



Chapter Two

Review of Literature: Nonformal Ways of Schooling

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Published as part of my
Dissertation
May, 2020

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature: Nonformal Ways of Schooling

The literature review begins with a brief overview on forms of learning. Then, I present how I use and define the term nonformal learning in my work. Next, I present findings from an analysis of studies pertaining to nonformal learning settings. Finally, I explain how my work contributes to the field of nonformal learning.

Overview of forms of learning. According to some scholars, learning consists of three forms: formal, informal, and nonformal (Farrow, de los Arcos, Pitt, & Weller, 2015; Norqvist, Leffler, & Jahnke, 2016; Rogoff, Callanan, Gutiérrez, & Erickson, 2016; Thaman, 2013). The definitions of these three types are derived from different sources including historical documents (Coombs, 1968; Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Etling, 1993; Scribner & Cole, 1973), policy reports (Cedefop, 2016; Harris, Breier, & Wihak, 2011; Harris & Wihak, 2018; Norqvist, Leffler, & Jahnke, 2016; OECD, 2010; Lockhart, 2016; UNESCO, 2014; Werquin, 2010), and current research (Aberg, 2016; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004; Schugurensky, 2000; Thaman, 2013; White & Lorenzi, 2016). To differentiate these three forms of learning, scholars (e.g., Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004; Eraut, 2000; Farrow et al., 2015; Schugurensky, 2000; Tuomainen, 2014) have recommended considering factors such as who determines the *what, where, and when* of learning. Although different definitions exist for formal, informal, and nonformal learning, scholars and policy report documents provide the following definitions of the three terms.

The first type of learning is *formal learning* (Etling, 1993; Thaman, 2013). Formal learning is structured in terms of learning objectives, learning times, and learning support (Aberg, 2016). Coombs (1968), Rogers (2019), Thaman (2013) and Werquin (2010) defined

formal learning as structured, planned, proposed through national curriculum, and school-based learning that takes place in a formal education system. Eaton (2010) defined formal learning as continuous and intentional learning that occurs within an organized and structured context, leading to recognized diplomas. Thaman (2013) defined formal learning as organized and “worthwhile learning” as in schools (p. 99). For example, elementary schools, secondary schools, academic colleges, and universities are considered sites for formal learning (Rogers, 2004).

The second type of learning is *informal learning* (Etling, 1993; Thaman, 2013). Informal learning can be intentional but, in most cases, it is described as unintentional and non-institutionalized; learning can happen anytime, anywhere, and by anyone (Coombs, 1968; Rogoff, Callanan, Gutiérrez, & Erickson, 2016; Thaman, 2013). Such learning does not lead to recognized certifications or diplomas. Informal learning is a process whereby a learner acquires values, skills, and knowledge from daily experiences and activities related to work, family, or leisure (Eaton, 2010; Gross & Rutland, 2017; Thaman, 2013). Tough (2002) was one of the first scholars in 1967 to begin using the notion of informal learning while working with adults in Canada. Tough defined informal learning as a “very normal, very natural human learning activity . . . so invisible that people just do not seem to be aware of their own learning” (Tough, 2002, p. 2). Similarly, Aberg (2016) agreed with Tough (2002), defining informal learning as self-teaching or self-learning and “self-directed learning” (Tough, 2002, p. 2) that places learning decisions, such as what, when, and how to learn, in the hands of learners. Coombs (1968) and Eaton (2010) referred to informal learning as the truly lifelong process whereby individuals acquire skills, attitudes, and knowledge from daily experience and resources in their environment such as from family or friends, from work, market place, or the library. Examples of informal

learning include learning from extracurricular activities, peers or family members, field trips, and learning languages from native speakers (Eaton, 2010; Jumani, Rahman, & Bibi, 2011).

The third type of learning is *nonformal learning* or learning somewhere between formal and informal learning (Etling, 1993; Thaman, 2013). Nonformal learning is planned and structured or organized in terms of learning times, objectives, support, and sustained education activities embedded in and planned outside formal educational institutions but not leading to certification or a diploma (Aberg, 2016; Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004; Rogers, 2005; Thaman, 2013; Tough, 2002; Wals, Mochizuki, & Leicht, 2017). These researchers additionally describe nonformal learning as intentional, from the learner's perspective (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004), and as providing alternative learning opportunities to those who have no access to formal education or who need specific life skills and knowledge to conquer different obstacles (Cedefop, 2014; Etling, 1993; Eraut, 2000; Khaddage, Müller, & Flintoff, 2016; Thaman, 1992; Tuomainen, 2014). Coombs and Ahmed (1974) defined nonformal learning as “organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system” (p. 8). In addition, nonformal learning takes place in different situations and environments (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974; Thaman, 2013). It is student-centered, voluntary, purposeful, but more flexible and available for anyone. Examples of nonformal learning include adult literacy programs, occupational skill trainings, online tutorials, language skill programs, disciplinary after school projects, fitness classes, family planning, cooperatives, tutoring, or professional and vocational programs organized by non-profit organizations (Rogers, 2005).

Using and defining nonformal learning. I focus on *nonformal learning* in my work. I use the non-hyphenated term *nonformal* in my study. Etling (1993) determined that use of a hyphen affects the meaning of the word. According to the Oxford Dictionary (1998), “non-” is a

prefix representing the Latin adverb “nōn,” meaning “not, by no means, not a” (Suffolk, 1998, p. 775), usually indicating negation, refusal, absence of, reverse of, or opposition to formal learning. *Nonformal* learning with a hyphen (e.g., *non-formal*) represents opposition to formal learning. In accordance with previous scholars such as Aberg (2016), Etling (1993), Eraut (2000), and Farrow et al. (2015) spelled *nonformal learning* without a hyphen to indicate that *nonformal* learning is not the opposite of formal learning, but an alternative or complement to formal learning (Etling, 1993). Thus, I use the non-hyphenated *nonformal* to specify my intended meaning.

As a result of careful examination of studies (Aberg, 2016; Khaddage, 2016; Rogers, 2004; Thaman, 2013; Tuomainen, 2014) and official documents (Buckler & Creech, 2014; Cedefop, 2000; 2014; Etling, 1993; Eraut, 2000; Norqvist, Leffler, and Jahnke, 2016; UNESCO; 2005), and based on my experience in the WLCP, I define nonformal learning as follows: *Nonformal learning* is prearranged and semi-structured learning that happens in a program within an institution. Such learning is voluntary, self-directed, and self-engaged worthwhile learning. It does not lead to recognized certifications or diplomas; however, it is guided by a teacher or facilitator.

Findings of studies pertaining to nonformal learning. I synthesized research findings across 18 empirical studies pertaining to adults learning in nonformal settings (see Appendix A for search procedures and analyses of reviewed studies). The following three questions guided my review: (1) *What themes were common across studies with respect to nonformal learning settings?* (2) *What are key findings in the research regarding nonformal learning settings?* (3) *What are the gaps in the studies with respect to nonformal learning settings?*

I discerned three themes which contained various ideas or topics related to adult students joining nonformal learning contexts. The three themes are: the consequences of learning in nonformal settings; the ways that adults learned in nonformal settings; and, the reasons adults studied in nonformal settings. I describe each theme below.

The consequences of learning in nonformal settings. This category, the consequences of learning in nonformal settings, is an umbrella for the studies that focused on different types of skills and knowledge adults developed in nonformal settings. Adults showed development of unique skills, abilities, and knowledge through the use of *a) communication skills* (Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tuomainen, 2014), *b) social skills* (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Rawat, Bouchon, & Nair, 2015; Tai, Benedict, Canny, Haines, & Molloy, 2017), *c) digital skills* (Berger & Croll, 2012; Farrow et al. 2015; Kok, 2014; Perez-Sanagustin, Hernandez-Leo, Santos, Delgado Kloos, & Blat, 2014), and *d) basic literacy skills* (Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Krupar, Horvatek, & Byun, 2017; Ngaka, Openjuru, & Mazur, 2012; White & Lorenzi, 2016).

The studies used various frameworks within both qualitative and quantitative investigations. For example, Andersson and Andersson (2011) and Kok (2014) framed their studies within a sociocultural framework and used ethnographic and qualitative methods, such as case studies, whereas Aberg (2016) and Farrow et al. (2015) grounded their research within popular education and used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze data. Of the studies reviewed in this subsection, only Andersson and Andersson (2011) and Kok (2014) described adult students' experiences using the case study design in a nonformal setting. The remaining studies used quantitative or mixed methods to explore adult students' experiences in

various nonformal settings. In what follows, I describe studies related to communication skills. Next, I discuss studies focused on social skills. Then, I describe studies related to digital skills. Finally, I discuss studies focused on basic skills.

Studies that focus on communication skills. Each of these studies (Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tuomainen, 2014) focused primarily on communication skills within a nonformal setting. The communication skills discussed dealt primarily with learners' abilities to communicate within their disciplines in nonformal settings. For example, Mirzaee and Hasrati (2014) conducted a qualitative study using interviews to explore the role of written feedback to create a space for nonformal learning for English as a foreign language (EFL) students "within context of schooling in general" (p. 557). Although, this context is similar to formal learning, researchers referred to the learning space as a nonformal context under peer-learning void of grades. Working with five Finnish students, Tuomainen (2014) conducted mixed methods research to examine skills students acquired while learning Business English in a nonformal learning environment such as an English for Specific Purposes course (ESP). The researchers found that this course, which had no tests and no grades (the *exemption examination system*), helped students acquire communication skills at the Finland Language Center. The exemption examination system is defined as an open project assignment where students had to submit a project on what they learned. Similarly, Jumani and Fazal-ur-Rahman (2011) conducted mixed methods research on the need for promoting literacy in nonformal settings. The researchers interviewed 620 parents and students in 120 Punjabi schools to explore the role of communication. Researchers found positive outcomes related to communication skills. For example, students learned how to develop thoughts and get ready for college interviews.

Researchers in all three studies found positive outcomes that helped participants learn communication skills in nonformal settings. For example, in all three studies, students participated in active mutual engagement to develop communication skills in nonformal settings.

Studies that focus on social skills. Six studies focused on social skills. Social skills refer to social behaviors and the ability to engage in social activities within different societies. The six studies focused on adult students' behaviors in various societies and cultures, specifically emphasizing behaviors that made communication more effective and efficient. Researchers used various qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, Aberg (2016) and Cameron and Harrison (2012) employed quantitative methods using ANOVA to analyze data. Cameron and Harrison (2012) surveyed 172 participants as they examined social norms within a labor market program. Significant results deemed group participation vital in learning social skills in a nonformal learning setting. Participants working in the fields of management and commerce self-reported positive effects associated with learning and handling social skills in three different settings. Similarly, Aberg (2016) focused on the examination of the social dimension of 258 adults age 65 and older regarding participation, making friends, well-being, and self-perception in nonformal *Swedish Circles*. *Swedish Circle* is defined as a community center where older people interact and learn from each other through participation in social activities. The results were significant. The author found that Swedish Circles are beneficial; participants gained social skills and avoided social isolation and loneliness by getting to know one another through participation in circle activities.

Andersson and Andersson (2011), Rawat et al. (2015), and Tai et al. (2017), conducted qualitative studies to understand how adults initiate learning in nonformal settings. These three case studies focused on the engagement of learners within various societies, and researchers

sought to explore how participants developed cultural awareness. For example, Tai and his colleagues (2017) focused on understanding how adult students use social skills in nonformal *clinical learning practices* through observations by and interviews with their supervisors. The students were not evaluated for the purpose of assigning a grade. Instead, the goal of this setting was for students to gain experiences. Findings showed that engaging in peer-assisted learning and peer observation, within the clinics, helped students critically examine the notions of good practice and good feedback. In addition, students reported that they learned efficiently when educators were serving as facilitators to guide and mediate social learning.

Using sociocultural theory to analyze data, Andersson and Andersson's (2011) case study interviewed Somali refugees participating in a Swedish adult basic education context. These Somali refugees shared their struggles with understanding the Swedish government before joining the center. The research showed that the refugees developed cross-cultural understandings and felt comfortable with establishing relations and communication as they shared their culture and learned about Swedish societal norms. For example, in this nonformal setting, refugees learned how to create Swedish dialogue to effectively engage in communication, assimilate culturally with Swedish officials, and bring deeper awareness of Swedish, as well as, Somali societies. In like manner, Rawat, Bouchon, and Nair (2015) participants attended a training to develop social skills helpful in starting a new business. The researchers found that participants learned how to solve complex problems within Thai society through innovative learning processes involving social skills.

All six of the studies in this sub-section point readers toward trends regarding specific aspects of social skills applicable to nonformal settings. Participants interacted positively in nonformal contexts. For example, in all six studies, adult students learned how to create

dialogue for specific situations and assimilate culturally with government officials within a specific society. Although these six studies differentiated nonformal learning from other types of learning, researchers did not conduct deeper analyses of adult students' experiences related to the social skills discussed.

Studies that focus on digital skills. Four studies focused on digital skills. Digital skills refer to the ability to use online tools such as social media, blogs, and online social training platforms, as well as the creation of digital programs using technology. These four studies used both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the importance of online tools in developing digital skills in a nonformal setting. For example, Kok's (2014) case study focused on examining the ways participants used digital skills to collaborate and make meaning in a nonformal setting. The results showed that participants learned about new forums and social media blogs to build a network community and digital interaction. Observing their own behavioral patterns, participants gained a shared understanding via social media. Although participants learned how to acquire online tools to communicate through online forums and built spaces designed to get to know new participants, the researchers did not report about adult students' experiences with social media blogs or new forums.

In a similar way, using cross-case analysis and frequency analysis, Farrow et al. (2014) and Perez-Sanagustin et al. (2014) examined how adult students initiated learning to incorporate technology into their activities in a nonformal setting. The researchers found that participants learned to use apps, smartphones, and social media that helped them navigate special activities on campus. Participants used nonformal digital educational resources to help them better understand concepts learned in class. Although researchers found positive aspects of using nonformal digital skills, they did not explore students' perspectives of the value of using such

apps. Likewise, Berger and Croll (2012) found that during basic structured internet training, participants learned how to use internet skills to communicate digitally, write emails, browse on the Internet, and search for terms related to hardware. However, researchers did not report on participants' perceptions of their experiences.

Studies that focus on basic literacy skills. Five studies focused on basic literacy skills. Basic literacy skills refer to reading, learning about numeracy, writing, and learning about basic computer and technical skills (Arikawei et al., 2017). Researchers provided both descriptive statistical results and descriptive qualitative accounts of participants learning in nonformal settings (Arikawei et al., 2017; Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Krupar et al., 2017; Ngaka et al., 2012; White & Lorenzi, 2016). The researchers in all five studies found that nonformal settings positively impacted the development of literacy awareness and other basic literacy skills. For example, Arikawei et al. (2017), Jumani and Fazal-ur-Rahman (2011), and Krupar et al. (2017), used descriptive statistics to examine adult basic literacy skills learning. The researchers focused on demographics and other variables to analyze the data. The results of these three studies showed that adults who attend nonformal settings show significant learning of basic literacy skills. For example, adult students developed higher numeracy scores in nonformal settings. Finally, using qualitative methods Ngaka et al. (2012) and White and Lorenzi (2016) found positive effects, such as enhanced creativity, in participants' writings.

The ways that adults learned in nonformal settings. Studies of the ways that adults learned in nonformal settings included *a) using social media* (Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Perez-Senagustin et al., 2014; and Kok, 2014), *b) sharing life experiences* (Andersson and Andersson, 2011; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017), *c) engaging in interpersonal interactions such as peer to peer and student to teacher* (Aberg, 2016;

Berger & Croll, 2012; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Rawat et al., 2015; White & Lorenzi, 2016), and *d) engaging in self-learning* (Farrow et al., 2015; Krupar, Horvatek, & Byun, 2017; Tai et al., 2017; Tuomainen, 2014). Overall, studies in this category emphasized personal and digital experiences in a unique context. I begin this subsection by describing studies related to adults learning via social media. Second, I present studies focused on adults learning through shared life experiences. Next, I describe studies related to adults learning through interpersonal interaction. Finally, I discuss studies focused on adults learning through self-learning.

Adult learning via social media. These studies (Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Kok, 2014; and Perez-Senagustin et al., 2014) explored adults' purposeful use of technology and social media in nonformal settings. In Kok's (2014) quantitative case study, participants were employees of International Business Machines (IBM). These researchers found that these employees created nonformal online communities where they participated in the exchange of ideas using social media such as Facebook, instant messaging, blogs, and wikis. In Jumani and Fazal-ur-Rahman (2011) and Perez-Senagustin et al. (2014), researchers found that adults learned better when they used media tools such as smartphones, Bluetooth, and technologies what were of interest to them. Through interactive ways of learning, participants provided feedback via apps and online platforms. In addition, students reported that they preferred the blended learning approach of using online educational materials with traditional place-based in-class instruction (Tochon, 2017).

Adult learning through shared life experiences. Adults learning through shared life experiences in nonformal settings were illustrated by Andersson and Andersson (2011), Cameron and Harrison (2012), Ngaka et al. (2012), and Norqvist and Leffler (2017). Both Ngaka et al. (2012) and Norqvist and Leffler (2017) used the case study approach with interviews and focus

groups to learn about their informants' experiences. They found that adults experienced higher levels of learning when they used experience-based learning. For example, participants documented their experiences and shared with each other, they kept blogs, used photos, and social media to reflect on what they experienced. Similarly, Andersson and Andersson (2011) found that participants learned about Swedish society when they compared their experiences in both Somali and Swedish societies. Although Cameron and Harrison (2012) conducted quantitative research, they reported similar findings related to adults learning through shared life experiences. For example, when employing statistical analysis, 84% of participants reported that they learned effectively using skills drawn from their life experiences

Learning through interpersonal interaction. A focus on adults learning in nonformal settings through interpersonal interaction such as peer-to-peer interaction was evident in the following five studies: Aberg (2016), Berger and Croll (2012), Mirzaee and Hasrati (2014), Rawat et al. (2015), and White and Lorenzi (2016). examined adults' interpersonal interactions in nonformal settings. Aberg (2016) and Berger and Croll (2012) found that participants were satisfied attending circles (activities where adults interacted and learned from each other) and trainings that helped them improve their peer-to-peer interaction and build networks. For example, participants learned from each other by asking questions and showing how to navigate social platforms such as blogs and Facebook.

Mirzaee and Hasrati (2014) examined how formative feedback in a nonformal setting helped improve master's program students' academic writing in a foreign language course in Iran. The authors found that through inter student communication and interaction, participants learned how to react to written feedback. Students were able to provide feedback to each other and, by so doing, scaffold one another's learning. In a similar vein, Rawat et al. (2015),

conducted a case study to examine nonformal learners' successes as they engaged in projects involving student and teacher interactions and communication technology. Finally, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, White and Lorenzi (2016) studied the ways participants developed creative writing skills through student and teacher interaction in an Irish non-profit center. Researchers found that participants were creative when the teacher and student had built an effective relationship and when the learning environment was meaningful to the learners.

Adult learning through self-learning. Four of the studies examined how adults learned various skills in nonformal settings in a manner best described as self-learning (i.e., independent learning through such venues as tutorials) (Tai et al., 2017, Farrow et al., 2015, Krupar et al., 2017, and Tuomainen, 2014). Tai et al. (2017) and Tuomainen (2014), through surveys and interviews, identified participants' self-learning and self-examination skills. Participants independently self-assessed their own learning and learned from tutorials. Using data from the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey, Krupar and his colleagues (2017) found that adult immigrants in Canada improved their learning when they independently acquired basic skills in a nonformal setting. Finally, Farrow and colleagues (2015) focused on how adults using MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses, learned new skills. Researchers found that participants were satisfied and effectively mastered content when they used these online tutorials. Although participants gave positive feedback, they reported difficulties with using some of the online resources without their teacher's help.

The reasons adults studied in nonformal settings. Studies that focused on reasons adults studied in nonformal settings included *employment, social or cultural interaction, and personal edification*. Seven of the studies focused on employment (Arikawei et al., 2017; Berger & Croll, 2012; Kok, 2014; Krupar et al., 2017; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; and

Rawat et al., 2015). Four of the studies provided rich descriptions of social and cultural interaction (Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tai et al., 2017). The remaining four studies described adults' personal edification (Aberg, 2016; Farrow et al., 2015; Perez-Sanagustin, 2014; White & Lorenzi, 2016). Interestingly, 15 of the 18 reviewed studies fit within this category. In the subsections below I describe first, studies related to employment. Second, I present studies focused on social or cultural interaction. Finally, I provide studies focused on personal edification.

Employment. Seven of the studies in this category examined the purpose of learning different skills to improve life quality through employment (Arikawei et al., 2017; Berger & Croll, 2012; Kok, 2014; Krupar et al., 2017; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Rawat et al., 2015). Five studies in this category used qualitative approaches such as interviews and observations to collect and analyze data. Berger and Croll (2012), Kok (2014), Norqvist and Leffler (2017), Rawat et al. (2015), and Ngaka et al. (2012) found that participants' main reasons to join nonformal settings were to prepare for the job market or get promoted. Rawat et al. (2015) and Ngaka et al. (2012) found that their participants from Thailand and Uganda learned how to use basic financial skills including investing and saving to start their own businesses, thereby, to help their families obtain economic stability. Similarly, Kok (2014) and Norqvist and Leffler (2017) found that participants joined nonformal settings to improve digital skills and other work skills in an after-work program. Interestingly, in both studies, the findings showed that nonformal programs helped participants gain social skills, be marketable, and apply for jobs.

In a similar vein, Krupar et al. (2017) examined first-generation immigrants in Canada and how a nonformal learning setting assisted them in developing job related skills. The authors found that 61%, of those studied, benefited from participating in on-the-job trainings that taught

basic job skills that eventually helped with placement in a skilled workplace (Krupar et al., 2017). Finally, Berger and Croll (2012) examined Russian adult immigrants who joined a nonformal setting to learn basic internet skills, like the sending and receiving of emails, necessary in most jobs. These low-income females and disabled elderly people were highly motivated to achieve relevant skills to ensure job success.

Studies by Arikawei et al. (2017) and Krupar et al. (2017) were quantitative in nature and researchers used descriptive statistics to analyze their data. The variables included gender, age, and participants' reasons to join nonformal settings. Arikawei et al. (2017) surveyed 232 adult women learners and facilitators of a nonformal vocational program in Bayela, Nigeria. Researchers reported that participants found learning basic literacy and numeracy skills essential in building sustainable work environments and obtaining employment. While obtaining home management skills that could help them attain jobs, these nonformal programs, neglected the teaching of entrepreneurial skills that are important when applying for jobs.

Social or cultural interaction. Four studies comprised the subcategory of social or cultural interaction (Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tai et al., 2017). Social and cultural interactions included learning about specific cultural competencies or socially accepted practices related to politeness, food, relationships, etc. Andersson and Andersson (2011), Mirzaee and Hasrati (2014), and Tai et al. (2017) used qualitative approaches to examine inter-student interactions and cross-cultural understandings in nonformal settings. Mirzaee and Hasrati (2014), interviewed five graduate students to understand the role of written feedback to create a space for nonformal learning “within context of schooling in general” (p. 557). Students reported that graduate level writing in nonformal contexts was different from writing for formal classes.

Along the same line, Andersson and Andersson (2011) found that participating Somali refugees learned about Swedish cultures and developed a deeper awareness of that society. Cameron and Harrison (2012) and Tai et al. (2017) conducted an exploratory study to examine adult interaction and engagement in nonformal contexts. The findings revealed participants, through peer-to-peer interactions, learned socially accepted norms and developed social skills that helped them successfully engage in various settings.

Finally, in two studies, Aberg (2016) and White and Lorenzi (2016) focused on how and why different nonformal settings were important to participants. Both studies surmised that participants were personally interested in social and cultural interaction in the learning environment. Aberg's (2016) case study focused on a *circles* activity where adults interacted by asking questions about each other's daily lives. Similarly, White and Lorenzi (2016) reported that students benefited from participating in a nonformal intensive creative writing program that focused on providing a cozy atmosphere and creative ideas for writers. Researchers in both studies found that participants attended nonformal settings for their personal well-being, to build social networks, and to find cozy spaces to promote successful creative writing.

Personal edification. Personal edification in learning various skills in different nonformal settings was illustrated by Aberg (2016), Farrow et al. (2015), Perez-Sanagustin et al. (2014), and White and Lorenzi, (2016). Personal edification refers to adult's personal interest in constructing or building knowledge. Each of these studies focused on exploring the reasons adults decided to learn in nonformal settings. Farrow et al. (2015) surveyed adults from the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Canada. As a result of this comparative study, the researchers found participants had different reasons to use nonformal settings to educate themselves. Adults preferred reading blogs related to their interests, taking notes while reading,

writing blogs, and discussing both in person and online the content of their focus or area of interest. Participants explored online resources using different apps to develop technology awareness.

Similarly, Perez-Sanagustin et al. (2014) used a case study methodology to explore students' abilities to use technology such as smartphones for both in class and outside of class activities. The researchers found that students joined the class because they wanted to improve their digital skills to support their learning. Participants reported that they improved their learning when they were actively aware of the technology they were using. In addition, students found activities were meaningful because they developed blended learning skills. For example, using both paper and digital maps, students worked on a task to explore the campus and Barcelona. Participants used *Bluetooth* to connect with their peers and teachers and provide their reflections. Students reported they enjoyed sharing their interests while doing meaningful activities in a nonformal setting.

Contribution of my study to the field of nonformal setting. In this section, I first present the key findings and emerged themes from reviewed studies. Then, I discuss how my study fills a gap in the literature pertaining to the nonformal learning field.

The key findings and emerged themes. Research reviewed for this study examined learners' experiences within different nonformal settings that occurred both in and outside the United States employing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Arikawai et al., 2017; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Farrow et al. 2015; Berger & Croll, 2012; Tai et al., 2017). Although the research in this field is not yet extensive (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2005; Jumani et al., 2011), there are strong indications that nonformal settings positively affect student learning. For example, in nonformal

settings learners experienced positive emotions as they interacted with each other and effectively practiced and learned different skills (Krupar et al., 2017; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Ngaka et al., 2012). Specifically, studies showed that in general, digital skills including social media, and digital tools, such as, apps and smartphones, helped participants collaborate to build a network community (Berger & Croll, 2012; Farrow et al. 2015; Kok, 2014; Perez-Sanagustin et al. 2014).

The following three themes emerged from this literature review: (1) the consequences of learning in nonformal settings; (2) the ways that adults learn in nonformal settings; and (3) the reasons adult students study in nonformal settings. The first theme, *the consequences of learning in nonformal settings*, showed that adult students learned communication, social, digital, and basic skills that are necessary for the enhancement of their lives (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Arikawei et al., 2017; Berger & Croll, 2012; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Farrow et al. 2015; Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Kok, 2014; Krupar et al., 2017; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Perez-Sanagustin et al., 2014; Rawat, Bouchon, & Nair, 2015; Tai et al., 2017; Tuomainen, 2014; White & Lorenzi, 2016).

The second theme, *the ways adults learned in nonformal settings*, determined that they learned through interacting via social media, sharing life experiences, engaging in peer-to-peer and student-teacher interpersonal interactions, and engaging in self-learning (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Berger & Croll, 2012; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Farrow et al., 2015, Jumani & Fazal-ur-Rahman, 2011; Perez-Sanagustin et al., 2014; Kok, 2014; Krupar et al., 2017; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Rawat et al., 2015; Tai et al., 2017; Tuomainen, 2014; and White & Lorenzi, 2016).

The third theme, *reasons adult students study in nonformal settings*, revealed that they study in nonformal settings to improve their quality of life via employment, social or cultural

interaction, and personal edification (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Arikawei et al., 2017; Berger & Croll, 2012; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Farrow et al., 2015; Kok, 2014; Krupar et al., 2017; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Perez-Sanagustin, 2014; Rawat et al., 2015; Tai et al., 2017; White & Lorenzi, 2016).

How my study fills a gap in the literature pertaining to nonformal learning. First, although there are many documents, reviews, and reports on informal and nonformal settings, I could not locate studies on nonformal settings similar to the WLCP focused on adult student learning and experiences. The studies I found, were conducted by researchers, government institutions, and international organizations. Although there are studies focused on learning languages and cultures informal through summer study abroad experiences and of professional development workshops, I could not locate studies that focused specifically on adult students' learning and experiences in nonformal learning settings. Through the review of literature, I identified two gaps that I address in my study. The first gap relates to adult students' learning in nonformal settings. The second gap relates to adult students' experiences in nonformal settings. In the following sub-section, I address each gap in the field.

First gap: Adult student learning in nonformal settings. Although I reviewed many studies, I was unable to locate research that addressed adult students' learning relative to unique conceptual content pertaining to world languages and cultures. Instead, the content taught and learned in these studies was medicine (Tai et al., 2017), English for specific purposes (Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tuomainen, 2014; White & Lorenzi, 2016), adult basic education (Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Arikawei et al. 2017; Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Jumani et al, 2011; Krupar et al., 2017; Ngaka et al., 2012; Norqvist & Leffler 2017), e-learning and technology (Berger & Croll, 2012; Farrow et al., 2015; Kok, 2014; Pepper et al. 2013; Perez-Sanagustin et al., 2014),

and psychology (Aberg, 2016); Tourism (Rawat et al., 2015). Consequently, this study promises to make a unique contribution to the field of studies with respect to adult students' learning knowledge of world languages and cultures in nonformal settings.

Second gap: Adult students' experiences in nonformal settings. As a result of my search, I was unable to locate studies that focused on adult students' experiences in nonformal settings related to world languages and cultures. Instead, studies focused on the following contexts: medical clinic (Tai et al., 2017), tutoring center (White & Lorenzi, 2016), adult education center (Aberg, 2016; Andersson & Andersson, 2011; Arikawei et al., 2017; Berger & Croll, 2012; Jumani et al., 2011; Kok, 2014; Rawat et al., 2015), learning space for nonformal learning “within context of schooling in general” (Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014, p. 557), and e-learning courses (Peffer et al., 2013; Perez-Sanagustin et al., 2014), educational resource center (Farrow et al., 2015), English Language Center (Tuomainen, 2014), community center (Ngaka et al., 2012), workplace learning centers including labor market programs (Cameron & Harrison, 2012; Krupar et al., 2017), and a youth center (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017). As a result, this study promises to make a unique contribution to the field with respect to adult students' experiences in learning world language and culture in nonformal settings.

In sum, the above-mentioned contexts in reviewed studies were referred to as nonformal settings where students were tutored one-on-one and were not formally graded (Farrow et al., 2015; Mirzaee & Hasrati, 2014; Tai et al., 2016). Based on this information, it is clear that this study of the WLCP can make a unique contribution to the literature on nonformal learning setting that is entirely voluntary, awards no letter grades or credits, is available at no charge, is highly flexible, involves teachers who are native speakers of taught languages, and facilitates one-on-one assistance to foster student learning. In addition, based on the above mentioned two

gaps, this study promises to contribute to the field with respect to adult student learning of and experiences with world language and culture in nonformal settings.

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