the classroom, Clark (2008) advocated that clear teacher

expectations should be provided for students. Once these clear expectations of how students

should use the technology are provided, Chandra and Chalmers (2010) suggested that it is

essential for teachers to support the students. Therefore, because of the results of this current

study, I would highly recommend that teachers take the time at the beginning of the year and train students about proper Internet etiquette. Teachers need to specify exactly how students should appropriately answer discussion board threads. Student responses need to be about the task at hand to help each other in a social constructivist setting to increase their knowledge about the content area. Responses should be insightful with plenty of detail and encouraging to fellow classmates. Language used especially in the discussion board threads of Edmodo should remain academic and the inclusion of emoticons should be limited. Once the appropriate use of Edmodo has been covered, then it is recommended that the teacher should take the time to demonstrate the features of Edmodo. These features include how to upload assignments to the social networking platform, the utilization of a class calendar, online quizzes and resources, discussion board threads, and daily updates of what occurred in class. Finally, students should then be asked to sign an agreement kept by the teacher that acknowledges proper classroom behavior in how to use Edmodo. Clear consequences such as limiting the use of technology in the classroom should be provided within the agreement.

Teachers

Similar to the students, it is highly recommended that the teachers take part in professional development of how to utilize and implement Edmodo in the classroom before expecting them to immediately begin using it. The goal is to build a sense of community for the students, in this case, especially Latino/Latina ESL students. Therefore, teachers need to have the skills of how to properly use the social networking platform in order to manifest success in the classroom. One method of providing this professional development for teachers is to have a lead teacher from the school become familiar with the program and then share it at the beginning of the year at a faculty meeting. During this meeting, the lead teacher could quickly provide an

overview of the basics of how to use Edmodo. A great starting point for this introduction would be to show the short ten minute video by Morin (2013). Basics such as how to post assignments, resources, activities, online quizzes, and monitoring options could quickly be covered in a short 15-minute period of time. As a result, teachers could be exposed to a short introduction that is not overwhelming and intimidating. If teachers are required to have their laptops at the meeting, they could have an account established before they leave and be connected to that particular school's Edmodo community. Follow up support could then be provided via Edmodo, email with the lead teacher, or within department meetings.

As mentioned in the student section, an Internet etiquette agreement is paramount for proper classroom management and usage of Edmodo. The proper procedures of how students should access the program and interact with other classmates need to be carefully devised and put in print. This could be done on an individual teacher's level, by department, or by the entire faculty of a school depending on the school culture. Consequences of not complying with the expectations also need to be clearly stated for students.

School Administration

School administrators should assist in developing the agreement form that students would agree to sign before using Edmodo in the classroom. Once the agreement has been established, it is essential that administrators support and encourage teacher usage of Edmodo within the classroom. Teachers need to feel comfortable with going outside of the box and trying social networking such as Edmodo to help foster a sense of community and to hopefully enhance student performance within the content. However, the most important recommendation garnered from this current study for school administrators centers on the ESL consultation teacher. To help foster a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL middle school students, the ESL

consultation teacher must be involved to help with the zone of proximal development. By providing this additional support and many times by providing a smaller learning environment, Latino/Latina ESL students will have a better opportunity to accomplish the goals of the online activities.

Central Office Personnel

Edmodo does not have any fees attached in order to access and use the service. With cost a major factor for many school districts, this is a very important advantage of using Edmodo. However, because it is based on the Internet, it is important that schools have the proper bandwidths in order for the program to run smoothly. If the network becomes too crowded because several classes across the campus is accessing the platform at the same time, frustration could set in for both teachers and students. It is therefore very important for schools to have enough bandwidth for the program to succeed.

In addition, Edmodo itself may be a free Internet service, but the hardware that must be used in order to access it can of course become a large ticket item for each classroom. Thirty computers or tablets for one classroom could incur a cost of several thousand dollars. Central office personnel should diligently consider the hardware that would be utilized in order to implement Edmodo in the classroom. A strong recommendation for the personnel involved in choosing this hardware that was derived from the results of this study is to carefully scrutinize the hardware. Because this study focused on ESL middle school students, it is paramount that the developmental stage of adolescents in middle school be considered. If at all possible, hardware should be chosen that does not have a camera option. Adolescents are enamored by the camera and are intent on taking selfies and pictures of other students in the classroom. This

becomes a major distraction and the sense of community is not fostered and the task at hand may go uncompleted.

Summary

To conclude this study, theoretically Edmodo could be another resource in an educator's pedagogical toolkit to help build a sense of community in the classroom. With the increase of the sense of community and self-confidence, students will achieve better academically. One result of this study was the emphasis of the unexpected positive attribute of students having another avenue in increasing their vocabulary skills. Both students and the teachers believed at the outset of the study that Edmodo could indeed build a sense of community for Latino/Latina ESL students. After the study concluded, students were still optimistic about its potential; whereas, the teachers involved were not as enthusiastic about its results. Therefore, theoretically Edmodo could be used in the civics classroom.

Empirically and practically, Edmodo and social networking in general have not been investigated enough to determine if it could truly build a sense of community for adolescents. This was especially true in the current study for Latino/Latina ESL students who also have language barriers to overcome to succeed academically. Logistically setting up 7th grade students on Edmodo proved to be challenging in the classroom when using iPads. Another barrier that surfaced was the lack of resources for ESL students both at school and at home to fully utilize the potential of Edmodo. The teachers involved in this study stated that many of their students came from a level of socio-economic status that inhibited the students having the technology at home to use.

Overall, the positives outweighed the negatives of implementing and using Edmodo in the classroom even though the results were inconclusive. Students seemed to enjoy using

technology, in this study for the use of Edmodo, in the classroom. Further implementation and research into the use of Edmodo is highly recommended.

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APPENDIX A: Liberty University IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 15, 2014

Michael Chris Taylor
IRB Approval 1846.051514: Edmodo: A Collective Case Study of English as the
Second Language (ESL) of Latino Students

Dear Chris,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the
Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection
proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to
human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms
for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the
requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be
included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your
research project.

Sincerely,
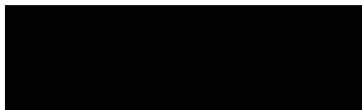
Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

APPENDIX B: School/Principal Recruitment Letter

Date: April 10, 2014

Dear Principal:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of my research is to explore if the social networking system, Edmodo, influences the sense of community for Latino ESL students in 7th grade civics through student engagement, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Therefore, I am writing to request your permission for your school's participation in my study. I have submitted my application to the district and have obtained their approval.

Students who participate in the study must be in 7th grade civics, be of Latino heritage, and meet the State of Florida requirements for ESL services. If you are willing to allow your school to participate, students will be asked to participate in two focus group interviews and complete two civics activities by using the social networking program, Edmodo. I am asking that one civics teacher and the ESL consultation teacher participate in this study. As a result, there will be two focus groups at your school's site participating in this study (one teacher group consisting of two teachers and four to five Latino ESL students). All transcripts and observation notes will be secured in password protected files, thus protecting the identity of students and teachers toward outside stakeholders. It should take approximately two lunch periods (lunch provided) and two class periods in civics for students to complete the procedures listed. The students' names and /or other identifying information will be requested as part of his or her participation. However, in the manuscript, student names will be pseudonyms and other people besides the classroom teacher and myself will not be able to identify the student's name.

For your school to participate, please email at the address below consenting to this request. A computer lab, mini-laptops, or iPads will be needed to complete this study.

A consent document will be sent home with students for the parents to sign one week before the focus group interview. Parents, students, and participating teachers will sign the consent/assent document and return it to the civics teacher where I will obtain them at the first focus group interview. I would be grateful for your consent for your school to participate in this study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Taylor
Doctoral Student, Liberty University
omitted

APPENDIX C: Teacher Recruitment Letter

Date: April 10, 2014

Dear Civics/ESL Consultation Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of my research is to explore if the social networking system, Edmodo, influences the sense of community for Latino ESL students in 7th grade civics through student engagement, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Therefore, I am writing to request your participation for your class participation in my study. I have submitted my application to the district and a letter to your principal and have obtained their approval.

Students who participate in the study must be in 7th grade civics, be of Latino heritage, and meet the State of Florida requirements for ESL services. If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in two focus group interviews that will be audio recorded and have the students complete two civics activities during their class time by using the social networking program, Edmodo. I am asking that one civics teacher and the ESL consultation teacher participate in this study. As a result, there will be two focus groups at your school's site participating in this study (one teacher group consisting of two teachers and four to five Latino ESL students). All transcripts and observation notes will be secured in password protected files, thus protecting your identity from outside stakeholders. It should take approximately two of your planning periods for the focus group interviews and two class periods in civics for students to complete the procedures listed. Your names and /or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation. However, in the manuscript, your name will be indicated as pseudonyms and other people besides myself will not be able to identify your name.

If you agree to participate, please email at the address below consenting to this request. Also, please provide when you have your planning period to help me in planning the time for the interviews. A computer lab, mini-laptops, or iPads will be needed to complete this study.

Once you have contacted me, I will send a consent form for you to read and sign. Please keep the form and I will receive it at our first focus group interview. A consent document will be sent home with students for the parents to sign one week before the focus group interview. Parents and students will sign the consent/assent document and return it to you where I will obtain them at the first focus group interview. I would be grateful for your consent for your participation in this study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Taylor
Doctoral Student, Liberty University
omitted

APPENDIX D: Teacher Consent Form

Edmodo: A collective case study of Latino English as the second language students
Michael Chris Taylor
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the influence of the social networking program, Edmodo, on sense of community for 7th grade Latino ESL Civics students. You were selected as a possible participant because you are either a civics educator with ESL students or an ESL Consultation teacher. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Michael Chris Taylor, Liberty University's School of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this collective case study will be to explore how a social networking platform, Edmodo, can influence the sense of community for Latino ESL civics students and assist them to be successful academically within the mandates and high-stakes test of the state of Florida's newly created civics course.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
- You will need to send home the recruitment letter for parents and receive them.
- Then, you will need to send home the parent consent form and the student assent form and collect them. I will pick up your consent form and the parents' and students' forms when we meet for the first interview.
- You will participate in a focus group interview consisting of the civics teacher and ESL Consultation teacher. This interview will occur during your planning period and last no more than 45 minutes.
- After the interview, you will need to have the students complete two Edmodo activities using mini-laptops, a computer lab, or iPads. I will need to coordinate with you the schedule of this to be able to observe the ESL students using Edmodo during one of the activities.
- After the activities, you will participate in a post-study focus group interview again consisting of the civics teacher and ESL Consultation teacher. This will occur again during your planning period and last approximately 45 minutes.
- Once the transcripts have been typed, I will ask that you peruse them to ensure that I have accurately recorded the interview.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks:

Due to the nature of the study, there will not be a present physical or emotional danger for participants. The risks you may face in this study are no more than what you would encounter in everyday life. However, there is always the possibility that an adolescent student will post to the discussion thread something hurtful or inappropriate. As the administrator of the Edmodo site for this study, I will have the capability to delete such posts and to address any unforeseen incident with the classroom teacher. The teacher and school administration can then administer the proper jurisprudence needed for individual cases. Finally, all transcripts will be stored through password coded files to prevent other people from reading the responses of the participants.

The benefits to participation include assisting researchers and colleagues in determining if Edmodo is a viable source of fostering a sense of community for 7th grade Latino ESL students. The goal is to find another resource or tool to assist ESL students in building a community of learning and to increase academic success. Therefore, the benefit will help with building the general knowledge of the educational community, but there will not be any direct benefit for you personally.

Compensation:

You will not be receiving payment for you participation in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will be done on a voluntary basis.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The district involved in the study will be referred to as a large school district located in Central Florida. As a result, the three schools will be identified as School A, School B, and School C. Teachers participating in the study will be designated with the school letter and then 1 for the civics teacher and 2 for the consultation teacher. Students will also have the letter designated for their respective school and then numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. A code book will be kept to help identify the participants. The code book will be stored separately from the transcripts and observation notes in a locked cabinet. The only individual who will have access to the true identity of the participants will be the PI. However, due to the nature of focus groups, I will not be able to assure you that other participants will maintain your confidentiality and privacy. Observation notes, letters, consent/assent forms and any other documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet for at least three years. Also, any audio recordings made will be kept in a password coded zip file to ensure confidentiality. The interviews will be digitally recorded on a computer and will be stored in a zipped folder with a password lock to ensure confidentiality. Documentation, including letters, consent/assent forms, and observation notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for at least three years. At the end of that period of time, all documentation will then be shredded and destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Volusia County Schools. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

At any time during the study, you may simply notify the researcher that you would like to withdraw from the study. Should you decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time, your decision will not affect your relationship with the school district or researcher. Any transcripts will be edited and your responses deleted and any audio recordings will be edited with your responses deleted and destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Chris Taylor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at omitted or omitted. You may also contact his advising professor, Dr. Charles Smith, at omitted or omitted.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, omitted or email at omitted.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

By agreeing to participate, I also agree to be audio-recorded for the focus group interviews.

    Yes   No

Signature: Date:

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

IRB Code Numbers: 1846.051514
IRB Expiration Date: May 15, 2015

APPENDIX E: Parent Recruitment Letter

Date: April 10, 2014

Dear Parent of a 7th Grade ESL Student:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of my research is to explore if the social networking system, Edmodo, influences the sense of community for Latino ESL students in 7th grade civics through student engagement, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Therefore, I am writing to invite your child to participate in my study.

Students who participate in the study must be in 7th grade civics, be of Latino heritage, and meet the State of Florida requirements for ESL services. If you are willing to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to participate in two focus group interviews and complete two civics activities by using the social networking program, Edmodo. The focus group interviews will be audio recorded. These recordings will be saved in a password protected file and will not be accessible to the public. It should take approximately two lunch periods (lunch provided) and two class periods in civics for your child to complete the procedures listed. Your child's name and /or other identifying information will be requested as part of his or her participation. However, in the manuscript, student names will be pseudonyms and other people besides the classroom teacher and myself will not be able to identify your child's name. The interview transcripts and observation notes will be saved digitally and password protected.

A consent document will be sent home with your child one week before the focus group interview. Please sign the consent document and return it to your child's civics teacher. I would be grateful for your consent for your child to participate in this study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Taylor
Doctoral Student, Liberty University
omitted

APPENDIX F: Parent Recruitment Letter – Spanish Version

Fecha: 10 de abril de 2014

Estimado padre de estudiantes de ESL del séptimo grado:

Como un estudiante graduado en la escuela de educación en la Universidad de la libertad, estoy investigando como parte de los requisitos para el grado de doctorado de educación en currículo e instrucción. El propósito de mi investigación es explorar si el sistema de red social Edmodo influye en el sentido de comunidad para estudiantes de ESL Latino en cívica 7mo grado a través de la participación de los estudiantes, en colaboración, comunicación y pensamiento crítico. Por lo tanto, le escribo para invitar a su niño a participar en mi estudio.

Los estudiantes que participan en el estudio deben de estar en la clase de civismo de grado 7 °, de herencia latina y cumplir con los requisitos del estado de la Florida para servicios de ESL. Si usted está dispuesto a permitir que su hijo / a participe, se pedirá que su niño participe en dos entrevistas de grupo de enfoque y complete dos actividades de educación cívica mediante el programa red social Edmodo. Las entrevistas de grupo de enfoque será audio grabado. Estas grabaciones se guardarán en un archivo protegido con contraseña y no serán accesibles al público. El estudio debe tomar aproximadamente dos periodos de almuerzo (almuerzo incluido) y dos períodos de clase de civismo para que su niño cumple los procedimientos indicados. El nombre de su hijo y/o otra información de identificación se solicitarán como parte de su participación. Sin embargo, en el manuscrito, los nombres del estudiante serán sustituidos por seudónimos, y otras personas además de la maestra y yo no será capaz de identificar el nombre de su hijo. Las transcripciones de la entrevista y las notas de observación se guardarán digitalmente y serán protegidas con contraseña.

Un documento de consentimiento se mandara a casa con su hijo una semana antes de la entrevista de grupo de enfoque. Por favor firme el documento de consentimiento y devuélvalo al maestro de educación cívica de su hijo. Estaría agradecido por su consentimiento para que sus hijos participen en este estudio. Gracias.

Atentamente,

Michael C. Taylor
Estudiante de doctorado,
Universidad de Libertad
Se omite

APPENDIX G: Parent Consent Form

Edmodo: A collective case study of Latino English as the second language students
Michael Chris Taylor
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child is invited to be in a research study of the influence of the social networking program, Edmodo, on sense of community for 7th grade Latino ESL Civics students. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he/she is a 7th grade Latino ESL students. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Michael Chris Taylor, Liberty University's School of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this collective case study will be to explore how a social networking platform, Edmodo, can influence the sense of community for Latino ESL civics students and assist them to be successful academically within the mandates and high-stakes test of the state of Florida's newly created civics course.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, I would ask him/her to do the following things:
- Your child will return the parent consent form and the child assent form to their Civics teacher.
- Your child will participate in a focus group interview consisting of four to five Latino ESL students. This interview will occur during his/her lunch (with lunch provided) and will last no more than 45 minutes thereby avoiding him/her from missing any instructional time. The focus group interview will be audio recorded.
- After the interview, the students will complete two Edmodo activities using mini-laptops, a computer lab, or iPads. Students will be asked to complete the two activities and reply to each other's work. These discussion threads will also be used to analyze the influence of Edmodo on sense of community.
- After the activities, your child will participate in a post-study focus group interview again consisting of the four to five Latino ESL students. This will occur again during his/her lunch (with lunch provided) and will last no more than 45 minutes thereby avoiding him/her from missing any instructional time. The focus group interview will be audio recorded.
- Once the transcripts have been typed, I will ask that your child read them to ensure that I have accurately recorded the interview.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

Due to the nature of the study, there will not be a present physical or emotional danger for your child. The risks he/she may face in this study are no more than what they would encounter in everyday life. However, there is always the possibility that an adolescent student will post to the discussion thread something hurtful or inappropriate. As the administrator of the Edmodo site for this study, I will have the capability to delete such posts and to address any unforeseen incident with the classroom teacher. The teacher and school administration can then administer the proper jurisprudence needed for individual cases. Finally, all transcripts will be stored through password coded files to prevent other people from reading the responses of the participants.

The benefits to participation include assisting researchers and colleagues in determining if Edmodo is a viable source of fostering a sense of community for 7th grade Latino ESL students. The goal is to find another resource or tool to assist ESL students in building a community of learning and to increase academic success. Therefore, the benefit will help with building the general knowledge of the educational community, but there will not be any direct benefit for your child personally.

Compensation:

Your child will not be receiving payment for his/her participation in this study. Your child's participation is greatly appreciated and will be done on a voluntary basis.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify your child. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The district involved in the study will be referred to as a large school district located in Central Florida. As a result, the three schools will be identified as School A, School B, and School C. Teachers participating in the study will be designated with the school letter and then 1 for the civics teacher and 2 for the consultation teacher. Students will also have the letter designated for their respective school and then numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. A code book will be kept to help identify the participants. The code book will be stored separately from the transcripts and observation notes in a locked cabinet. The only individual who will have access to the true identity of the participants will be the PI. However, due to the nature of focus groups, I will not be able to assure you that other participants will maintain your child's confidentiality and privacy. Observation notes, letters, consent/assent forms and any other documentation will be kept in a locked cabinet for at least three years. Also, any audio recordings made will be kept in a password coded zip file to ensure confidentiality. The interviews will be digitally recorded on a computer and will be stored in a zipped folder with a password lock to ensure confidentiality. Documentation, including letters, consent/assent forms, and observation notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for at least three years. At the end of that period of time, all documentation will then be shredded and destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect your current or future relations, nor your child's current or future relations with Liberty University, your child's teacher and school, or Volusia County Schools. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

At any time during the study, you may simply notify the researcher that you would like for your child to withdraw from the study. Should you decide for your child not to participate or to withdraw at any time, your decision will not affect your child's relationship with the school district, teacher, or researcher. Any transcripts will be edited to delete your child's responded and any audio recordings will be edited with your child's responses deleted and destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Chris Taylor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at omitted or omitted. You may also contact his advising professor, Dr. Charles Smith, at omitted or omitted.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, omitted or email at omitted.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

By agreeing to allow my child to participate, I also agree to allow my child to be audio-recorded for the focus group interviews.

Yes _____   No _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____
IRB Code Numbers: 1846.051514
IRB Expiration Date: May 15, 2015

APPENDIX H: Parent Consent Form – Spanish Version

Padre/Madre Formulario del Consentimiento
Edmodo: Un estudio colectivo de caso de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) de estudiantes latinos
Michael Chris Taylor
Liberty University
School of Education

Su niño ha sido invitado a estar en un estudio de la influencia del programa red social Edmodo en el sentido de comunidad de estudiantes latinos de ESL en el séptimo grado de educación cívica. Su hijo fue seleccionado como un posible participante porque está en el séptimo grado, es Latino, y es estudiante de ESL. Le pido que lea este formulario y pregunte cualquier pregunta que tenga antes de acceder a participar en el estudio.

Este estudio se está realizando por Michael Chris Taylor, un candidato al doctorado en la escuela de Educación de la Universidad de la libertad.

Antecedentes:

El propósito de este estudio de caso colectivo será explorar cómo una plataforma de red social, Edmodo, puede influir en el sentido de comunidad para estudiantes latinos de ESL en el séptimo grado de educación cívica y en cómo puede ayudarles a tener éxito académicamente dentro de los mandatos y la prueba de alto riesgo del estado de la Florida recién creado curso de educación cívica.

Procedimientos:

Si estás de acuerdo y permite que su niño participe en este estudio, le pediría a su estudiante que haga lo siguiente:
- Su hijo regresará a su profesor secundario de educación cívica el formulario de consentimiento firmado por el padre.
- Su hijo debe participar en una entrevista de grupo de enfoque (el grupo de enfoque consiste de cuatro o cinco estudiantes latinos de ESL). Esta entrevista se producirá durante su almuerzo (el almuerzo será incluido) y durará no más de 45 minutos, para que él o ella no se pierda ningún tiempo de instrucción. La entrevista de grupo de enfoque será audio grabado.
- Después de la entrevista, los estudiantes completarán dos actividades de Edmodo usando mini-computadoras portátiles, un laboratorio de computación o iPads. Los estudiantes deberán completar las dos actividades y responder al trabajo de cada uno de sus compañeros en el grupo de enfoque. También se utilizarán estos hilos de discusión para analizar la influencia de Edmodo en el sentido de comunidad de los estudiantes.
- Después de las actividades, su hijo debe participar en una entrevista de grupo de enfoque otra vez, el grupo de enfoque consistirá de cuatro o cinco estudiantes latinos de ESL. Esto también ocurrirá durante su hora de almuerzo (el almuerzo será incluido) y durará no más de 45 minutos, para que él o ella no se pierda ningún tiempo de instrucción. La entrevista de grupo de enfoque será audio grabado.
- Una vez que hayan escrito las transcripciones, le pediré a su hijo que lo lea para asegurarse que he grabado con precisión la entrevista.

Riesgos y Beneficios de Participar en el Estudio:

Debido a la naturaleza del estudio, no habrá un peligro físico o emocional para su niño. Los riesgos que pueden enfrentar en este estudio no son más que lo que encontrarían en la vida cotidiana. Sin embargo, siempre hay la posibilidad de que un estudiante adolescente publique en el hilo de discusión algo dañino o inapropiado. Como administrador del sitio Edmodo durante este estudio, tendré la capacidad de eliminar esos puestos y atender cualquier incidente imprevisto con la maestra. El maestro y la administración de la escuela entonces pueden administrar la jurisprudencia apropiada necesaria para casos individuales. Finalmente, se guardarán todas las transcripciones a través de archivos de código de contraseña para evitar que otras personas lean las respuestas de los participantes.

Los beneficios de participación incluyen ayudar a los investigadores y sus colegas en determinar si Edmodo es una fuente viable de fomentar un sentido de comunidad para estudiantes latinos de ESL en el séptimo grado. El objetivo es encontrar otro recurso o herramienta para ayudar a los estudiantes de ESL en la construcción de una comunidad de aprendizaje y aumentar el éxito académico. Por lo tanto, este estudio ayudará a construir el conocimiento general de la comunidad educativa, pero no habrá ningún beneficio directo para su hijo personalmente.

Compensación:

Su hijo no va a recibir pago por su participación en este estudio. La participación de su hijo es muy apreciada y se hará solamente de base voluntaria.

Privacidad:

Los registros de este estudio se mantendrán privados. Cualquier tipo de informe que se podría publicar, no incluirá ninguna información que hará posible identificar a su hijo. Registros de investigación serán almacenados con seguridad y sólo el investigador tendrá acceso a los registros.

El distrito que participará en el estudio será referido en el estudio como un distrito escolar grande situado en el centro de Florida. Como resultado, las tres escuelas se identificará como Escuela A la escuela B, y la escuela C. Los profesores participantes en el estudio serán designados con la letra de la escuela y luego 1 para el profesor de educación cívica y 2 para el profesor de consulta. Los estudiantes también tendrán una letra designados para sus respectivas escuelas y luego numeradas 1, 2, 3, etc. Se mantendrá un libro de código para ayudar a identificar a los participantes. El libro se almacenará por separado de las transcripciones y notas de observación en un armario cerrado. La única persona que tendrá acceso a la verdadera identidad de los participantes será el investigador. Sin embargo, debido a la naturaleza de los grupos de enfoque, no seré capaz de asegurarle que otros participantes mantendrán la confidencialidad y la privacidad de su hijo. Notas de observación, cartas, formularios de consentimiento/asentimiento y cualquier otra documentación se mantendrá en un gabinete cerrado durante al menos tres años. Además, se mantendrá cualquier audio grabaciones realizadas en un archivo zip código de contraseña para garantizar la confidencialidad. Las entrevistas serán registradas digitalmente en un ordenador y serán almacenadas en una carpeta zip con una contraseña de bloqueo para asegurar la confidencialidad. La documentación, incluye cartas, formularios de consentimiento/asentimiento y notas de observación, se mantendrá en un archivador cerrado durante al menos tres años. Al final de ese período de tiempo, toda la documentación será entonces destrozada y destruida.

Carácter voluntario del estudio:

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su decisión si desea o desea permitir que su hijo / a participe no afectará sus relaciones actuales o futuras, ni las relaciones actuales o futuras de su hijo con Liberty University, el maestro de su hijo y la escuela o escuelas del Condado de Volusia. Si usted decide permitir que su hijo/hija participe, es libre de no responder a cualquier pregunta o retirar en cualquier momento sin afectar estas relaciones.

Cómo retirar del estudio:

En cualquier momento durante el estudio, usted puede simplemente notificar al investigador que desea que su hijo participe o a retirarse del estudio. Si usted decidiera que su hijo no participe o decide retirarse en cualquier momento, su decisión no afectará la relación de su hijo con el distrito escolar, profesor o investigador. Cualquier transcripción será editada para eliminar las respuestas de su hijo y se editarán cualquier grabaciones de audio con las respuestas de su hijo y serán eliminados y destruidos.

Contactos y Preguntas:

El investigador de realización de este estudio es Michael Chris Taylor. Usted puede pedir cualquier duda que tienes ahora. Si usted tiene preguntas más tarde, le animamos a contactar con él en (Se omite). También puede comunicarse con su profesor asesoramiento, el Dr. Charles Smith, en (Se omite).

Si tienes alguna pregunta o preocupaciones con respecto a este estudio y quieren hablar con alguien que no sea el investigador, le animamos a contactar con la Junta de revisión institucional, (Se omite).

Se le entregará a usted una copia de esta información para guardar en sus propios archivos.

Declaración de Consentimiento:

He leído y comprendido la información anterior. Me han hecho preguntas y han recibido respuestas. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en el estudio.

Acepto permitir que mi hijo/a participe, también estoy de acuerdo permitir que mi hijo sea grabado en audio para las entrevistas de grupo de enfoque.

    Sí   No

Firma: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del investigador:_____ Fecha: _____

Números de Códigos de la IRB: 1846.051514
Fecha de Vencimiento del Estudio Asignada por la IRB: May 15, 2015

APPENDIX I: Student Assent Form

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?
Edmodo: A Collective Case Study of Latino English as the Second Language Students
Researcher: Mr. Michael Chris Taylor

Why am I doing this study?
I am interested in studying the building of a sense of community for students through the online program, Edmodo. This study will help explore the possibility of students working together through Edmodo to help them understand civics.

Why I am asking you to be in this study?
You are being asked to be in this research study because it focuses on Latino students who qualify for ESL services. By using the computer and Edmodo, this study will explore if by working with your classmates you are able to better understand civics.

If you agree, what will happen?
If you are in this study the first thing to occur will be a focus interview with the researcher and a few of your classmates. Lunch will be provided for this. Then, you will simply complete two assignments that your teacher will give you by using Edmodo. After the two activities with Edmodo, you will then participate in another interview with your classmates. Again, lunch will be provided. Once the researcher has typed what was said in the interviews, you will have the opportunity to review it to make sure what was recorded was correctly written.

Do you have to be in this study?
No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don't want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

Do you have any questions?
You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

_____   _____

Signature of Child   Date

Michael Chris Taylor   Dr. Charles Smith
omitted   omitted
Liberty University Institutional Review Board,
omitted or email at omitted.

APPENDIX J: Student Assent Form – Spanish Version

Aprobación de un niño a participar en un estudio investigativo

¿Qué es el nombre del estudio y quién está llevando a cabo el estudio?

Edmodo: Un estudio colectivo de caso de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) de estudiantes latinos.   Investigador: Sr. Michael Chris Taylor

¿Por qué estoy haciendo este estudio?
Estoy interesado en estudiar la construcción de un sentido de comunidad para los estudiantes a través del programa en línea, Edmodo. Este estudio ayudará a explorar la posibilidad de trabajar juntos a través de Edmodo para ayudar a los estudiantes a entender la educación cívica.

¿Por qué te estoy pidiendo que participar en este estudio?
Se les ha pedido que en este estudio de investigación porque se centra en los estudiantes latinos que califican para servicios de ESL.

Si usted participa, ¿qué va a suceder?
Si usted está en este estudio lo primero que ocurrirá será una entrevista con el investigador y algunos de sus compañeros de clase que estarán en el grupo de foco. Se le proporcionará almuerzo durante esta entrevista. Entonces, usted simplemente completará dos asignaciones que tu profesor te dará mediante el uso de Edmodo. Después de las dos actividades con Edmodo, luego participará en otra entrevista con tus compañeros. Una vez más, se le proveerá almuerzo. Una vez que el investigador haya escrito lo que se dijo en las entrevistas, usted tendrá la oportunidad de revisar para asegurarse de que lo que usted compartió oralmente fue registrado de forma escrita correctamente por el entrevistador.

¿Es obligatoria su participación en este estudio?
No, usted no tiene que participar en este estudio. Si quiere participar en este estudio, favor de hacérselo saber al investigador. Si no quiere participar en este estudio, usted puede negarse a participar. El investigador no se va a enojar. Usted puede decir que sí ahora y luego cambiar de opinión y decir que no. La decisión es suya.

¿Tiene usted alguna pregunta?
Puede hacer preguntas en cualquier momento. Puede hacérselas ahora. Puede hacérselas más tarde. Puede hablar con el investigador. Si no entiende algo, favor de pedirle al investigador que se lo explique de nuevo.
La firma de su nombre en la línea de abajo significa que usted quiere participar en el estudio.

_____   _____

Firma del niño   Fecha

Michael Chris Taylor   Dr. Charles Smith
Se omite   Se omite

APPENDIX K: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Researcher Name: Chris Taylor	Study Name: Edmodo Student Focus Group Interview
Interview Protocol #: 1	Observation Date: TBD
Observation Site: School A	Protocol Completion Date: TBD

1
2   The notes of the focus groups of each school
3   using Edmodo to build sense of community will
4   be recorded in a protocol similar to this. Notes
5   will be typed verbatim from the recording to
6   ensure reliability of the interview process.
7
8   After the protocol has been typed, the right half
9   of this page will be used to write notes and to
10   begin to analyze the data for categorical
11   aggregation and to establish patterns.
12
13   The interviewer will be designated by an "I" and
14   the students will be designated by "S1," "S2,"
15   etc. The interview protocol will be similar to the
16   following:
17
18
19   I: If you have used a social networking program
20   in school, what were some examples of the tasks
21   or problems you completed? What program did
22   you use?
23
24   S3: Replies to the question.
25
26
27   I: your opinion, how important is it for a student
28   to "feel" as a part of the group to succeed
29   academically?
30
31
32   S1: Replies to the question.

APPENDIX L: Observation Protocol Template

Researcher Name: Chris Taylor	Study Name: Building a Sense of Community through the use of Edmodo
Protocol #: 1	Observation Date: TBD
Observation Site: School A	Protocol Completion Date: TBD

1
2   The notes of my observations of each school
3   using Edmodo to build sense of community will
4   be recorded in a protocol similar to this. Maps
5   of the room and where each student is located
6   will be recorded in these notes.
7
8   After the protocol has been typed, the right half
9   of this page will be used to write notes and to
10 begin to analyze the data for categorical
11 aggregation and to establish patterns.
12
1

APPENDIX M: Discussion Threads

Edmodo Discussion Thread #1 (Adapted from Teacher's Curriculum Institute, 2014)

With today's advancements in technology, such as cell phones, satellite television, and jet airplanes, our world has become a smaller place. Also, the United States continues to be a nation in which the rest of the world watches for direction on various issues because of its role as a superpower. As a result, it is very important for the President and members of Congress to have a foreign policy. Review the following foreign policy goals:

Foreign Policy Goals
Promote freedom and representative government (democracy) abroad.
Respond to international environmental disasters.
Establish good trade relations with other countries.
Protect our national borders.
Maintain positive relations with our allies.
Ensure the safety of Americans overseas.
Combat terrorism.
Send humanitarian aid to poorer nations.

In three to four sentences, post a discussion thread on Edmodo to describe the two goals that you think are the *most* important for the United States to pursue? Why?

In an additional three to four sentences, post a discussion thread on Edmodo to describe the two goals that you think are the *least* important for the United States to pursue? Why?

Please comment in an appropriate manner why you agree or disagree with at least two or your fellow classmates for both the most important goals and least important goals. Please write a two to three sentence response. Finally, please respond back to what other classmates have written about your own responses.

Edmodo Discussion Thread #2 (Adapted from Remy, Patrick, Saffell, & Clayton, 2013)

Students will read the background summary for the graphic novel, *Happy Birthday: Feliz Cumpleaños*, from McGraw-Hill. Then, students will read the graphic novel that depicts the day in the life of an American child and a child in Mexico. Students will then write a paragraph on Edmodo discussing the following questions:

1. Should American companies who manufacture products in developing countries do more to prevent the exploitation of children?
2. Should they pay their adult employees a higher wage so that their employees' children do not have to work?

After posting their paragraph on Edmodo, students will reply to two of their classmates. Discuss by supplying supporting details of why you agree or disagree with what your classmates wrote in their initial post.

APPENDIX N: Edmodo Screenshots

Me to ■ 1st Period American Government, ■ 3rd Period American Government,
■ 4th Period American Government, more...

November 19th - 20th

Students will create four Frayer models for the terms, limited government, judicial review, federalism, and separation of powers

The Frayer models will consist of the definition, characteristics, examples, and illustration

Students will then complete "marking the text" for the four pages of reading on these terms

Finally, students will answer the 8 questions in the reading

Students will watch the Safari Montage video, "Judicial Branch" and take a short 5-question video quiz

⊙ Nov 20, 2013 · ⚪ Reply · ☺ ˅

APPENDIX O: Codes for Interviews, Observations, and Discussion Threads

Code Results and Their Number of Occurrences for the Pre-study Interviews

	School A	School B
Civics Teacher & ESL Consultation Teacher	Teacher Willingness - 2 Teacher Efficacy - 1 Teacher Intentions - 1 Social Networking - 2 Mandates and Pacing - 1 Sense of Community - 1 Teacher Expectations - 2 Student Isolation - 1 Student Motivation - 3 Cultural Identity - 2 ESL/Cultural Background - 6 Teacher Bias - 2 Relevancy - 3 Language Barrier - 2 Team or group - 2 Collaboration/Various Perspectives - 1 Citizenship - 2 Citizen Responsibilities and Rights - 2 Formative Assessments - 1 Lesser Role of Communication - 1 Introverted Students - 2 Critical Thinking - 1 Efficiency - 1 Leadership/ZPD - 1 Student Selection/Preference - 2 Voting - 1 Obeying the Law - 1 Relevance of Government - 3 Role of the Teacher - 1 Citizen Participation/Decisions/Willingness - 3 Change in Government - 1 Apathy - 1 Immigration - 1 Teacher Perception - 1 Teacher Motivation/Buy-in - 1 American Government Origins - 1 Comparative Government - 1 Cultural Sensitivity - 1	Lack of Social Networking - 1 Social Networking - 1 Email/HW Website - 3 Inclusion/Belonging - 2 Language Barrier - 3 Group Success - 4 ZPD - 4 Collaboration/Sense of Community - 3 ZPD/Better Understanding - 3 Language/ZPD - 1 Importance of Communication - 1 ESL - 1 Cultural Sensitivity - 3 Cultural/Content Connectedness - 6 Teacher Role/Caring Teacher - 6 Tone - 1 Student Engagement - 1 Adolescence - 1 Teacher Bias - 2 Culture Clash - 2 Critical Thinking - 1 Self-esteem - 1 Language Acquisition - 1 Teamwork - 2 Job Preparedness - 1 Individual Responsibility - 1 Citizenship - 1 Informed Citizen - 4 Cultural Identity - 3 Healthcare - 1 Good Citizenship - 1 Cultural Background - 3 Comparative Government - 3 Cultural Bias - 1 Choices/Freedoms - 1 Cultural Sensitivity - 2 Language Barrier/Sensitivity - 1

	Cultural Content - 1	Spanish - 1 Portuguese - 1 Teacher/Student Relationship - 1 Respect - 1 Quality Work - 1
Students	Cultural Identity - 3 Social Networking - 1 Technological Barrier - 1 Misconceptions - 1 Required Credits - 1 Team - 1 Respect in Collaboration - 2 Assistance - 2 ZPD - 4 Engagement - 3 Frustration - 1 Sense of Community - 3 Retention - 1 Translation - 1 Vocabulary Acquisition - 2 Encouragement - 1 Citizenship - 2 Reform - 1 Cultural Needs - 2 Employment Skills - 1 Direction - 1 Comparative Government - 1 Cultural Background - 1 Immigration - 3	Language Barrier - 10 Social Networking/Entertainment - 4 Connectedness - 2 Puerto Rico - 3 Lack of Social Networking for Education - 1 Student Participation - 1 Sense of Community/Belonging - 4 No Social Networking for Sense of Community - 1 Collaboration - 2 Content Relevancy/Specific - 4 Student Choice - 1 Cultural Identity - 3 Communication - 3 Teacher Expectations - 1 Feelings of Others - 1 Communicate for Assistance - 1 Teamwork/ZPD - 5 ZPD/Role of Teacher - 1 Reliability Check - 1 Use of Technology - 1 Cultural Background - 2 Advantages to ZPD - 1 Cultural Identity - 3 Citizenship - 1 Citizen Rights and Responsibilities - 1 Voting - 1 Informed Citizen - 1 Cultural Sensitivity - 1 Content Connectedness - 1 Civics - 1 Cultural Connectedness - 2 Teacher Bias - 1 Culture Clash – 1

Code Results and Their Occurrences for the Observations

School A	School B
Barrier - 3	Social Networking - 3
Teacher Efficacy - 5	ESL - 2
Social Networking - 5	Civics - 1
Collaboration – 3	Smaller Classroom Setting - 1
Student Engagement - 3	ZPD - 19
Routine - 1	Teacher Role - 3
Novelty Affect - 1	Sense of Community - 4
ZPD - 5	Participants - 1
Teacher Role - 6	Teacher Expectations - 3
Lack of Student Engagement - 9	Teacher Assistance - 5
Distractions - 9	Clarification - 4
Cultural Relevant Material - 1	Scaffolding - 1
Student Choice - 1	Student Confidence - 1
Teacher Buy-in - 1	Language Barrier - 3
ESL Consultation Support - 1	Vocabulary Acquisition - 6
Occurrence of Technological Use - 1	Spanish - 2
	Successful Completion - 2
	Teacher Instructions/Direction - 1
	Group/Team - 1
	Culturally Sensitive - 1
	Latino Culture - 1
	Linguistically Friendly - 1
	Student Engagement - 3
	Translator - 2
	Group/Sense of Community - 2
	Economics - 1