

**PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR: INVESTIGATING HOW INSTRUCTORS
ESTABLISH TEACHING PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
ENVIRONMENTS**

By

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ABSTRACT

PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR: INVESTIGATING HOW INSTRUCTORS ESTABLISH TEACHING PRESENCE IN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS

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In this embedded case study, instructors reflected on their own intentions and practices in the creation and administration of their asynchronous fully online courses to provide new insight into teaching presence as encapsulated in the Community of Inquiry framework and a fresh perspective on teaching in online environments. I interviewed five instructors and one graduate assistant teaching asynchronous fully online courses at a large Midwestern research university using a protocol derived from the Community of Inquiry questionnaire to determine whether and how they engaged in the practices identified by the C of I framework as comprising teaching presence. In addition, the interviews delved into what inspired their choices. The findings provide new insights for those teaching or preparing to teach in online environments, for those responsible for professional development of instructors of asynchronous fully online courses, and for future research into teaching presence.

The Community of Inquiry framework was first established by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000) as a methodology and heuristic to describe learning in a computer-based class. The framework is comprised of three overlapping circles, representing teaching, social, and cognitive presence, which work together in worthwhile educational experiences. Teaching presence plays a key mediating role between the other two presences; studies have shown a link between teaching presence and student perceptions of learning, of instructor performance, and of cognitive and affective learning.

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This is dedicated to: my husband, Mike; my children, Robert and Arielle; my grandchildren, Hunter and Aaliyah; my parents; and to every woman over the age of 40 who decides to go out on a limb and pursue a dream.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Online education, in its various forms, has been recognized for close to 20 years as transformational to higher education, with growth in online class offerings and fully online degrees exploding during that time period. Online learning has grown a great deal via integration of technology into all levels of education, as colleges and universities seek to attract populations of students they may not have reached previously to support shrinking budgets and declining student enrollment (Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleen & Stevens, 2012; Sung & Mayer, 2012). Radford (2011) pointed to the flexibility that distance education offers to students who have to juggle work and family commitments as they pursue a higher education.

Experts have been predicting a plateau in enrollments in distance education courses for several years. However, the most recent data shows a slowdown in the increase in enrollments but no sign of a plateau (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Between 2000 and 2008, enrollment in distance education classes jumped from eight to 20% of U.S. undergraduates enrolled in one or more online classes, increasing to 32% in 2013. According to the Babson Digital Education Enrollment Report for 2017, the trend of increasing enrollments in distance education courses has continued unabated. In fact, Allen and Seaman (2017) reported a 3.9% uptick in enrollments between 2014 and 2015, with over 6 million students taking at least one online course. In total, nearly 30% of all post-secondary students take at least one course via distance education; just over half of those take a blend of on-the-ground and distance courses, as opposed to all courses taken online (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Research from a 2011 NCES distance education report showed that nontraditional undergraduates (those who are older, have a dependent, spouse or full-time employment) were more likely to utilize distance education classes and programs, as were those with mobility disabilities (Radford, 2011, p. 3).

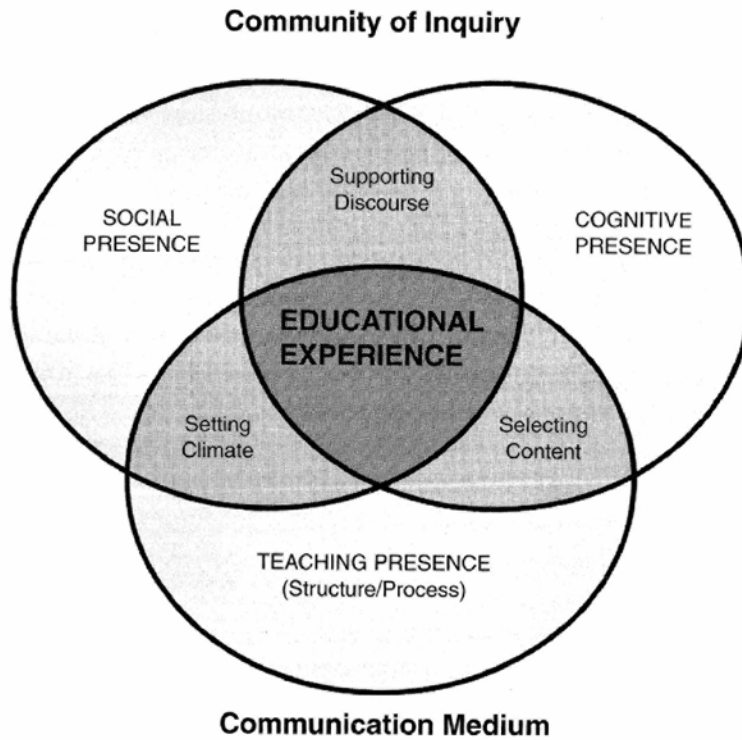
As enrollments increase, so do the number faculty teaching online courses, rising to 42% of all faculty teaching an online course (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017). While nine out of 10 say they were involved in the design of the online course, less than half report receiving professional development on online course design, and one quarter have assistance from an instructional designer in the creation of their course. When queried about the quality of the learning experience, faculty who teach online believe their courses produce equivalent outcomes to in-person courses, while faculty who do not teach online courses do not agree as strongly. However, the faculty seem to agree that online courses suffer in the area of student interaction and reaching at-risk students (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017). Teaching online is more time intensive than teaching a face-to-face class. Kenny and Fluck (2017) found that it takes 10 hours to prepare for one hour of instruction in an online course, versus eight hours for a face-to-face course. This equated to 100 hours of work to create a new unit online, and more time to revise and update an online course compared to a face-to-face course.

In light of the growth of forms of distance education in the late 20th century, the Sloan Consortium created its Five Pillars for Quality Online Education (learning effectiveness, student satisfaction, faculty satisfaction, cost effectiveness, and access) in an attempt to provide guidance about values, principles and goals for asynchronous learning networks. This proposal will utilize this Sloan-C descriptor for this study's context of asynchronous fully online classes: "computer and Internet technologies [used] to facilitate interactive communications between an instructor(s) and students inside an online learning environment" (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002, p. 3). This environment exists asynchronously outside a physical location and utilizes electronic communications and text/multimedia learning resources.

The first of the five pillars, Learning Effectiveness, hinges on interaction – with classmates, instructors and content. This pillar requires “that educators understand how to build online learning environments that generate meaningful discourse and encourage deep reflection” (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002, p. 3). It is essential that faculty members engaged in teaching in asynchronous online environments understand that learning online is significantly different from teaching face-to-face; to insure the creation of positive interactions with their students, faculty need to be aware of and prioritize engaging in models of “online pedagogical interactions” (Kupczynski, Ice, Wiesenmayer, & McCluskey, 2010). To that end, a framework for understanding these interactions is the Community of Inquiry, in which online classes “create communities of inquiry where learning is accomplished through sustained electronic communication” (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002, p. 3).

The Community of Inquiry model is depicted as a Venn diagram (see figure 1), comprised of the categories of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. Swan, Garrison and Richardson (2009) described the framework as being “two constituting notions of community and inquiry form[ing] a pragmatic organizing framework of sustainable practices and processes for the purpose of guiding online educational practice” (p. 45). It is intended to provide a conceptual framework that would offer a heuristic and a methodology for studying education in a digital environment across contexts, with the goal to “define, describe and measure the elements of a collaborative and worthwhile educational experience” (p. 45).

Figure 1: Community of Inquiry Framework



Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010.

Jézégou (2010) offered a useful explication and critique of the C of I framework, noting specifically that a community “organizes itself around a common space of interactions and exchanges, mainly based on the logic of collaboration” (p. 50). The community of inquiry, then, is a learning collaboration that seeks to co-construct knowledge. Jézégou suggested the following definition for community of inquiry:

A group of people, who are voluntary members with various expertise of equal value, who are jointly involved in a problem solving process based on the general principles of the scientific method and in a collaborative learning process; these combined processes facilitate the individual and collective construction of knowledge. (p. 51)

For the community of inquiry to meet its goals, the students must be motivated and self-regulated to collaborate with the group (Jézégou, 2010). To help accomplish this goal, “the instructor has an important role to...motivate each learner while helping him regulate his learning environment and behaviour in a collaborative logic in order to create a *community of inquiry*” (p. 52). Further, Jézégou provided a description of the particular brand of community referenced by this framework, which goes beyond the basic contours of a flexible, goal-oriented social organization to include define a learning community: “A community [that] organizes itself around a common space of interactions and exchanges, mainly based on the logic of collaboration” (p. 3).

Online education has shifted the paradigm of community, transforming three areas of education: “knowledge transmission to knowledge building; teacher-centered to learning-centered, and passive to active learning” (Tekiner Tolu & Shuford Evans, 2013, p. 53). Tekiner Tolu and Shuford Evans (2013) highlighted six main areas of effective online community building, which include honesty (safety and trust of learners); responsiveness (timely interactions and response to needs and concerns); relevance (promotes learning, connects to real-life experiences); respect (welcome messages, self-introductions, feedback, self-/group evaluations, confidentiality, consenting to group work, ethics); openness (free sharing of thoughts/feelings, respect and honesty); empowerment (learners control the learning process). The C of I framework combines community and inquiry to bring about learning.

Therefore, an online community of learning differs from other communities due to inquiry. The C of I was derived from extensive analysis and comparison of spoken and text-based CMC, as well as their effects on thinking, research on social-learning, community, social-constructivism, collaborative learning, instructional design, and distance education. (Tekiner Tolu & Shuford Evans, 2013, p. 54)

Teaching Presence

This study is specifically interested in one of the three circles of the C of I model – teaching presence, or the pedagogical strategies that faculty teaching in asynchronous online environments choose to create and facilitate their classes. Teaching presence unites and sustains the other two presences in the framework. According to Archer (2013):

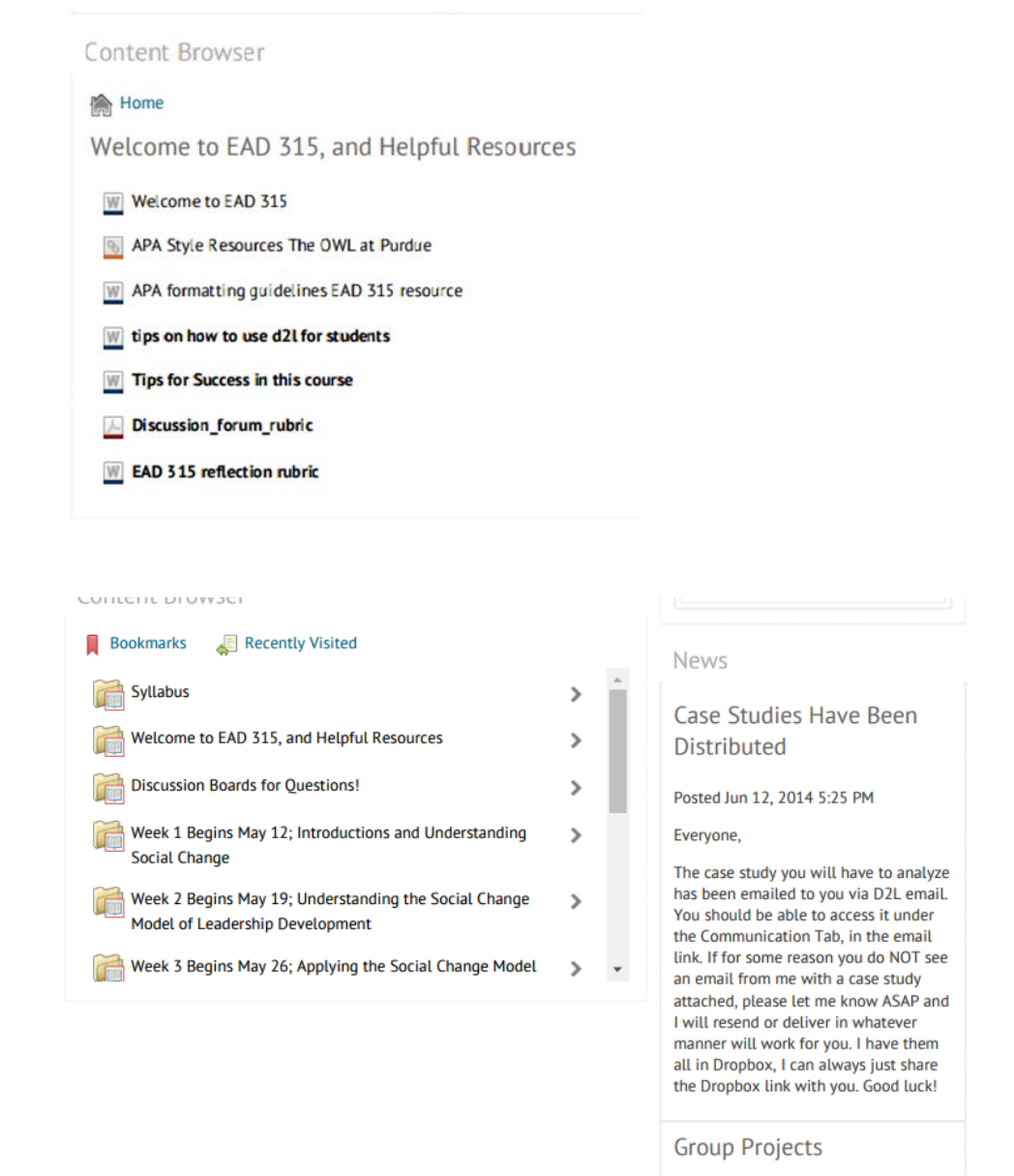
In this learner communicative context, student learning is dependent on deliberate actions by the instructors (Teaching Presence, in the Communities of Inquiry framework) to build a collaborative and constructivist learning process (Social Presence) that will assist students to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Cognitive Presence). (p. xv)

Designing an online course takes more time than a face-to-face course: “Because online learning sets new expectations and norms for students, everything needs to be more explicit and transparent” (Tekiner Tolu & Shuford Evans, 2013, p. 57). The original Community of Inquiry model depicts teaching presence as consisting of three characteristics or activities of the asynchronous online course: design and administration, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001). Design and administration consists of planning the course by “thinking through the process, structure, evaluation and interaction components,” including curriculum materials (external readings and resources; lecture notes, mini-lectures and personal insights), activities (group and individual exercises and projects), processes (timelines, “netiquette”), and Macro-level structure (having a “grand design” for the course and a narrative path through the learning goals) (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5-6).

This introduction to the course, which would normally be accomplished during a face-to-face class’s first meeting, welcomes the students into the course, provides a course outline, timeline and expectations. An additional responsibility of the asynchronous online educator is to

provide the students with tools and resources for navigating the online course environment as well as support for their success. An example from an online version of a course I facilitated at a research university is below to illustrate some of the content that may occur in this portion of faculty presence. The first shows the Welcome and Resources area, while the second shows the course overview and the “grand design” of the course.

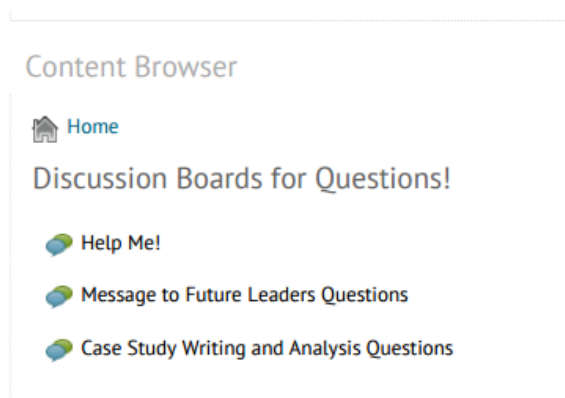
Figure 2: Example of Introductory Elements



Much of the pedagogy used in online courses utilizes discourse in some fashion. Anderson et al. (2001) stressed that the facilitating discourse element of teaching presence is “critical to maintaining the interest, motivation and engagement of students. Activities that characterize this aspect include reading and responding to student postings and looking for ways to deepen and strengthen the learning community” (p. 7). Just as an instructor moderates a discussion in a face-to-face class, instructors in online environments model behavior and moderate discussions in a mediated environment, and as a result create a positive learning environment.

An example, taken from our example course for illustration, is a discussion board area in which students can post questions about course content or just overall posts for assistance. This discussion board was moderated by the instructor, but students were also encouraged to post to each other to help create a learning community. In addition, each week had some form of discussion that would take place between the instructor and the students as well as a requirement for students to interact with each other.

Figure 3: Example of Facilitating Discourse



Finally, direct instruction can be thought of as content delivery as well as intellectual and scholarly leadership. Anderson et al. (2001) quoted Davie in saying that “the instructor must be able to set and communicate the intellectual climate of the course or seminar, and model the

qualities of a scholar” (p. 8). Other elements include advancing discussion, clarifying misconceptions, checking for understanding, providing resource suggestions, etc. The screen shot below illustrates some of the activities used in the example course for these elements. For example, in Week 1, the instructor had asked for the students to respond with any questions or concerns they may have about the course after the introductory elements. The answers to these student questions appear in the first document on the site. Additionally, direct instruction appears in the Week 2 letter, in which the instructor gives an overview of the readings, the assignments, and the key ideas to focus on.

Figure 4: Examples of Direct Instruction

The screenshot displays a Canvas LMS interface. On the left is a 'Table of Contents' sidebar with a list of course sections and their respective counts in parentheses: 'Syllabus' (1), 'Welcome to EAD 315, and Helpful Resources' (7), 'Discussion Boards for Questions!' (7), 'Week 1 Begins May 12; Introductions and Understanding Social Change' (7), 'Week 2 Begins May 19; Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development' (4), 'Everyday Leadership' (1), 'Reflection 2' (1), 'Week 3 Begins May 26; Applying the Social Change Model' (6), 'Week 4 Begins June 2; Understand Societal and Community Values Through Citizenship Begins May 31' (6), 'Week 5 Begins June 9; Understanding Group Values through Collaboration, Common Purpose, and Controversy with Civility Begins June 8' (7), and 'Week 6 Begins June 16; Understanding Individual Values' (6). The 'Week 2' section is highlighted in blue.

The main content area on the right shows the details for 'Week 2 Begins May 19; Understanding the Social Change Model of Leadership Development'. At the top, there are buttons for 'New', 'Add Existing Activities', and 'Bulk Edit', along with 'Expand All' and 'Collapse All' links. The week's activities are listed as follows:

- 'Week One Questions' (with a document icon)
- 'Week 2 Letter' (with a document icon, marked with a checkmark, and a start time of 'Starts May 15, 2014 10:00 PM')
- 'This week's reading: Chapter 2' (with a document icon, containing the text: 'I put this here to just be a reminder about what the reading is -- there's nothing to do in this module.'
- 'Week 2 Discussion Forum 1 -- Questions, Concerns or Issues' (with a speech bubble icon, containing the text: 'This is the place for any questions about the readings, the assignments, any problems or concerns you want to talk about or suggestions you'd like to make.'
- 'Week 2 Discussion Forum 2: Who Are You?' (with a speech bubble icon, containing the text: 'A discussion forum for us to share and consider who we are -- our identities, our values, etc. Share as you see fit, this is not required but is a way to drive our learning deeper and make it personal.'
- '[Broken Topic]' (with a speech bubble icon, marked with a red exclamation mark icon)
- 'Everyday Leadership' (with a document icon, containing a sub-section 'Some Information' marked with a checkmark)
- 'Everyday Leadership folder' (with a folder icon, marked with a checkmark)
- 'Reflection 2' (with a document icon)

Why Teaching Presence is Important

Research has found that there is a link between faculty teaching presence and student perception of learning and of the instructor's performance:

Many researchers such as Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010) and Shea and Bidjerano (2009) empirically proved that teaching presence is a determinant to predict social presence and cognitive presence of online students in higher education. Instructor's

teaching, emphasized as a core element to establish and sustain social engagement and cognitive gain could be realized by showing quality instruction practices in cyber space, which led to the development of community of inquiry. (Kim, Kwon & Cho, 2011, p. 1514)

According to Kupcznski et al. (2010), researchers found that teaching presence is the “primary catalyst for formation of both of the other presences. (see Shea and Bidjerano, 2009; Pisutova-Gerber and Malovicova (2009); deLang, Dolmans, Jobsis, Muijtjens, and van der Vleuten (2009); and Akyol and Garrison (2008).) Additionally, high levels of instructor presence result in better evaluations of effectiveness, while an instructor’s intimacy and immediacy communication behaviors are thought to be related to increased cognitive and affective learning (Sung & Mayer, 2012). Desai et al., argue that successful distance education requires increased interaction between instructor and student which, they assert, “plays a huge role in establishing a sense of community over the web for the learner” (as cited in Boling et al., 2012, p. 119).

Student reactions to teaching presence. Boling et al. (2012) studied what supported and hindered online teaching and learning experiences of eight students and six faculty participating in online education. Their findings showed that students defined a good instructor as one “who is “accessible,” “flexible,” and provides individualized feedback...and seemed to determine their overall impressions of their online programs” (2012, p. 121). Students further disclosed that instructor feedback seemed to build a strong connection. Communication and feedback are key components of teaching presence. Baker (2010) reported that research in the area of teaching presence has shown a positive relationship between teacher immediacy behaviors (asking questions, using “we” and “us” pronouns, self-disclosure, praise, frequent response, for example) and student cognition and affect. Faculty must utilize frequent interaction, feedback, moderation

of discussion, content expertise, etc. to establish presence (Baker, 2010; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). Among Western students, Beaudoin, Kurtz and Eden (2009) found that content and organization, convenience and flexibility, online interaction, and instructor's role influenced satisfaction. Shea, Sau, Li and Pickett (2006) asserted that students are not only aware of when instructors are present, but also of what techniques are used to create teaching presence, and that students will rate their instructors accordingly on evaluations. Teaching presence, then, is key to student satisfaction with their learning experience, as well as perceived learning.

A Brief History of “Distance Education” and Competing Frameworks

The roots of distance education, or trying to bring learning to people rather than the other way around, date back to the 1800s and can be traced through correspondence courses, to film, radio and television learning, and finally to education facilitated through internet technology (Simonson, Schlosser, & Orellana, 2011; Sun & Chen, 2016). At a time when a college education was out of reach for all but the elites, industrial workers were looking for a method to gain an advantage over their coworkers. According to Ferster (2014), these correspondence schools sent printed materials as pamphlets or books through the mail; the students sent back their quizzes, essays, and content questions for grading and responses. Once the graders at the businesses determined a student had successfully completed the course of study, the student would receive a certificate of completion. One of the first was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) and, later, the Chautauqua Assembly Herald. Another, the International Correspondence School, initially targeted miners and later branched out to other trades and preparatory services.

Eventually, distance education evolved to include film, radio, and television learning, whose “allure was one of economy of scale; produce an episode at a fixed cost and then present

that experience over and over, presumably at a lower incremental cost each time, in contrast to a live instructor who must constantly deliver the lecture at the same cost per performance” (Ferster, 2014, p. 32). Films pioneered “edutainment,” while radio offered outreach to rural schools to offer more diverse subject matter. The federal government and the Ford Foundation invested \$100 million in the 1960s on educational television trials involving more than 300,000 students across 250 school systems and 50 colleges, with moderate results. Eventually audio/visual technology coupled with the correspondence school model created mailed video courses, such as the Great Courses series (Ferster). According to Sun and Chen (2016), the first online course was made available in 1981, and Western Behavior Sciences Institute was home to the first online program in 1982. Satellite courses helped bolster K-12 schools during a shortage in math, science, and foreign language teachers in the mid-1980s. Moving into the 21st century, large universities like MIT start posting their courses for free consumption on the internet, initiating an OpenCourseWare revolution, while Apple created iTunes U to allow universities to distributed courses widely. Innovators like Salman Khan started recording instructional material on “virtual chalkboards” to be made accessible on YouTube and Vimeo. During this time, colleges and universities have continued to build their online learning capabilities and offerings in the for-credit arena (Ferster).

The C of I framework offered a new way to think about learning in an online environment. As Garrison (2016) recounted, the framework came about at a time when “there was little research and virtually no coherent perspective in which to help us understand online learning” (p. viii). Collaboration is at the heart of this “parsimonious” framework, as Garrison described it, and the focus is on the complex process of the elements of the learning enterprise. At around the same time, researchers were writing about the equivalency theory of distance

education, which stressed equivalent learning experiences that would lead to equivalent outcomes for both students sitting in traditional brick and mortar classrooms as well as those learning at a distance. As Simonson (1999) explained:

...learning at a distance and learning locally are *fundamentally* different, even when interactive technologies are used. Equivalency theory advocates the design for distant and local learners of a collection of probably different but ultimately equivalent learning experiences...the experiences of the local learner and distant learner should have equivalent value even though specific experiences might be quite different. (p. 7)

Competing frameworks for online education shift the focus to other perspectives, however. For example, the Sloan-C Foundation, which has evolved to the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), took a more institutional focus on online learning, focusing instead on teaching effectiveness, scale (cost effectiveness and commitment), access, and faculty and student satisfaction (Online Learning Consortium, 2018).

Quality Matters also has a large influence on online education today; its focus is on alignment to accomplish the desired learning outcomes. The rubrics used to score online courses focus on course elements (Butcher & Wilson-Strydom, n.d.). Networks are the most recent view of online learning, namely the next generation digital learning environment (NGDLE), which is described as “an ecosystem – a learning environment consisting of learning tools and components that adhere to common standards” (Educause Learning Initiative, 2015). Its features are interoperability and integration, personalization, analytics, advising, and learning assessment, collaboration, accessibility and universal design which uses a learning management system as a “central nervous system” (Baker, 2017). Even Anderson (2015), one of the originators of the C of I, has evolved to view online learning in terms of networks that “allow learning to expand

beyond the temporal bounds and role designations of this term's students and teachers and evolve into networks of current students, professionals, alumni, and guests" and "leave traces of learning activity— visible strategies and artifacts— that enrich future students and informal learners from around the world who are not enrolled in the course" (p. 232).

Purpose and Research Questions

Teaching online requires specific techniques and processes to bridge the gap created by the asynchronous online environment and deliver a satisfying and quality learning experience. However, there is very little research available to faculty members to understand how and why to establish their teaching presence in a course, which is an essential element of an online learning environment.

The research questions that guided this study are:

- What practices do instructors in fully asynchronous online courses employ to create their teaching presence in their courses?
- How do they establish this presence?
- What do they draw upon to accomplish the elements of their teaching presence?

Importance of the Topic

One of the factors of teaching presence is facilitating the discourse between the students and as a scholarly mentor to create the Community of Inquiry in an asynchronous online class. According to Akyol and Garrison (2013), "The C of I theoretical framework represents the process of creating a deep and meaningful learning experience" and provides guidelines and principles for "effective learning environments" and deeper learning. Teaching presence "provides the design, facilitation, and direction throughout a course of study" (p. xvii). Balancing all three provides a meaningful learning environment. Though this study specifically investigates

only one circle of the Venn diagram that makes up the Community of Inquiry framework, all three of the areas are inter-related in creating a quality online experience and in facilitating student learning (Sung & Mayer, 2012). For example, research has found that there is a link between faculty teaching presence and student perception of learning and of the instructor's performance.

Research has found a link between faculty teaching presence and student perception of learning and of the instructor's performance. Kim, Kwan and Cho (2011) noted that "teaching presence is a determinant to predict social presence and cognitive presence of online students" and that the "instructor's teaching, emphasized as a core element to establish and sustain social engagement and cognitive gain, could be realized by showing quality instruction practices in cyber space, which led to the development of community of inquiry" (p. 1514).

In fact, teacher practices with regard to their teaching presence and promoting student social presence have been found to have an effect on outcomes for students. This is a primary motivator for researching this topic. Low social presence between students may result in frustration, negative attitudes toward the instructor, and lower affective learning (Sung & Mayer, 2012). On the other hand, high levels of instructor presence result in better evaluations of effectiveness, while intimacy and immediacy communication behaviors are thought to be related to increased cognitive and affective learning (Sung & Mayer). Further, Shea and Bidjerano (2009) set out to validate the Community of Inquiry instrument, which found through structural equation modeling that 70% of the variance in subject students' cognitive presence can be modeled on the instructor's teaching presence. "When students see their instructors taking an active role in focusing online discussions on relevant issues, they also report higher cognitive presence" (Shea & Bidjerano, 2009). Additionally, Shea and Bidjerano concluded that these

findings should be used to “guide the development of courses” in asynchronous online environments (p. 551). Desai et al., argued that successful distance education requires increased interaction between instructor and student which, they assert, “plays a huge role in establishing a sense of community over the web for the learner” (as cited in Boling et al, 2012, p. 119). Bush, Castelli, Lowry, and Cole (2010) found that teaching presence is significantly related to student satisfaction and knowledge acquisition and is, therefore, an important factor for student satisfaction and knowledge acquisition in asynchronous online courses.

The continued growth of online education and the climate surrounding education focusing on outcomes provides a level of importance to studies that investigate effective online education. In addition, the evidence that creating and facilitating online courses is time intensive provides another rationale for studying this topic. This study explored how instructors in fully asynchronous online courses envisioned and established their teaching presence in their courses and what those instructors drew upon to accomplish this task, an area that is largely missing from the current research on online education and the Community of Inquiry framework. As Jaschik and Lederman (2017) reported, most instructors teaching online courses do not work with an instructional designer to create their courses, nor do they receive professional development on effective practices in online course creation. Considering teaching from the faculty members’ perspective provides another layer of information with which faculty can approach their online courses and for institutions to consider how they support faculty in this endeavor. The next chapter will explore relevant literature to further understand the C of I framework and current research on the framework and on teaching presence. Chapter 3 will provide an explanation of the methodology used in the study as well as a description of the participants. Chapter 4 provides

the findings of the study, while Chapter 5 consists of a discussion of what was learned in relation to the research questions and implications for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: A Review of the Literature

To set the context for my study, I will review some background on the Community of Inquiry framework in this chapter. First, I provide an overview of the presences that make up the C of I framework. Then, I elaborate on the presence of interest to my study – teaching presence – and its importance to online education. Finally, I provide an overview of research concerning the C of I framework to situate my study.

The Community of Inquiry Framework

The Community of Inquiry Framework originated in the work of Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) as a “comprehensive framework” for research into online learning, based on theories of teaching and learning in postsecondary education. It reaches back to Dewey’s work on community and inquiry and to constructivist theories of education. This concept of Community of Inquiry, particularly in asynchronous online environments, is elaborated upon by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer’s model of critical thinking and practical inquiry, which Shea, Pickett and Pelz (2003) suggested adds “a specific set of indicators that [focus] on higher education at a distance in primarily text-based asynchronous environments” and a “more developed and detailed set of categories through which to examine issues of pedagogy, faculty development, student satisfaction, and reported learning” (pp. 64-65).

This model is depicted as a Venn diagram using the categories of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence to create a Community of Inquiry. The three elements are distinct, yet overlap; balancing all three provides a meaningful learning environment (Akyol & Garrison, 2013). Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) characterized the relationship in this way: Social presence “lays the groundwork for higher level discourse; and the structure, organization, and leadership associated with teaching presence creates the environment where cognitive presence

can be developed” (p. 163). Archer (2013) also picked up this description, pointing out that “student learning is dependent on deliberate actions by the instructors (Teaching Presence, in the Communities of Inquiry framework) to build a collaborative and constructivist learning process (Social Presence) that will assist students to achieve the desired learning outcomes (Cognitive Presence)” in light of the specific communications context of asynchronous fully online courses (p. xv). Akyol and Garrison (2013) explained that “The C of I theoretical framework represents the process of creating a deep and meaningful learning experience” and supplies guidelines and principles for “effective learning environments” and deeper learning. The subject of this study, teaching presence, “provides the design, facilitation, and direction throughout a course of study” (p. xvii). This “pedagogic leadership,” as Garrison (2013) termed it, brings about the community aspect of the C of I. Building a community of collaboration (not cooperation due to the constructivist epistemologies of the framework) depends on context and purpose; it is the teaching presence that “creates a sense of belonging and personally meaningful academic collaboration” (p. 2).

Studies have shown that the C of I framework is a valid framework for use in the study of asynchronous online courses (see Akyol et al., 2009; Arbaugh et al., 2008; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007) for its use in understanding the “nature of the educational transaction” (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010, p. 8). The framework has also been applied across contexts (K-12, higher education, the work place) and across disciplines. Archer (2013) also supported the use of the C of I framework across higher education, believing it could also be used to “inform faculty development even in contexts where most or all of the teaching is done face-to-face” (p. xv).

Social Presence

Social Presence, as described in the C of I framework, is defined as “the ability to project one’s self and establish personal and purposeful relationships” (Garrison, 2007, p. 63). It brings together direct and mediated experience, allowing a sense of “being” via online presence, and awareness of others’ presence, or “...the illusion of direct experience in mediated situations is a critical part of e-learning practice” (Kehrwald, 2010, p. 40). This is accomplished via affective expression, open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison, 2007; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Kehrwald (2010) posited that social presence is a:

combination of (a) individuals’ abilities to project themselves as real and salient social actors in online environments; (b) the extent to which individuals see and interpret (or ‘read’) the presence of others in the environment; and (c) the degree to which individuals feel connected to one another within a group or other social structure. (p. 41)

Social presence is demonstrative, dynamic, and cumulative; it can be positive or negative, can be affective, relational, group building, and interactive. Social presence created by the instructor and other students, then, can engage students who otherwise may feel isolated and lonely in an asynchronous or widely-dispersed environment with no physical classroom. Social presence is thought to support relationships and information exchange in a mediated environment, and is important to interaction (Oztok & Brett, 2011). Elements such as mutual understanding, two-way communication, psychological involvement, and access are important to social presence.

Garrison (2007) pointed out that students’ sense of community in an online class is based on common purpose and intention, or inquiry. Further, students must feel that their class is a safe space in which to project their self, because “social presence must move beyond simply establishing socio-emotional presence and personal relationships. Cohesion requires intellectual

focus...and respect” (Garrison, 2007, p. 63). Part of the work of the faculty member is to establish these elements – an overlap in the Venn diagram of the C of I framework. While this study acknowledges that faculty do play a role in helping to establish and create spaces to foster and support social presence, social presence exists largely among students, in alignment with the framework utilized in this study. Though social presence itself cannot create critical discourse, it paves the way for both interaction and cognitive presence (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). While the C of I model acknowledges that faculty play a role in social presence, this study is interested in investigating the behaviors of the sphere of teaching presence alone (Shea, Pickett & Pelz, 2003).

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence, which is based on the Practical Inquiry model, is “the exploration, construction, resolution and confirmation of understanding through collaboration and reflection in a community of inquiry” (Garrison, 2007, p. 65), engages the processes of learning within the online course. Kozan and Richardson (2014a) described this as being “cognitively active, in that learners seek the most effective and efficient ways of solving a learning problem, and applying these solutions at the end” (p. 68). The four phases of cognitive presence are a triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution, derived from Dewey’s ideas about reflective thought. This process is facilitated by information exchange, connecting ideas, and applying new knowledge (Garrison, 2007; Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010). While this is rarely a linear model and is often a recursive process, there are key areas where social presence and teaching presence have more sway. The exploration phase, for example, proposes individual and corporate investigation via critical reflection and discourse. Similarly, the integration stage

seems to require “enhanced teaching presence to probe and diagnose ideas so that learners will move to higher level thinking in developing their ideas (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007, p. 161).

The students’ progression through the stages of Cognitive Presence, according to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010), appears to be complemented by the teaching presence sphere – on the design of learning activities and the facilitation of the instructor. According to Garrison and Arbaugh, research has consistently revealed that students stall at the exploration phase and that “this pervasive finding may have more to do with aspects of teaching presence than to the other possible factors [communication medium, educational context, the PI model itself]” (p. 162). Meyer (2003) concluded that as the complexity of the task increased, faculty has a larger role to play in allowing – or creating – the space for reflection and directing the students through the process of integration and resolution. Meyer (2003, 2004) and others (see Arnold & Ducate, 2006; Celentin, 2007; Garrison et al., 2007; Luebeck & Bice, 2005; Murphy, 2004). The questions or tasks created by the instructor, then, influenced the outcomes for the students. Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) explained that “Sustained development and progression through the inquiry cycle requires well designed learning activities, facilitation, and direction...as subject matter expert, the teacher should interject relevant information and diagnose misconceptions if the discourse is to be productive” (p. 162).

Teaching Presence

Teaching presence actually begins before the course commences, as the instructor designs his/her course, and continues during the course’s delivery as the instructor “facilitates the discourse and provides direct instruction when required. Through adequate teaching presence, formal learning that facilitates personally relevant and educationally defined outcomes is achieved” (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5). Teaching presence mediates all the components of a

course, not just dialogue, including readings, web searching, projects and exercises by providing the design, facilitation and direction needed to enable these components (Garrison, 2007).

Both social and teaching presence relate to feelings – how connected and “real,” and psychologically close, the learners feel toward each other and the instructor (Sung & Mayer, 2012). Miller, Hahs-Vaughn, and Zygoris-Coe (2014) supplied a list of traits that differentiate teaching presence from a teacher’s presence in a face-to-face class. In-person courses have the advantage of face-to-face interactions that allow for the persona of the teacher to come through. Evidence of the instructor’s persona may or may not happen in an online class. Some of these areas include interacting without non-verbals and projection of personality. Interactions alone do not guarantee learning in an online environment, however; Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) stress the need for interactions between the presences of the C of I framework, which are focused by teaching presence. Cleveland-Innes (2013) further described the difference in the instructor role and expectations between in-person and online courses:

The difference between face-to-face and online interactions were interpreted as having both benefits and drawbacks. Information presented face-to-face can be immediately clarified in response to non-verbal cues that may indicate students’ interest (or lack of), confusion or emotional reactions. These cues are absent or more subtle online; it requires more vigilance on the part of online instructors, who must deliberately engage students to determine benefit from additional resources, or if they are struggling with concepts or emotionally reacting to content. (p. 393-394)

Major (2015) highlighted the differences between instruction that occurs in person and that which occurs through technological mediation, which she described as an “interface between us and our instructional worlds” that alters “our perceptions of realities” (p. 9). “We have to think

through the manner in which we will store, review, update, and communicate knowledge in a formal way. Expressing knowledge in an online course also requires us to have a different set of skills for sharing that knowledge with students,” (p. 27).

When originally conceptualized, the teaching presence sphere of the Community of Inquiry framework was made up of three elements: instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction. Subsequent research has questioned whether teaching presence contains these three factors or whether teaching presence is more correctly described by only two factors -- direct facilitation, and instructional design and organization. This study used the existing framework with all three aspects of teaching presence.

Instructional design and organization. Instructors begin to establish their teaching presence at the planning and design stage of an asynchronous online course. The instructional design and organization element consists of the structure, process, interaction and evaluation of the course and its outcomes. Because of the online (faceless and non-time bound) context of these classes, instructors must be more “explicit and transparent” with these elements (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). The course syllabus, timeline, instruction on how to use and succeed in an online course, transmission and explanation of information, student activities, etc. are all part of this aspect.

Facilitating discourse. This portion of teaching presence involves both student-faculty and student-to-student interaction in the learning process “as the means by which students are engaged in interaction about and building upon the information provided in the course instructional materials” (Anderson et al., 2001; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007, p. 164). Facilitating discourse includes “shared meaning, identifying areas of agreement and disagreement, and seeking to reach consensus and understanding” (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007, p. 164). As the

subject matter expert, instructors must interact with students' ideas and responses, steer the discussion, correct misconceptions, urge new directions, clarification, or further exploration, raise questions, make observations, and manage the group interaction.

Direct instruction. Distinct from facilitating discourse, direct instruction is thought of in terms of the faculty member's intellectual and scholarly leadership in the context of the course. As subject matter expert, the instructor must check for understanding and accuracy on the part of the students, add other sources of information, direct discussions, and scaffold learning, in addition to assessing the discourse and outcomes.

Components of Teaching Presence. The idea that the conceptualization of teaching presence containing three factors does not accurately describe that presence. Various studies (see Shea et al., 2003; Shea et al., 2006; Arbaugh, 2007) have found that their results indicate variations in teaching presence. Shea and Bidjerano (2009) further supported this line of thought, suggesting that rather than consisting of instructional design/organization, facilitation of discourse, and direct instruction, teaching presence instead is better thought of as directed facilitation and instructional design and organization. They further suggest defining direct instruction as "the capacity of the instructor to provide valuable analogies, offer useful illustration, present helpful examples, conduct supportive demonstrations, [and] supply clarifying explanation" (p. 552).

Importance of teaching presence

According to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010), there was growing evidence that teaching presence has a significant effect on student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community. The model itself is an apt depiction of the interactions – they overlap, influence each other and are interdependent and not discrete. Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) asserted that,

“Interaction and discourse play key roles in higher-order learning, but not without structure (design) and leadership (facilitation and direction)...structure and facilitation have a significant influence on discourse” (p. 164).

Many studies recently have explored correlations between and among the various presences in an attempt to try to explain how the framework affects learning, or “works.” For example, Swan et al. (2008) found the teaching presence element indicators of the C of I questionnaire, upon which my interview protocol is based, to have a Cronbach’s alpha reliability of 0.94 while also validating the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Akyol and Garrison (2008) found a significant positive relationship between teaching and cognitive presence. Ke (2010) studied interactions between the various presences and the effects of teaching presence on the other presences in online courses with students aged 24-59. Both qualitative and quantitative results indicated that an effective teaching presence catalyzes social and cognitive presence.

Archibald (2010) utilized the C of I framework to test the effects of certain pedagogical choices on outcomes, as well as examined the effects of social and teaching presence on cognitive presence. He found that teaching and social presence explained 69% of the variance in cognitive presence; the effect remained even after controlling for self-direction, prior online learning experience, and prior collaborative learning experience. Shea and Bidjerano (2009) further investigated the effects of teaching and social presence on cognitive presence and found that teaching presence had a significant direct and total effect on cognitive presence. These results were further supported in a study by Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010), who used structural equation modeling to confirm that student perceptions of teaching presence had a significant direct effect on perceived cognitive presence, while also having a significant association with social presence. Similarly, Kozan and Richardson (2014b) found a large,

positive correlation between teaching and social presence, with cognitive presence having a strong mediating effect. In addition, they found a strong positive correlation between teaching presence and cognitive presence, which was maintained after controlling for social presence.

Shea and Bidjerano (2009) found that as teaching presence indicators decline, average student social presence declines as well, specifically in courses where there is high teaching presence. The activities of the faculty member, then, appear to play a notable role in the learning and environment on the asynchronous online course. The body of research concerned with the Community of Inquiry framework is supporting the importance of teaching presence for successful online learning, showing that it's a "significant determinate of student satisfaction, perceived learning, and a sense of community" (Garrison, 2007, p. 67).

According to Moore and Kearsley (2005), distance is a "pedagogical phenomenon" and is not a matter of geography. Teachers and researchers are concerned with the effect distance has on aspects of education, including "teaching and learning, communication and interaction, curriculum and course design, and the organization and management of the educational program" (p. 223). Research has found that there is a link between faculty teaching presence and student perception of learning and of the instructor's performance.

In fact, teacher practices with regard to their teaching presence and promoting student social presence has been found to have an effect on outcomes for students. This is a primary motivator for researching this topic. Low presence may result in frustration, negative attitudes toward the instructor, and lower affective learning. On the other hand, high levels of instructor presence result in better evaluations of effectiveness, while intimacy and immediacy communication behaviors are thought to be related to increased cognitive and affective learning (Sung & Mayer, 2012). Desai, Hart and Richards (2008) concluded that successful online

courses require teaching presence in the form of guidance and interaction, which establishes a sense of community in the online context.

Online environments foster inquiry-based learning, which undergirds the C of I framework; students and instructors are changing to operate effectively in such environments. Instructors are aware of, and supportive of, the adjustments required of the student, which necessitates changes in the instructor's role and approach to teaching. According to Cleveland-Innes (2013) the new structures and pedagogies are "constructed and crafted, based on content, students' needs, and the available technologies" (p. 397). Cleveland-Innes (2013) contended that the elements of teaching presence are interchangeable between online, face-to-face and blended environments. She pointed to the inquiry-based model as the distinguishing element – teachers foster teaching presence by "allowing and supporting individual responsibility and the teaching of others" (p. 391) and a shared (constructivist) leadership because "participants take some responsibility for fostering social, cognitive and teaching presence" that is furthered or constrained by the teacher in the community. The teacher maintains a role in direct instruction and facilitation, and in design of the environment. "The teacher must be prepared to identify the design and requirements, clarify expectations, engage and facilitate interaction and critical discourse, assess understanding and diagnose and correct misconceptions. These aspects of teaching presence which foster a community of inquiry are interchangeable in face-to-face, blended and online environments." (p. 391).

Shea, Sau, Li, and Pickett (2006) suggested that instructors can develop social presence in their online courses by developing community among students. This can be accomplished through elements of teaching presence -- designing cooperative activities that utilize the three areas of teaching presence – instructional design (curriculum, methods, timelines, group norms),

facilitation (“engagement;” seeking consensus; working with agreements/disagreements; encouraging, acknowledging student contributions; establishing the “classroom” climate; prompting; assessing) , and cognitive and social process direction (presenting content, asking questions, checking for understanding, adding knowledge, and clearing up misconceptions). They also assert that students are not only aware of when instructors are present, but also of what techniques are used to create teaching presence, and that students will rate their instructors accordingly on evaluations.

C of I Research

Several areas of inquiry have been pursued regarding the C of I framework, investigating the framework itself or using it to analyze some aspect of education, particularly with online courses. Some topic areas include the interplay of the presences with each other; the effects of the presences on each other; the effects of various presences on student learning and satisfaction; C of I within various disciplines and with various populations of students; and validating the C of I framework itself (as a whole, and particular aspect of the model). Teaching presence seems to be the least developed or researched area of the C of I framework, with the studies being mostly exploratory or using basic quantitative measures such as frequency distributions or correlations (Arbaugh & Hwang, 2006).

Scholars have now begun to analyze and investigate the elements of the C of I framework and the components of each of the presences. Recently scholars have opened a new line of questioning related to how many components are truly included – the traditional three (teaching, social, cognitive), or four (adding a separate learning presence component). Others have questioned whether the names accurately describe the components or should be renamed to more closely reflect what actually occurs in each space (see Pollard, Minor & Swanson, 2014; Shea et

al., 2014). While these are ongoing research areas, this is not the focus of this study and will not affect the outcome of this research. This study specifically focused on how instructors in fully asynchronous online courses envisioned and established their teaching presence in their courses and what those instructors drew upon to accomplish this task.

In addition to suggesting that Learning Presence should be an addition to the framework (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010; Shea et al., 2012), Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) recommended adding Emotional Presence to the framework. Amemado and Manca (2017) suggested infusing distributed learning into the presences, while Paz and Pereira (2015) proposed adding Regulation of Learning to the Teaching Presence category in the C of I. Shea, Vickers, and Hayes (2010) named a possible fourth element of Teaching Presence – assessment.

Rienties, Giesbers, Tempelaar, and Lygo-Baker (2013) studied the impact of a computer mediated communications environment that provided explicit scaffolding and increased instructional design organization to measure cognitive presence in online courses, finding that balancing teaching presence elements of facilitating discourse and direct instruction to “facilitate learners to critically engage is a complex and delicate issue” (p. 125). “An important finding was that in the redesigned learning environment learners contributed less to higher quality cognitive presence” (p. 124), which negatively affected student engagement.

Another study utilized a cross-sectional survey of 245 students, 78% of whom were undergraduates, at two large Midwestern universities to determine which indicators of teaching presence graduate and undergraduate students perceived as important to their success in online courses (Sheridan, Kelly & Betz, 2013). The indicators rated as important were similar between graduate and undergraduate students, though there were some statistically significant differences in some indicators. This study built upon previous research that found that an instructor’s “social

presence” had an effect on students’ interactions and perceptions of the instructor, but not on perceived learning or actual performance. However, the instructor is key to shaping student perceptions of social presence and sense of community, support & inclusion:

certain actions that the instructor takes or the ways of projecting his or her presence may enhance students’ abilities or willingness to express their emotions or make self-disclosures, which are aspects of affective expression. Likewise, the instructor’s communication style used in facilitating discourse among the students may influence the students’ willingness to engage in open, honest communication with one another.

(Sheridan et al., 2013, p. 68)

Sheridan et al. found that the most important constructs by frequency of responses were (1) communication (clear & timely instructor communication); (2) instructor disposition (conceptualized in my study as “teacher presence” – the instructor’s inherent qualities of mind & character & inclination to act or think in a particular manner, such as being understanding, patient, kind, helpful, humorous, creative & fun, fair, and presenting good lectures); (3) accessibility to materials (textbook, powerpoint, lectures, videos, supplementary materials) and providing feedback (constructive criticism, evaluation); (4) clarity (course requirements, due dates, important topics clearly and concisely). According to the authors:

In particular, students’ responses have sparked additional insights into the importance of instructor dispositions...The online instructor must be able to compensate for the lack of physical presence by creating an environment in the online classroom that encourages students to be engaged, motivated, validated, and comfortable participating. Thus, the online instructor needs to convey that there is an understanding, kind, empathetic, patient, and creative human being at the other end of the virtual classroom. The breadth of these

disposition responses suggest that online instructors should continue to explore and find ways of projecting themselves, their personalities, and teaching styles into the virtual classroom environments.” Sheridan et al., 2013, p. 78)

My study connects with this advice from Sheridan et al.; after completing data collection and drawing out themes from the participants’ experiences creating and teaching their asynchronous fully online courses, new questions emerged. Specifically, my participants made note of their desire to let students know there was a “person” behind the course, which connects to the idea Sheridan espoused of the presence of a human being executing the tasks that make up teaching presence. An additional yet related question concerned the reasoning behind the desire to inject a “teacher presence” in their courses – were my participants aware of the suggestion to project themselves into their online course spaces? And, for purposes of application, how do institutions best educate and assist online course instructors in achieving this goal?

Of particular interest to this study, Pollard, Minor, and Swanson (2014) recommended adding Instructor Social Presence to the existing framework. The framework as it exists does not tie any of the presences to a specific person or role; while Social Presence is conceptualized as mainly between students, the teacher plays a role in developing and supporting the social presence of the community. Teaching Presence, while largely the domain of the course instructor, does not preclude the students from taking on elements of Teaching Presence through their inquiry. As Paz and Pereira explain, the model “dissociates the actor and the function...It assumes Teaching Presence and not Teacher Presence” (p. 3). Pollard et al. (2014) added elements to the existing C of I survey to establish their concept of Instructor Social Presence, including being caring, professional, humble, open, unifying, encouraging, fair, and a “real person.” As demonstrated in chapters four and five, the results from my study support the idea

that it is worthwhile to explore further the idea of a “teacher presence” apart from the elements of “teaching presence.”

In a 2013 study that compared student and faculty perceptions of online courses, students were found to believe that they put forth more effort to teach themselves and, therefore, teachers were not as important in online courses. Not surprisingly, the faculty surveyed in the study did not respond similarly (Otter et al., 2013). While both students and faculty agreed that there is a relationship between student-teacher connection and course satisfaction, faculty members rated that relationship more strongly than students and valued the faculty member’s role in the online course more than students. Otter et al. (2013) also found that students believe professors devote less time and effort to teaching an online course than an in-person course because “students must do the teaching and learning on their own” (p. 35). Students also felt that lower-quality instructors choose to teach online, which the authors hypothesize could lead to their idea that online courses require more self-directed learning than in-person courses. Drawing on other studies, Otter et al. (2013) connected these student perceptions to a preference for face-to-face interaction with an instructor when learning conceptual information. This could also indicate students expecting to be passive recipients of information versus being active learners.

This contradiction also came into play in a study of student perceptions about Teaching Presence and their predisposition toward instructor feedback. Cole et al. (2017) found a negative relationship between teaching presence and student motivation. The researchers suggest that online instructors focus on how students prefer to receive communications rather than trying to communicate information through multiple channels within the online environment. In fact, Cole et al. posited that “students taking online courses may *not* desire an online course structure that attempts to replicate the [face-to-face] class experience” (p. 256). The researchers further suggest

that perhaps some students enroll in online courses seeking a more autonomous course structure and react negatively to instructors seeking to increase their teaching presence and communication behaviors. These findings are of particular interest to faculty as they approach design of their courses.

Additional research involving the C of I framework includes investigating interactions between learners and teaching presence in an open online professional development course. Saadatmand, Uhlin, Hedberg, Abjörnsson, and Kvarnström (2017) revised the C of I survey and added open-ended questions, finding a significant relationship between teaching and cognitive presence, and social and cognitive presence. Another application of the C of I framework survey is as a tool for course evaluation and quality improvement. The American Public University System adapted the framework for formative course assessment, receiving a 2009 Sloan-C Effective Practice Award (Ice, 2009).

In summary, this chapter described the C of I framework to provide a background understanding of its components and to set the context for my study, which focuses on the teaching presence element of the framework. In addition, I also set the context for my study by reviewing research using the C of I framework, particularly that which involves teaching presence. Teaching presence has not been engaged from the viewpoint of my study. The interest for this research is the faculty member. Ample research has shown the importance of teaching presence and validated the C of I for use in studying asynchronous online courses. My study investigated how online educators seek to establish their teaching presence, not how students react to the efforts of the faculty member to establish teaching presence. My study was not situated within a specific discipline, which also helps it stand apart. Additionally, my research

engaged the conversation between a two- or three-part description of teaching presence and add new information to the discussion.

CHAPTER THREE: Methods

Previously, I set the context for this study by describing the Community of Inquiry framework as it applies to asynchronous fully online courses. I then used the Community of Inquiry framework to help describe teaching presence in fully asynchronous online classes – the primary focus of this study. The C of I framework established the definition of teaching presence that provided the framework for the focus of this study and for the interview protocol that was developed to explore teaching presence with the participants. The purpose of this study was to investigate how faculty teaching fully online asynchronous courses establish their teaching presence, specifically related to facilitation of learning. The research questions were:

- What practices do instructors in fully asynchronous online courses employ to create their teaching presence in their courses?
- How do they establish this presence?
- What do they draw upon to accomplish the elements of their teaching presence?

Methodology

To answer these questions, I conducted a constructivist qualitative case study. I studied five individual online courses at one university, which constitutes the case within which the five courses are embedded. This study was constructivist or, as Merriam (1998) described it, interpretivist because “education is considered to be a process and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4).

Specifically, because the context for this study has clear boundaries around what is to be studied, this was a case study (Glesne, 2011). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), “rigorous qualitative case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in

context using a variety of data sources” (p. 544) and reveal the “biographic, authentic...perspectives of real social or natural systems” (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, para. 8). In addition, my case study is exploratory in nature, as the intention of the driving questions is to delve into how and why online instructors create their teaching presence (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, my study fits the definition Yin provides in that it is contemporary, does not intend to manipulate the actions of the participants, and:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used. (Yin, 1989, p. 23)

The primary focus is on the process of the participants and their individual experiences as they engage in the online teaching enterprise (Creswell, 2009), a subject of educational and practical interest (Merriam, 1998; Scholz & Tietje, 2002). Specifically, this study was an embedded case study, as it involves more than one unit of analysis, the subunits being each online asynchronous course that is studied (Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

Justification for using a qualitative, embedded case study approach. By utilizing a case study, I attempted to reveal multiple facets of the phenomenon in question and explore the faculty experience with online education in depth. The goal of this study was to describe the participants’ experiences with online asynchronous courses, guided by the Community of Inquiry framework. An embedded case study design will “organize different types of knowledge, such as different stakeholder or disciplinary perspectives” (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, para. 14). Each class becomes a unit of analysis within the larger context of asynchronous online education at the university that served as the setting for this study. I worked to understand each case individually

before attempting to align each case and its findings within what Stake terms a quintain (Stake, 2006).

Sample

The sample consists of five cases and six participants – five full-time faculty members and one graduate course assistant. All cases are asynchronous fully online courses offered at a large, Midwestern research-intensive public university. I will describe the institution at which this study took place and the cases later in this chapter. The participants all had taught their fully online course at least one time as part of their regular course assignment within the last year. Four of the five cases originated as face-to-face courses and transitioned to either replace or add fully online asynchronous courses. Case 1 and Case 4 have evolved to exist only as fully online asynchronous courses; Case 5 was originally conceived by the participant as an online course and has only been taught in that setting. Recruitment, then, proceeded via a variety of means. One of my subject courses was suggested by a colleague, who characterized the faculty member as a good teacher; this participant suggested another instructor, who also agreed to participate. One course was suggested by an undergraduate student who had taken the course. I also combed the course catalog for courses designated as online courses and, after reviewing the course descriptions, invited some to become participants. Once I received a recommendation or selected a course that looked appropriate for inclusion, I invited the faculty members to participate via email.

Data Collection

To carry out this study, I created an interview protocol (Appendix 1) that corresponds to the elements of teaching presence in the Community of Inquiry framework and instrument (see Appendix 2) developed and validated by the research team of Arbaugh et al. (2008), which

served as the foundation for the interview protocol to investigate teaching presence. I approached the questioning utilizing a stimulated recall-style of interview (Vesterinen, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2010, prompted by incidents in the participants' courses. As I posed the questions written to explore the elements that define teaching presence in the C of I, I asked the faculty member to relate the items to the course that was the subject of our investigation. To begin data collection, I completed a pilot interview using the protocol. As Stake (1995) suggested, trying out a protocol on a pilot participant can help the researcher see if the protocol is appropriate to the initial research questions. "Trying out the questions in pilot form...should be routine," according to Stake (1995). "During the actual exchange, the interviewer needs most to listen, maybe take few or many notes...but to stay in control of the data gathering, thinking about what form the account will take in writing" (p. 65). I followed the preparation steps as outlined by Yin (2014): training for the particular type of case study being undertaken, developing a protocol, selecting candidate cases, and conducting a pilot. I used the pilot interview to refine my instrument to "develop relevant lines of questions – possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design as well" (Yin, 2014, p. 96). To recruit a pilot participant, I approached an instructional designer at the institution and requested a referral to a faculty person whose class she considered high quality and who she felt would be comfortable participating.

Once my pilot interview was completed, I reviewed my instrument to clarify wording on questions and strengthen the elements of recall and faculty experience. I also identified an initial overarching theme of interest that emerged from the questions established by the C of I framework's description of teaching presence. I added a focus on and a question related to this theme – what had prompted their decisions about how they created their fully online courses and their presence – to the protocol. I found that my original protocol contained an implicit focus on

this question that needed to be more explicitly called out and captured. I recorded all the interviews and took notes by hand during the discussions, which lasted from one and a quarter to one and a half hours each. After completing each interview, I began to develop additional overarching themes and, when the participants did not explicitly respond to these themes, I probed with additional questions. Other themes emerged after reviewing the results from all interviews and were not prompted by specific additional questions.

During the interviews, I requested access to the courses to review the elements of teaching presence the participants discussed first-hand. I also reviewed some elements in the course management system with some of the participants as we went through the protocol so they could clarify or demonstrate concepts we were exploring during the interview. I asked each participant to reflect on places in their course where they had succeeded in creating their teaching presence according to the definition provided in the C of I framework. I also probed the instructor's intentions when building that part of the course and their teaching presence.

Stimulated recall. For several decades, researchers who wished to probe a teacher's interactive thought processes while in the act of teaching have utilized stimulated recall as a data collection method. Researchers using this method in some way record a teacher's interactions during actual instruction – usually via videotape. This “authentic stimuli” is presented, along with cues, to those being studied to bring to light their thought processes when in the recorded situation (Vesterinen, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2010). Vesterinen et al. note that “it is normal to use the STR in qualitative research in which the aim is to describe and understand the phenomenon being researched in a specific context and to take the subjectivity of the researcher and informant into account” (p. 185). The intention is that the witnessing of the situation will give “the benefit of replaying and reintroducing the original cues that were present during the task in which the

participant was engaged” (Stough, 2001, p. 2). Since I was not witnessing a teacher in the process of her work, I used my questions to prompt the recall of their thought process, intentions, and actual methods each participant utilized to create their teaching presence. For example, I asked the participants:

When you decided to create this as an online course, how did you approach creating your online version of this course? What choices did you make about how you would structure the course? How did you go about deciding this is how I want this course to look in the big picture as an online course?

I also probed their choices by asking if, when they were making their design choices, the participants thought through them on their own or whether they sought out the help of an instructional designer or received any professional development around creating an online course. I also asked participants to reflect on the genesis of some of their choices when establishing teaching presence – were they inspired by their own experiences as learners? By their masters or doctoral education? By their teaching philosophy?

Data Analysis

Yin (2014) advised that analysis should start with the questions from the case study protocol, beginning with first-level questions and the evidence gathered for each question. After drawing tentative conclusions, continue analysis until the main research questions are addressed. He continues by suggesting the research play with the data gathered, looking for patterns, insights or promising concepts that may emerge by juxtaposing data between cases. My data analysis followed this pattern of repeated cycles, conceptualizing data, “defensible handling and interpretation of data” (p. 136), drawing conclusions, while moving forward and backward in

analysis “giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations” (Stake, 1995, p. 71).

I began analysis with two general strategies described by Yin (2014) – relying on theoretical propositions and working from the ground up. The interview protocol was based on the theoretical grounding of the C of I framework. My initial coding followed each question in the protocol, or “direct interpretation of the individual instance” (Stake, 1995, p. 74). After the recordings were transcribed, I read through each and made initial notations to describe the data provided by each participant and by my review of their course sites. Then I aggregated, or clustered, each participants’ responses by protocol question to overlay each embedded case within the framework of the interview protocol, or what Stake calls “categorical aggregation.” I then made an initial descriptive code for the responses to each question in the protocol, which reflected analysis and interpretation of the data’s meaning (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). After this phase was completed, I turned to a “ground up” analysis to discern “a useful concept or two” which became “the start of an analytic path, leading [me] farther into [my] data and possibly suggesting additional relationships” (Stake, 2014, p. 137).

My analytic techniques were both explanation building and cross-case synthesis. As I analyzed my data, I worked to explain how or why the participants chose to address the elements of their teaching presence in fully only asynchronous courses as defined by the C of I framework. My work was iterative, akin to the process Yin (2014) described; I made an initial explanatory proposition about the elements of each case, then compared each case against each other, revised my explanations, and repeated. In this way I also combined elements of a cross-case synthesis – each case was initially treated as a separate study which were then aggregated, first, by interview question, and second by meta-analysis of larger themes that emerged. I

initially arranged my data first at the fine, more granular level and then continued to move outward as I analyzed the data. This allowed me to “prove whether different cases appear to share similar profiles (p. 166). As I continued my synthesis, I moved outward to the broader case in which each of my specific cases were embedded.

My coding was mainly descriptive and inductive, guided by Miles et al. (2014), in that the codes derived from my first-level analysis became prompts for deeper reflection once I began aggregating across cases. My codes, then, allowed me to “retrieve the most meaningful material, to assemble chunks of data that go together, and to further condense the bulk into readily analyzable units” (p. 73). After reviewing the codes in my First Cycle in light of my research questions, I reflected on the interpretation and meaning of each code. From there, the Second Cycle coding involved clustering the codes into Pattern codes (Miles et al, 2014). “The interrelationships of the categories with each other then are constructed to develop higher level analytic meanings for assertion, proposition, hypothesis, and/or theory development” (Miles et al.). This allowed me to pursue the cross-case analysis as my larger themes emerged.

Researcher Role and Positionality

Due to the nature of constructivist research, it is important to recognize my role and positionality in the research to keep the focus of the analysis and interpretation on the participants’ experiences. My researcher identity for this project is that of a teacher with experience in face-to-face, blended, technology-enhanced and online courses, and as a student who has taken many online courses. From the faculty perspective, I am particularly interested in professional development and in faculty member’s pedagogical practices in relation to their teaching perspectives and philosophies. As a student, it is valuable to consider how instructors teach through the lens of one on the receiving end of this instruction. Much of my own teaching

practice has been informed by my experiences as a student. While these positions will help inform my understanding of the participants' experiences, it should not overshadow my interpretation and analysis of the views discovered during data collection. I have worked as both a journalist and a researcher conducting interviews, which allowed me to have prior knowledge about how to make contact and build rapport with my participants. I have contacts and familiarity with people at the institution at which the research was conducted, so I was able to locate the necessary gatekeepers and receive the information I needed to proceed with recruitment. I also come from a faculty background, so I drew upon my experiences teaching both in person and online, allowing for shared experiences to shape our interactions. I am also a student of the institution and, therefore, am not an "outsider," which helped establish rapport. Finally, because of the subject matter, I became aware of my background identities coming into play in the conduct of this research project; I found that it helped me understand what my participants were describing and provided fodder for deeper questioning. For example, when Participant 2 shared an encounter with a student who had taken her online class but did not recognize her in a subsequent semester in an in-person class, I was able to draw upon similar experiences in my past to share our feelings and prompt reflection. During my conversation with Participant 4, she was describing issues she had with teaching and assessing student writing, and we were able to have some conversation about techniques we had each tried to tackle this issue. Several participants were interested in my experience as a student in asynchronous fully online courses. These examples show how my positionality came into play during my data collection but, I believe, strengthened my interviewing without interfering my objectivity.

Trustworthiness

To ensure my analysis was of high quality, I worked to show that I considered all the evidence I gathered, another advantage of using each question of the protocol in my initial analysis. The first iteration contained an analysis by the question, which was then aggregated into larger themes that emerged. As I continued to refine my analysis, I considered the data in light of the most important issue highlighted by my research questions and by my own prior experience as a student in asynchronous fully online courses and having taught online and blended courses myself. It should be noted that my initial research question was very broad and general; as I continued data collection, I added new questions or subquestions. Then, during analysis, I also refined my research questions to bring the most important issues into focus. As I continued with my analysis, I performed a coding check by consulting with colleagues, who read my interview data in light of the data analysis, and confirmed my coding with my dissertation adviser.

Institutional Context

I completed this study at a large, research-intensive university in the Midwest. The university has approximately 50,000 students, 78 percent of which are undergraduates, and over 200 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of study across 17 colleges. In 2016, the institution had over 25,000 enrollments in 115 online and blended programs, representing over 100 undergraduate and graduate classes offered online.

Description of Cases

Case 1, Participant 1.

Semester: Summer of every year

Credits: Total Credits: 3 Lecture/Recitation/Discussion Hours: 3

Restrictions: Not open to freshmen or sophomores.

This course has been taught in the past as a traditional face-to-face, fourth-year course that utilized slightly different readings than the current course. “It was a technology-enhanced course...that was part of my dissertation research. And I’ve taught a version of this as part of a study abroad program,” the faculty member said. The current version is only taught as an online course.

The course is taught during a short, seven-week summer semester as a fully asynchronous, self-paced course. The instructor designed it that way, knowing that some students are working and others are studying abroad, which allows the students to complete the course within the confines of their own schedules while still gaining the desired outcomes. Case 1 utilized the following to achieve the items denoted as teaching presence by the C of I: video, news widget, discussion forum, written assignments, narrated PowerPoint instruction (video), Padlet

Case 2, Participant 2 & graduate assistant.

Semester: Fall and Spring of every year (in person), Summer of every year (online)

Credits: Total Credits: 3 Lecture/Recitation/Discussion Hours: 3

Restrictions: None

This course continues to be taught in a traditional face-to-face setting during the fall and spring semesters but the online version was conceived to be taught during the shortened summer semesters “and then the tasks became to somehow replicate [the in-class upper level undergraduate seminar] in the online environment” four years ago, according to Participant 2, who is a full-time faculty member of the university. The structure of this course is unique in that all the content is provided by the two full-time faculty members who teach this course in person

during fall and spring semesters while a graduate student facilitates the delivery of the course online. The graduate student participant has facilitated the course since its inception. That student also taught an in-person version of this course in another college within the university.

The faculty members planned the course very strategically, putting together what they refer to as a “blueprint” (rather than a syllabus). In the planning stages, they each went through their 15/16 week courses to identify what they termed their “greatest hits” – the sections they felt were their strongest content. Because the two faculty members have different research interests and disciplinary focus areas, the “greatest hits” fit neatly together to comprise the course. They consciously decided to have two voices providing content but “it was really important that we had similar structure, because if we just approached it in our own way, we thought that would be too disconcerting in the online environment.” Teaching presence utilized: WordPress blog, videos (including narrated PowerPoints), discussion forums, news updates, and home page announcements.

Case 3/Participant 3.

Semester: Fall, Spring, Summer of every year

Credits: Total Credits: 4 Lecture/Recitation/Discussion Hours: 4

Restrictions: Open to undergraduate students.

This course was originally taught in the fall of each year as a traditional face-to-face course by this faculty member, starting in 2013. The face-to-face courses are 15 weeks in length. The participant transitioned the class to a fully online offering during the seven-week summer semester in 2015; the course started being offered only online in fall of 2016. The course is an interdisciplinary course, required in the undergraduate core.

The participant said she focused on student interaction when she transitioned her course to the online environment.

It's more about getting students to just respond to the reading...I have overarching questions I kind of want us to address and some big ideas about where we're headed but I really want it to be about what students notice in the reading...my main concern in taking it online was figuring out how we could preserve some kind of interaction and engagement so that it wasn't just me lecturing and them responding to, you know, a series of questions or something like that, or just writing essays.

Case 3 utilized mostly discussion forums, instructional videos, and web links for teaching presence.

Case 4/Participant 4.

Semester: Fall and Spring of every year (in person); Summer of every year (online)

Credits: Total Credits: 3 Lecture/Recitation/Discussion Hours: 3

Restrictions: None

This faculty member has taught this class approximately three times in a traditional face-to-face setting and will only be teaching it as a fully online course during the summer semesters moving forward, while others teach it face-to-face during fall and spring semesters. Though she has taught this specific course online only one time, she had developed a different class in her discipline as an online course before handing it off to another faculty member. When she reflects on her practice and her intentions, she refers to all her experience but focuses specifically on this class. This participant focused on how to structure her online course, asking herself, “how can I optimize class time and outsource what they can do on their own online.” This participant has received several departmental grants to hire technology assistants to help her set up assessments

and structure for her course. Teaching presence elements are accomplished through documents & images, online workbook, instructional videos, and audio recordings.

Case 5/Participant 5.

Semester: Fall of every year

Credits: Total Credits: 3 Lecture/Recitation/Discussion Hours: 3

Restrictions: None

This faculty member is the originator of this course, which has existed since 2013. It was conceived and has always been taught as an online course. It is part of an online master's degree program for working teachers who are located all over the country and the world. This course was inspired by a course the participant had taught at another institution. "I had taught a similar course to this topic...that course was setup for that specific audience. So when I got here, they wanted the similar course...I sort of modelled [several core assignments] off of what I used at a previous university." Case 5 used: recordings (videos), discussion boards, cartoons, documents, announcements in the CMS, news widget, links to bookmarks and links library resources to establish the elements of teaching presence.

All the participants mentioned using email, rubrics, gradebook feedback and some sort of "office hours" to accomplish the elements of teaching presence; none detailed use of social media.

Limitations of Study

There are some limitations that may affect the generalizability of the findings from this study. All my participants and embedded cases are situated in the same large research-intensive university, which could have implications for cases in other higher education contexts. Most of my embedded cases were seven-week summer courses; there may be further considerations for

online courses of longer duration or that occur during a fall or winter/spring semester. Finally, subject matter or discipline area were not part of analysis or selection for the study. It is possible there could be different experiences of instructors by discipline area or application of my findings to their contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings

I conducted my research at a large, Midwestern research-intensive university, which served as the case being studied. Embedded within that case were five asynchronous fully online courses being taught at the university. I completed in-person interviews with five faculty members and one graduate assistant utilizing an interview protocol derived from the Community of Inquiry framework description of Teaching Presence with the intention of exploring the following research questions:

- What practices do instructors in fully asynchronous online courses employ to create their teaching presence in their courses?
- How do they establish this presence?
- What do they draw upon to accomplish the elements of their teaching presence?

I also reviewed the online course sites that the participants used to carry out their courses. After three rounds of coding, analysis, and refinements, several key themes emerged from my data: a need for structure, predictability, and redundancy in asynchronous fully online courses; that participants experienced advantages and disadvantages of the online format; varied influences on the design of each course; participants desire and methods for creating a sense of community in their courses; teaching presence used for both intervention and instruction; how course assistants fulfilled some elements of teaching presence; insights into each participants' inspiration for creating their courses; and participants' use of the institution's course management system and outside tools.

Structure, Predictability, and Redundancy

One prevalent theme for many of my respondents when reflecting on the elements that represent teaching presence was a need for structure within the course. The requirement of structure is

provided for in the Community of Inquiry framework – the underlying structure of the course is the first glimpse of the instructor for the students. The structure of the course sets an atmosphere and gives students a glimpse of how the instructor envisions their course, what they find important, and how they intend the students to engage. And, as Miller (2014) explained, “Good design, of course, offsets the problem of orienting students to the layout of the assignments – but even in a well-designed online course, students as well as teachers have to work harder to establish a basic understanding of how the course will work” (p. 28). Structure interacted in several different ways with my participants. For example, most of the courses in this study occurred during a short summer semester offered by the university, consisting of approximately seven weeks. These participants noted that the course structure was a primary consideration when making design decisions. Participant 1 said when designing the asynchronous online course that she compared the seven-week schedule to the in-person version of this course and identified seven distinct modules. “So, I grouped them into six main modules [and] a beginning and conclusion” to transition the course to the online environment. She then suggested to the students to try to complete one module per week to get the most out of completing the course.

The semester length was a secondary concern to the second participant. Because this asynchronous fully online course was created from an in-person 15-week course, the faculty members collapsed their content to fit the timeframe. Participant 2 explained, “We needed to make sure that the students were getting what we felt were equivalent [classes] – exposure to methods, exposure to theories, and then the ability to kind of work through some of the stuff well too,” though they recognized that there is a difference in environment between the in-person and online versions of the course. Because Case 2 was created as a “multi-focal” course, the faculty members who created the course decided to have a highly structured “blueprint” (an “expanded

syllabus”) to be very organized. This blueprint was driven by the multiple instructors in the course and a need for consistency, for the students and for the faculty members to stay on track, and to give up “control” of the course to a graduate student to facilitate. In it the faculty members detail “every single point of the semester and we use that to plan.” The goals for each unit are explicitly stated, as well as:

this is how we’re going to achieve it in terms of you’re going to watch these videos...you’re going to watch this PowerPoint lecture, you’re going to do these assessments....And I do think [if the course is successful] one of the reasons is that [the other faculty member] and I have so much experience teaching it in class and so we already knew, we could anticipate so much of what are...the typical questions, what are the typical kind of missing pieces that students oftentimes don’t get.

When queried about why prompted this decision to create a highly structured plan for the class, Participant 2 explained:

We needed to have it...That helped us with consistency that I mentioned. That we needed to have it very specific and then we were also able to communicate why we would choose this...we had to explain why...did we think that this was particularly important for us to do and the blueprint helped us, kind of, to say why these are the key pieces that you need for [this] course...I think having it as structure is what allowed us to give it over [to be facilitated by a graduate student]. And that’s very different in in-class teaching...I prepare for all of my courses. I go in with the notes but my notes are very much more of a guide as opposed to a strict lecture. But I felt with this, if it was going to be my content, I needed to have [the information] more fully fleshed out.

The graduate assistant was able to add his own spin on things but, Participant 2 said:

I did feel like I want to be as clear and explicit as possible if this is my stuff and you're not going to be able to ask me questions about it. I needed to be much more deliberate about it than I am in my in-person classes, where I can always say, "Oh well, I didn't really mean that" or...so I needed to be very very explicit and that was nerve wracking, actually, as an instructor to think that I didn't have that recourse.

Participant 4 used the same textbook in the online course as in the face-to-face sections, which provided a natural structure for the course. The textbook provided a structure to drive content delivery and learning in the course without requiring a great deal of additional resources or reorganization. The book has six chapters and a narrow focus that matched the faculty member's intentions for the focus of learning in the course. Most of her course goals and learning outcomes were driven by the needs of the next classes in the curricular sequence. The professors of the classes that come after the participant's class highlighted areas of weakness for their students that should be strengthened in the earlier classes. In addition, the department has achievement goals for the students that require certain outcomes from this course. In addition, the textbook came with a supplemental online workbook that allowed the students to practice the skills they learned through the reading and lecture. The participant said, then, that she could "focus [her] time on developing what would then take the place of class time." The focus of this course is very specific and narrow – practicing skills that are preparatory for the next class the students will take. Hence, the participant believes that "it really wasn't that much of a stretch to take [the course] online." When asked what inspired her need for structure in her course, Participant 4 said it as both her teaching philosophy and thinking about the course from the students' experience:

A lot of it is me needing a routine. But also with [her participation in a learning community with other faculty in her college], we discussed that and that if...because students don't read and teachers don't either, we needed to be very clear. And if we changed the deadline that was going to be a catastrophe, because you can't announce it in class. You can't have that communication. So that's why from early on I recommended that we have a very strict routine or things were due on particular days and that never changed, and that kind of stuff.

Many of the instructors mentioned the need for routine and predictability as part of the underlying structure of their courses and their presence. The participants mentioned thinking of how best to usher their students through the course as part of their decision-making. The participants recognized that when there were no synchronous activities with the entire class, their preparation and predictability had to serve as a surrogate to their active presence in an in-person class. Participant 5 described this well:

I sort of realized that [the] online experience...has to be a coherent story because you're not there. You have readers, in a sense. We're going through an experience...and you need to guide them through that experience. It can't be just random notes on a PowerPoint and that's your module. So, I think in that sense, it's helped me both with the face-to-face and online by putting together a cohesive [experience] like that and then having people go through that journey, go through the materials that are there and then engage with me on topics they're interested in, on things they find they need help with or they need more direction with.

Participant 4 said activities in her class were always due on the same day of the week. "In that initial video, when I talked about the syllabus, I explained that and I explained when I was

going to upload...videos that would help them with the reading.” The instructor also said she explained to the class that her videos would only cover points on which she felt they would need extra instruction and that they should be able to pick up other necessary information from the readings. Similarly, Participant 1 made her structure and intentions evident to the students. “So each unit is structured very similarly...the students...see the description of the unit, what is the content, what is the unit objective, and then the actual unit content.” Later units start with a review of the previous unit and a pre-test.

Conversely, Participant 3 found structuring her course in the online format to be a challenge. She utilized a similar mindset to Participant 2 – redundancy. “The information is in any place I can think to put it” on the course management system, she said. “I send out a weekly email, usually Sunday, saying ok, this is what we’re doing this week, here are the assignments that we’re gonna be working on, here’s how to get in touch with me if you have questions.” The email is sent through the CMS’s email system with links to each element referred to in the email. This instructor also posts information on the news area of the CMS. “My units have names which hopefully kind of guide [the students] through, you know, what’s the question we’re thinking about or what’s the idea we’re thinking about.” She also introduces these ideas in her weekly lecture and follows up with weekly discussion boards to address those topics. From the beginning, she laid out the expectations for the course in the course description: “where we’re going, what [are] the questions we’re asking.” This theme is expanded on with the first lecture. Participant 3 explained how she built on this structuring of her course with her more overt or direct presence. She explained:

The first lecture I give is about the questions we’re talking about in this course.

Then...each week has its own heading to kind of be like, this is what we’re thinking

about this week. The lecture then reiterates some of those big questions that I want people to be considering and tries to show connection across what we've been talking about.

When designing her instruction and the resources she uses to support her teaching, Participant 3 pointed to readings she uses to tie the “real world” to what the students are learning in class. She cites the sources of the information and views that she brings in her lectures and does “a lot of linking, like if I think this could be interesting, go look at it.” From the initial elements of the structure of the course, according to this participant:

I think I try to set up in the syllabus by, again, making the course seem approachable, but also being clear about what we're going to be doing. And try to be as transparent as possible about what I expect and how much time this is going to take, and I try to take this course seriously and I expect you to, too.

Participant 1 believes the way she has structured the course with content delivery, assimilation of information, and application of that knowledge is the major driving force.

...the process is, they watch the video [lecture], you know, get a basic understanding of the concept. Then there are some activities that have them apply the concept. And then there is a reading component where they read the scholarly piece and the [disciplinary reading assignment] that goes along with it, and then there is an analysis portion that follows after that. So I think just the sequence of how things are presented helps them apply the concepts and make sense of what they've learned.

Recalling his own experiences as a student, Participant 5 drew on the format a previous instructor had used to inspire his approach to structuring his course.

So, when I took that online course my first semester, the professor had a syllabus and she actually divided it up into four areas...social tasks, content tasks, course activities, and

there was one more and I'm drawing a blank on it. And then at the end of the syllabus those four things were divided up into a page she called course deliverables. And they were all laid out right there. So it was fairly clear-cut from the beginning what was coming forward. So I took that from that class onward. I made my own course deliverables...I understand why [other instructors] would put their course this way...there would be an assignments folder and all the assignments were in that folder. And there'll be a materials folder and materials would be all in there. So, for me, that was an absolute nightmare as a student to have to go to each folder to figure out where I should be and what I should be doing...and again, it goes back to that story book. Like, you don't jump around in a story, you follow it page by page, so I try to follow the same with the courses.

Participant 3 also recognized the value of having a clear statement of course deliverables or goals. She shared that each semester she works on building or enhancing areas of her online course structure to make it more explicit.

This is something I'm still learning how to do effectively and I do a piece of it every semester and think, ok, the next semester I'm going to do it. So I've made my goals this semester, I rewrote them to be much more concrete. They were kind of conceptual before that, part of that was 'cause I didn't really know how to write them effectively. And so I made them very concrete and I tried to tie them to the undergraduate learning goals. I'd like to do that more explicitly this next semester and I would like to make them more explicit how they tie in to everything that we do.

As demonstrated, the participants in my study saw value in having a structured approach to their courses – for themselves as well as for their students.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Online Environment

A number of participants compared their experiences teaching in-person courses versus their online courses throughout the interviews, highlighting pros and cons to each. I was interested to know about not just those differences but also why they chose certain methods to craft their teaching presence. Participant 1 kept her desire for student engagement in mind when creating her course and its objectives. Her self-paced course structure became an underlying aspect of her teaching presence as part of the “grand design” of her course:

...I wanted it to be as flexible as possible for the students. So that was the very first decision, would it be an online course that had synchronous components or would it be an online course that’s just completely self-paced. And so I opted for the self-paced because I wanted it to be available to as many students as possible.

Participant 1 asks her students to fill out a background survey about themselves and their experience at the beginning of the class to learn more about their experience and what they need in the online format. She asks the students about their experiences with online classes – if this is their first, what they liked and disliked about any previous online experiences, et cetera.

...that’s an ongoing open dialogue where I tell the students, I seek out their feedback and their input and at the end there is a detailed survey again where I ask them, you know, what was good, what worked for you, what didn’t. And I know that all of these students are traditional face-to-face students.

In considering how the course goals were made clear to the students, Participant 4 reflected that her online class was not different from her face-to-face class in that respect. “I think that I actually clarified my goals a little bit more in the online class...because I explicitly told them how much work they were going to do on [course content].” Course goals is an

element of the “grand design” that establishes a more ubiquitous teaching presence. One specific activity that this participant included was asking student to discuss feedback on their papers via Skype so they can see their paper with her comments and discuss them with her. I asked Participant 4 if this is something she would try to do in a face to face class and, therefore, something she felt was important to her online course. Participant 4 agreed, saying:

Yeah, I guess that’s what I would do in face-to-face as well because I would see a pattern that everybody can benefit from...that’s why I did that on Skype because at that point that’s when I would say, I need to talk to you individually...this is something graded. I’m not discussing it with anybody else in front of you. It’s you and me alone. So in the face to face format, this is come to my office, stay after class, whatever. So I guess that’s...I never thought it of that way but yeah, that would make sense.

While some of the participants mentioned feeling constrained by the online format – the lack of nonverbal feedback, the size of the class, the amount of time that could be devoted to some activities – there were other instances where the online format was found to be beneficial. For example, Case 2 allowed two professors who teach the same course to “cull” their “greatest hits” from their in-person classes to form the instructional content for their online class. “That was liberating because I think in the traditional classroom, you do feel like you are so content driven that, you know, in order to understand [the course content], we need to hit all of these sorts of things,” Participant 2 said. “And what the online environment allowed us to do and say, “Ok, no, ‘cause we can’t...we don’t have the space” but can we really kind of distill what are the fundamental phases that we want each student to kind of have. So that was really nice. So that was kind of a good thing.”

Participant 2 described her in-person courses as a “very interactive experience,” during which she asks the students for examples from their own perspectives that relate to the topic of that day. The challenge for creating an asynchronous online course was “how do you take that kind of face-to-face interaction that is so, in many ways, at least the way that I teach it, improvisational [to] a very canned experience in an online environment.” At the same time, the faculty participant recognized that the online environment did allow for some elements, such as the use of media sources, that she did not feel as if she could include in her in-person course. This faculty member recognized that her online course would lack the student-instructor interaction that her in-person courses had, but found some other benefits, such as use of websites, movies or short videos, that she did not feel she could devote time to in her in-person course. This added to the affordances of the online environment in the course design – a chance to give the students the “best of both of” the two faculty members who provided content. For the faculty members who provided the structure and content for Case 2, one of the learning drivers was the outside resources they brought into the online class. “[The online environment] did allow us to do a lot more video clips and a lot more multimedia sources than...I do in the classroom itself.” Participant 2 said that when teaching the course in person, it’s “alive” – she and the students have interchanges, characterizing it as a “performance.”

Here we are, and here we are in this moment, and it’s distracting to [use videos]...I do do some video clips and things like that but we did a lot more in the online environment because it’s right there, and they can easily do that. They can see these things, they can hear these things and they’re already online and already on the computer so they can have access to these things in a way that they can’t in class...You can give more examples than the ones I give in the [in-person] class environment.

Participant 2 said she felt she had more flexibility to use things like videos in the online environment, which she did not feel able to do during an in-person one hour and 20 minute course meeting. Participant 4 pointed out that having course content existing in the CMS was beneficial.

...that's where I found that actually online was a little bit easier because [the students] could go back and do it as many times as they wanted on their own pace. Whereas in class, I mean, we go over the stuff that's on the board and if they miss a syllable or a word or something, I'm already down the line so that's where I felt that they were much more in control of their learning.

On the other hand, there were other constraints that emerged as the participants weighed the positive and the negative about online courses. Participant 4 shared:

There is a part of online teaching I don't like because there [are] times where I feel that it would be so much less time for me to just tell them in person. Or, also, one of the things that I feel is the most difficult is that when I'm in class, I can tell when they don't get it. I have the immediate blank stare. And then, even when I don't get the blank stare, I have the immediate feedback when I say, "All right, is that clear?" And then the "yes" – you can tell as a teacher if it is a "yes, whatever" or "yeah I get it" or "yeah, I believe you but I have no idea what you just said." So that is the crucial thing that is lacking to me online, but the convenience of teaching in my jammies in my house...sometimes wins. Yeah, also [an online course is] a good thing, especially to [students not on] campus during the summer, so it works for everyone. I mean a lot of students actually were not on campus. Some were not even on the same continent.

The graduate student assistant in Case 2 brought up the lack of immediate, nonverbal feedback as a key difference for him between teaching an in-person class versus a fully online asynchronous course. “You see everybody [in an in-person course] and you say “hey, what do you think?”...How do you do it [online]? And that’s always the question.”

Participants who valued interaction with students and between students also noted some difficulty with the online format. Participant 3 said she is:

really interested in getting students talking to each other, because I found that to be really effective in my face to face classes. Students feedback is that they really like that part of the class and they get a lot from it. You know, you’ve got really smart students bringing, you know, unique perspectives to this. I want to make sure everyone has access to that. She tries to replicate that in her online environment which, she says, is challenging. Case 3 has “a lot of emphasis on the discussion forums that we work on each week,” responding to a question and replying to two other students’ responses “to kind of build conversation. So that’s how I try to facilitate some of that feedback. So that’s one way.”

I asked Participant 2 if she thought she would do well as a student in an online course. She responded in the negative, saying it would not be for her as a learner. However,

...I think online teaching can be very successful and I think that students can be very successful in it but it’s only because that’s what they’ve been exposed to and that’s what—and they’ve been hopefully taught good strategies for dealing in that environment but for myself...I cannot see engaging the people on the really deep level of conversation, especially...within my field...where we do talk about very difficult things, in a mediated environment where you are not actually seeing that person and seeing how they’re reacting to what you’re saying. And that ability to kind of judge and, you know,

for me as a learner, all of my best experiences were in those small seminars where you really were—well, where the professor...was really more of facilitator rather than even a, you know, providing content...I've not seen how that can be modeled in an online environment. So, maybe there are strategies out there...I think there is something very much that has to still be in a face-to-face, one-on-one interaction where you really think that you're dealing with another human that allows you to both fully listen and understand what another person is saying ...

Participant 3 tries to create that smaller, more intimate group feeling by breaking her students up into groups to work on a project together. When asked why she decided on that approach, Participant 3 said:

Fifty people is kind of an overwhelming number. I think for students, too. I want them to be able to engage in more sustained discussion, which I don't quite know how to facilitate, because, you know, it's a lot of people. They're fulfilling a requirement. They put in just enough time to get the grades that they want out of it. So to try to be respectful of their priorities on the one hand, but on the other hand, try to create spaces where it is possible to have more back and forth and actual conversation.

Because of its unique format, I asked Participant 2 if it was difficult for her to, in effect, give the class away for someone else to facilitate her content. She responded:

If I were to develop more online courses, I'm not sure I would follow this format or not, but I would certainly – I'd want it to be a class that I had taught a lot. It made me far more comfortable moving this class into this environment than other classes that...that I don't teach on as regular of a rotation. This class, I teach all the time. So...I was more secure in moving that to the online environment than other classes.

The graduate student assistant in Case 2 brought up the persistent issue of cheating in online courses. He mentioned that it is hard to know for sure if the students completing the work are the enrolled students

...because if you go to like Craigslist or something like that, you'll see ads in the tutoring section for people. Like, "I'll take your online class for you." And I have no way of knowing if that is the person that I'm talking to...and I'm sure it goes on. I mean, it would be an easy way to make money and an easier way to get your grade, unless they failed...that's always one of the things that I have been interested in...I mean, give your friend your log in information and they could do the work for you.

Three of the participants mentioned interactions with students that call into question how students see the instructors of their online courses, something I have termed "Instructor as Textbook." Anecdotally, Participant 1 mentioned that she will encounter students from her online course around the area in which her office is located; the students will recognize her and reference this course. She admitted that she doesn't recognize them by sight, only by first and last name but that, "I think the course, or me, I don't know, or both, do leave some kind of impact." I asked if she had ever probed the students about the impact of her presence in the online course (she does not). She also allowed that maybe the subject matter of her course is what triggers the remembering, but said, "That's a good idea, asking a question about that. Just to see if this is a concept that the student even notices." She does ask the students if this was their first online course, what they liked and didn't like and does recall that students have remarked on classes where the material is in static PowerPoint slides they are expected to read along with lecture notes. The students have described reading static PowerPoints as "boring" and remarked

on the lack of engagement with an instructor. “I think maybe that’s where I’m...trying to do something different, ‘cause that’s...not how I want to learn, right?”

Participant 2 shared an interaction with a student related to this idea:

I might have an unusual experience which I don’t quite understand of a student who came into another one of my classes, and I teach that Anthropology capstone course, and he’s like, “Oh, yes I took 420.” I say, “Did you take it with [the other faculty member]?” He was like, “No, I took it online.” So I was like, “You took it with me?” (laughs) I was like—and he didn’t realize that (laughs) I don’t—I—that was weird to me that I felt like, “Did you not know that that was me?” you know.

Despite the content of the course being delivered via video, meaning the student had watched the participant deliver content throughout the entire course, yet did not recognize her.

That was a little disquieting. Like, I never had any problems until that moment where I was like, “Really? Did you not know?” you know because I do feel tied to the course—well, I feel like in some ways it is. You know, it’s my shared course—So that was all a bit disquieting...

Notwithstanding the structure of the course – content provided by two faculty members and facilitated by a graduate student assistant, Participant 2 still felt ownership of the course. She did allow that she and her faculty counterpart are similar in description – age, gender, hair color – but still did not really know how to react.

The [graduate student] was the one he was interacting with. That was the person who was responding to his emails so was like he was seeing my name on that and I think he probably was like, “Yeah, these are just, you know, kind of the talking heads that are there like...we are a textbook. We are a textbook...I mean, I’m fine with [the course]

being kind of...not being fully associated with [me] but I just consider it as my class because I also still see it...linked to the [in-person] class.

Similarly, Participant 3 shared what she termed a “very strange interaction” from the online course she was teaching at the time of our interview. A student requested an in-person meeting because he was behind in the class and wanted to talk about getting caught up.

He was a nice guy but he was like, “oh, this is maybe not appropriate, you’re really pretty.” And I was like, you’re right, that is not appropriate. It was just weird. But I think what he was really articulating is, you’re not what I thought a professor would look like.

Despite her introductory exercise and her narrated presentations, this student had not connected what he should have read and heard to the actual, physical person on the other end.

So you have in these weird moments where, because you’re online, [students] create some vision in their head and then when they’re confronted with reality sometimes the matchup is odd...There is a sense that they don’t interact with you as another human being, just an instance of authority.

Asking the participants to consider themselves as a text led to a related topic with Participant 3 – that of authority in the asynchronous online space.

I think one thing I’m always trying to figure out how to do and how to do productively is...I think the issue around establishing authority is a little bit difficult. I’m relatively new, this is my fourth year here. I know that I appear younger than I am...so students are often unsure that I am the teacher, let alone that I have a Ph.D., or you know, things like that. And then, of course, all of the gender issues that come into being a woman teaching classes, especially teaching a class that is, you know, people don’t want to take unless you’re enforcing...standards can be sometimes a little fraught. So I think these issues

definitely play into how I present myself differently in [this class] than say in [a class in her discipline]...

I picked up on the idea of gender in an online environment to question a bit further, asking how Participant 3 feels gender comes across in an online class and whether she has felt that gender has become an issue as an instructor in an online class. She responded that her research interests include feminist theory in gender studies and so, from her feelings and her training:

I would say that gender certainly plays a role. I'm not sure how or in what ways it plays out, but I would feel that certainly it does because we have association around, you know, what it means to hear a female voice...and so I would say yes, I think it does as a social construct...I only just have anecdotal evidence where students write things like...how [a student] thought the professor would be this little man with a white moustache. She didn't think it would be this young woman. Things like that...

While my study did not explore student reactions to teaching presence, the instances my participants related regarding how students envisioned the “person on the other end” of their courses offered an interesting glimpse into the student experience and an area for further thought for my participants and for me as a researcher.

Influences on Course Design

One focus of this study was to get an idea of how the participants made their decisions about how to design their courses and present themselves to their classes. When probed about those influences, the participants mainly pointed to three factors: their education (formal [Ph.D. programs], informal [personal reading], professional development, and learning communities);

institutional support (a center or office that supports online teaching or instructional development, hired teaching assistants); and on-the-job experience.

Participant 1's dissertation focused on using technology to teach in her discipline, so part of her Ph.D. coursework was in digital humanities, "...learning the basics...figuring out what makes something positive...in an online environment for learning, to support learning and teaching, what's good, what's not good." This faculty member stressed that her course was heavily influenced by her formal education. "I think this course definitely benefitted from knowing what worked well in my dissertation project and what did not work well. So this is a much more refined version of the course now."

The approach to the course taken by the fifth participant was also influenced by his experiences during his doctoral program, which included a survey course in teaching and learning online. After that he became a teaching assistant, working often in an online environment and teaching blended courses (courses with both in-person and online interactions). Prior to arriving at his current institution and developing this course, Participant 5 said he had taught blended and online courses for five years. "The only thing I haven't done would be a MOOC." He drew on that previous experience to create this course and revisions to the structure have been largely responsive to expressed needs of the students.

Participant 4 was in a learning community that supported its members in online teaching. That learning community provided some financial resources that she used to hire someone to help her develop her first online course. "The learning community gave me a lot of the research, some of the background, some of the software knowledge, some of that stuff and then a little bit of a stipend to hire somebody to help me with that." She has progressively worked on parts of

the course and has received various financial supports to hire teaching assistants to help develop pre-reading and specific skill-building activities for the textbook.

Participant 4 also utilized institutional support when constructing her course. Years before teaching her first online course, this faculty member was asked to create a hybrid course by her department and was provided with some support and professional development in order to do so.

Having to do the hybrid I think was a really good transition for me because this forced me to see, okay, what can [the students] do on their own, really? What do they need me for as a teacher and what is it that they can do on their own...and so that's the guiding principle for me is what are they smart enough to do on their own and what do they really need me for?...And so at that point is when I did a lot of thinking in terms of what should be taught online and what should class time be devoted to. So that kind of influenced my thinking way back then.

This experience led directly to her class design – which can be likened to what has become known as a “flipped” classroom – that takes what the students can learn on their own into account; as the participant explained: “how can I optimize class time and outsource what they can do on their own.”

Participant 2 shared that once the decision had been made by her department to bring some of their courses into the asynchronous fully online environment, the department hosted a workshop with an office that helps faculty members with the use of technology in their teaching and research.

We saw some examples of online courses and then we also kind of went through...what it is like to kind of build it. But what I found effective about those workshops is that it

was the faculty who were designing the courses but then also the graduate students who had already been selected to teach the courses.

The courses in this department are unusual in that they are designed to be taught in the summer by graduate students using content created by the faculty members. “If [these courses] are successful, I think one of the keys to the success was that alignment...”

Though not an official offering of his institution, Participant 5 said he used personnel on campus who are trained in the Quality Matters framework to do an informal evaluation of his course.

I wanted to get the feedback. So that helped a lot I went through that last year and I made a lot of changes based on that feedback. It’s always a work in progress but it’s much stronger than it was from the first time I did it.

Participant 1 highlighted much of her work as being “learning by doing” beyond the other experiences she shared. Similarly, the primary faculty member of Case 2’s online course had no professional development to support creating an online course. The graduate student for her course was trained how to use the technology and best practices for interacting with students. But mainly, he said, “You learn while you’re doing it. You know, in every class it’s different...But a lot of that you learn while you’re doing it. Hopefully you don’t make too many mistakes.” The third participant sited largely on-the-job training, or learning by doing, for her design choices, mainly in her previous work on the MOOC project in which she was involved.

I was in charge of putting together kind of a guide for new faculty interested in teaching a MOOC and kind of looking at, at that point it wasn’t even best practices, it was just common practices on...the platform we were working on. So I had a lot of experience

just looking at different kinds of online courses and so I had a sense of what I thought worked and what I thought didn't work as well...

She also reported having experience with the mechanics of putting a course online, including things to be aware of, how to record videos – both practical and theoretical items.

Creating a Sense of Community

Part of teaching presence is working to create a community not only between the instructor and the students, but also among students. The participants in this study approached creating community in several different ways. However, not all the participants considered this as part of their course design. Two of the cases – Case 1 and Case 4 – felt constrained in creating community. Participant 1 recognized that the self-paced structure of the course would not necessarily allow for a great amount of community to be built among the students: "...building community is so hard with the way that this course is structured and with the amount of students and the fact that I always have a few students who are abroad," she said. "I always have students who work full time. Some students can only, you know, do this on weekends...And again, that was the initial decision, allowing for that flexibility, knowing that the community will suffer." Despite the challenges brought by the structure of the course, Participant 1 really wanted to have community with her students. "...if I was teaching in a virtual school, I think that would be a different approach that I would take, 'cause I don't think I would...not want to have those synchronous, you know, experiences. For my own sake, too."

Interestingly, because Participant 4's course is a skill course, building community is not a focus for her in the fully online asynchronous version of her course. In person, she said, she does a lot of what could be considered collaborative work, allowing students to talk with others while completing their work. This seemed largely to be based on her own learning preferences. "I'm

not the kind of person who does well in conversation classes. I have never done those and I'm very glad that I don't. I'm a very structured person..."

When asked whether she developed a sense of community among the students, Participant 2 responded "No! I'll have to be honest. No. Nope. That didn't enter my mind...[it's a] very individualized [course]." The graduate student, however, had a slightly different take on his portion. He asked the students to post an introduction of themselves, but mainly "to get them all used to the technology" and gain five points of extra credit. The result was that the students introduced themselves to the community – who they are, where they're from, what they're studying. "And then I would see people like, "Oh hey, you were in my [previous] class." Because they were all coming from, like, the same space in campus, a lot of them were friends anyway." Once the students began to identify with each other, those with existing relationships would often start to form an "in group" and respond only to each other, so the graduate student said he would

try to respond to [those not in the "in group," because] they weren't getting any responses to their blogs...and so I would focus on them as much as possible...so they knew that the people were reading their things and that they weren't just out there by themselves.

Similarly, the undergraduate student assistants in Case 1 reached out and had conversations with the students to encourage connection, though mostly focused around the mechanics of the course.

Most of the participants in this study used introductory videos in their courses to introduce themselves to the students. The first participant places a video on the course homepage that students must watch before they can even access the introductory module. Both Case 2 and Case 5 have introductory videos of the faculty members and the graduate student who

administered the course in Case 2. For Participant 5, his course is organized in modules, which include an introductory module as recommended and rewarded by the Quality Matters evaluation. “I didn’t really offer an intro video to myself, and that’s a point in Quality Matters. If you don’t offer that, you lose points...so...I’ve caved and now I have an intro video.” This participant also includes video overviews of the course readings since some students have asked for that and audio overviews of each of the modules. He also included comic strips or memes for each module which, he felt, “humanized a little bit of the course...rather than seeing chunks of material.” When probed about his reticence to include video, his reasoning drew on his own experiences as a student:

I had taken courses where people had put videos up and, generally speaking, they just weren’t valuable...At least in person you can maybe ask a question or talk to people around you. But with the video, you’re stuck and especially with a long video. So I had always that bias against videos.

Though not as much a problem now, previously files sizes on videos were prohibitively large and were often difficult to play. The participant also shared he prefers audio files so students can download them and listen to them while doing other things. Audio is also easier for accessibility issues, where only a transcript of the words is needed versus a transcript of words and image descriptions.

The third participant focused on student engagement and student-instructor interaction when creating the online version of her course. This faculty member had experience as a graduate student working on a project to create a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). “So,” she explained, “I had some experience thinking through the design issues for online courses. And so what I concentrated on...was how to get student engagement online.” Face-to-face, this

faculty member focuses on discussion and responding to big, overarching questions inspired by the course readings. “My main concern in taking it online was figuring out how we could preserve some kind of interaction and engagement...that was my main concern...how do we get this interactive part online.”

Participant 3 said she wants students in her course to create a community amongst themselves and is “really interested in students talking to each other,” because that is an aspect of her face-to-face classes that she’s found to be effective.

Student feedback is that they really like that part of the class and they get a lot from it.

You know, you’ve got really smart students bringing...unique perspectives to this. I want to make sure everyone has access to that.

She has found recreating that student interaction in the online environment challenging. She has approached the work of creating community through the online discussion board and through her assignments. The first assignment is a written introduction (an approach also used by Participant 1) which she also completes to illustrate the information she wants included. She also asks them to comment on each other’s introductions; the participant comments on each student’s post to welcome them to the class. Students are also placed in groups to complete a project to try to create a smaller community among the students. “Fifty people [in a course] is kind of an overwhelming number. I think for students, too. I want them to be able to engage in more sustained discussion, which I don’t quite know how to facilitate.”

Discussion board posts are another way Participant 3 hopes to connect the students to each other and the course material.

...I put a lot of emphasis on the discussion forums that we work on each week. So everyone writes an initial, you know, response to the question. Then I ask them to respond to at least two other people to kind of build conversation.

She tries to “be respectful of the [students’] priorities on the one hand, but on the other hand, try to create spaces where it is possible to have more back and forth and actual conversation.”

Participant 5 disclosed that participation to build community has been an area of struggle for him. He uses discussion boards a lot and also posts students’ introductions on the online platform; each module has a question/comment/concern area where students can ask the participant or other students questions or raise issues. However, he shared:

Specifically, in the online courses, the student-to-student interaction is where I feel, for me personally, is a weak spot in my teaching. So the last two years or so, I’ve really taken a step back and looked at what does that mean in an online class and what steps can I take to make that type of engagement occur? Not only naturally, but then make it occur as an official part of the course so that hopefully at least that portion will always be handled because the students...see there’s value attached to doing this activity or doing this way.

Participant 5 made a change to a literature review assignment, asking students to comment on each other’s work. “Those really exploded. Those more so than even the discussion board. There was more interaction on those, commenting on the side than there were [with traditional discussion board activities].” He has always encouraged the students to work together, but discovered in casual conversation with students after course completion that they had taken it one step further on their own. They have told him, for example, “we called each other, we developed a relationship outside the course to be successful within the course.” These small

groups formed outside anything he intentionally sought to do; the instructor would encourage them to work on assignments in pairs or groups,

but I never fully understood how much of the relationship was formed. But then with these little conversations I've learned how much they relied on each other...I found just about every activity I had done, I found a way to tie in the student-to-student interaction.

Case 1 also utilized group or collaborative work to create community among the students.

In one assignment, Participant 5 asked students to work individually and share their work on a discussion board. Then, other students were required to make recommendations for extension activities on at least two other students' work. "That was amazing," Participant 5 said. "I was really happy to see the results from that. From that little tweak, that to me really addressed that student-to-student interaction...people were doing four or five [responses on the discussion board]."

Another method utilized by many participants to establish a sense of community was email. For example, Participant 3 sent out an email "a number of weeks before the class opens" that includes a reminder that students had signed up for the course, a short introduction about the faculty member, as well as "the materials they'll need to buy...the date the course opens, just kind of orienting everybody on what to expect." About a week prior to the semester, the participant sent out another email, with the syllabus and another introduction, to announce the course site is open, remind the students of the course start date, and to convey "I'm excited to work with you, here's my email if there's any issues, things like that." Any success tips are included in the syllabus, along with the technical requirements and troubleshooting tips for the course. "And then what I did this year was introduced open [discussion board] threads, like do

you have questions about the course, post your questions here,” which has been pretty effective, she said, as another channel for communication.

The student assistants that work with Participant 1 on her course also provide guidance on issues related to finding a topic for research, finding resources, judging the legitimacy of resources, citing sources, assignment samples, and tips to avoid plagiarism. Because of the particular way in which the second course was developed, it falls to the graduate student to lead the first phase of the class. He began each class with an introductory email to welcome students and provide instruction prior to the semester. The graduate student described the email as:

here’s where you find this, here’s where you find that, here’s the syllabus, contact me if you have questions before class starts...if you’re having problems, don’t wait ‘til the last minute. Just outlining some of the things they need to be aware of before they start.

The fourth class combined email and personal meetings for the introductory elements; in prior semesters, Participant 4 emailed the enrolled students near the end of the semester before the course to invite them to her office to ask questions or discuss the class. When only two students showed up, the participant subsequently joined up with another professor teaching an online class and offered a pizza get-together for students to learn about what to expect in the course. A draft syllabus was available at that meeting so students would have an idea what to expect from the class, including:

how I planned everything, why I had planned it, because one other thing that I realized when I taught the first class is that I had to be very clear on what I was doing and why I was doing it. It is almost as if I had to justify to them the inclusion of every single activity so that they would understand that it was necessary for their own learning.

Once the class opened, the students had to complete a quiz over the syllabus and watch a brief video so the students who didn't attend the in-person meeting could put a face to the name, "and to try to show them who I was and what I was expecting, feeling, and trying to establish that human relation that is lacking so much." The course instruction was largely done by narrated PowerPoint presentations, but the participant said she tried to do something to draw the students' attention, like wearing different colored nail polish with each video. She also required two Skype appointments, one during the first two weeks, to talk with the students about their work, how they were feeling. "They have great ideas and so I just asked them what do you need me to do to help you?" Some students kept weekly appointments to get one-on-one help from the participant "because they needed extra help with the online format as well as the materials." However, overall, when my participants offered in-person meetings as an option, most students did not utilize the option.

Participants' Presence – Intervention versus Instruction

The participants in this study shared varying perspectives on their presence. All at some point mentioned wanting the students to know someone was there behind the words, that there was a person in the background. Though, as noted earlier, the C of I framework removes the person from the role or the presence, the participants in my study noted a distinction between Teaching Presence – the "things" an instructor does to teach an online course – and what could be termed "teacher presence" – the sense of the person who is embodied in most of the elements of Teaching Presence. As a result, my study dovetails with the instructor disposition element highlighted as important to the students in Sheridan, Kelly, and Betz's (2013) study. It also offers a slightly different distinction to Teaching Presence between pedagogy, facilitation and design, and the person who is performing each of those functions. Case 2 in my study is unique in that

the faculty members served as content providers in a static embedded presentation. Their presence was very recessive, evident through the thoughtful structuring of the course and through their content delivery while the personality the students experienced as teacher presence was that of the graduate assistant whom the faculty members had empowered to be their representation. I asked Participant 2 whether the PowerPoints used for the content are the same between the in-person and online versions of the class.

The PowerPoints I did take from my existing class but they're augmented, they're added [to], they're longer and they're more explicit...they have more things on them and I do go through more in terms of the actual articles [the students are assigned to read] themselves, like what the author's point is in this particular [piece]...which I would say in class but I actually put it explicitly on PowerPoint...So things I would just kind of use, just oral examples, I do have written out much more explicitly.

When asked if she prepared an outline or script of what she wanted to say with each PowerPoint slide, Participant 2 said she used the existing PowerPoint as an outline but the recording was still a bit spontaneous.

...in class, you know, the PowerPoints are in some ways a guide for me. It's just kind of to keep me on track but students are asking questions. If they need clarification, then I can, you know, kind of go back to it. I knew that they weren't going to have that opportunity in this environment and that they're not in class. I could do PowerPoints, they have access to the PowerPoints because I put them on [the CMS], but [the in-person students] are taking notes. Nobody is taking notes here. These are their notes, so in some ways, these are also my ideal what I want the students' notes to look like because I'm not expecting anybody to be sitting down at the computer taking notes...they're not having

that environment in the online environment, so I need to think about these are, in a sense, their notes. This is what their notes have to look like.

Because Case 1 was a self-paced course, which allowed and encouraged students to progress at their own rate, Participant 1 said she had to anticipate when students would need to receive communication about the course topics and goals and include those elements in her videos. She took care to provide a description of the content of each video she posts, including the due date for the work. Another more instructional format for teaching presence came via feedback provided to students. Many of the participants noted they interacted with students via comments on their assignments or in the gradebook. Several tied assignment grading to a rubric, which provided feedback. Participant 3 used rubrics and comments on assignments to take a more instructional approach to presence.

I let the discussion forum be a space to experiment and then they submit their assignments [using the dropbox function of the CMS], so it allows me to tie it into the rubric. My rubric usually has feedback associated with each level, so there's some generated feedback and then I try to provide a couple of sentences for each student about, ok, this is what worked, here's where I might ask you to think more. And so that's generally how I approach it. In the feedback I always say, if they want a more detailed discussion, they can get in touch with me and we can set up a meeting.

The graduate assistant in Case 2 and Participant 3 also noted a similar instructional presence, using a weekly email to the class to interact with students about participation, time frame, due dates, clarify misconceptions or redirect the students by suggesting that, as Participant 3 said, "it may be more productive for us to think about [a topic] in x, y, or z way, or then bring it up in the lectures." Participant 3 explained,

In the weekly email I send out, I make sure to highlight any important due dates that are coming up. I try to highlight, especially in the early emails, that the semester follows a pattern and, you know, the same thing is due on [the same day each week]. So there's a pattern...I think establishing that rhythm helps take some guesswork out.

Though not many students take her up on in-person office hours, Participant 3 said she gets a lot of email; she tries to respond promptly "to show them that there is actually someone there."

The fifth case was another course with rubrics attached, which the participant said he vacillates over sometimes.

So over the years with the detailed feedback, I mean, we have a very small program and that's part of that charm and the attractiveness to it for our students. But I've always wondered, especially with certain students, if they even ever go back and open their feedback.

Participant 4 interacted in an instructional sense via the review function of Word.

I would either leave comments, fix mistakes, highlight some stuff, without leaving a comment for them to try to figure it out on their own. And then I would leave overall comments at the end, both on content and form...and sometimes I would write a comment like, "we need to talk next week." And also what I think about as well is that I could tell when they log back in to retrieve my comments. So that was very helpful.

While often the elements of teaching presence were subtle – a recorded lecture, written interactions or feedback – in other situations the participants noted a more direct form of presence meant to intervene or provided a more one-on-one interaction. For example, Participant 1 provides synchronous options for her students to connect with her, though most do not take advantage of those options. She reflected:

I wish there was a way to be more present. But, I don't know how...I'm not sure that the students feel they need anything beyond what's there...there is a lot of email conversation going back and forth, students have questions. They send quick emails...As I said, I wish I would find a better way to be more present but I have a sense that it's not even necessary, that it's nothing that the students are looking for.

Asked if she has ever attempted to gather feedback from her students about what they want or need as far as her presence, Participant 1 said she has not asked specifically about instructor presence.

I ask more broadly about, you know, things that worked well for you, things that didn't work well, which components did you like. You know, which components helped you in your learning, and then I list the video lectures and the conversations and blah blah blah...But that could, maybe, be a good question to add to, you know, the final survey. Something specifically about instructor presence.

Participant 3 said she tries to provide feedback on the students' work. One assignment – a larger project – requires students to turn in initial citations, a proposal, an outline, and a first draft.

That allows me to kind of help identifying issues and guide them toward more resources...I send the library URL out a lot. I tell them about the reference services...I guess I do [driving learning] a lot through feedback and providing resources.

This more directed type of presence is meant to intervene in the students' learning process.

Participant 1 also used comments to the students to offer suggestions, resources, or alternative ways to fulfill the assignments.

Participant 5 directly intervenes in the students' work by providing specific feedback on early assignments. During the first three weeks, he asks students to search for literature and the faculty member looks for themes or patterns of what interests each student. "I'll encourage on my feedback, "Why don't you keep going here? Why don't you look at this for the final paper?" Participant 5 also seeks out student contributions that are "working on the same idea, same topic, concept...I introduce them through my feedback" to encourage the students to collaborate. This also takes place in comments on discussion board posts. "Within the discussion boards I'm always posting little notes. I might give links to things...if they have a topic they're talking about, I might look for things myself." Participant 5 further illuminated ways he approaches direct instruction in his learning activities.

I'll say, "Look, here are a series of tools that myself have used or I recommended for that environment. Here are some examples of them. Here are how they are used. Here are some examples from maybe previous courses or things I've done myself."

From there the students are encouraged to explore those tools to engage in the learning activities or find other tools to use on their self-chosen areas of interest.

Participant 2 pointed to this as the domain of the graduate assistant on her course. Through his one-on-one interactions and other methods (blog posts, news updates), the graduate student was the troubleshooter and interventionist.

This is such an unusual class in that our grad student has done it for so long that I feel I trust him implicitly to do those...sort of things. And this is my student, he took this class with me so...I feel like he's an extension, so I have no problem with him doing that. The graduate student in Case 2 attempted to utilize real-time office hours to intervene directly with the students – to communicate time frames and due dates and support participation. "I

would make myself available,” the graduate student said. He would invite the students to meet him at a coffee shop when he would be there or on campus. “I did have students take me up on that...especially when they were struggling with the materials or they kept failing and couldn’t figure out why.”

While much of the direct contact occurs mainly “offline,” according to Participant 1 (indicating this is done through personal contact with the students), within the course, she highlighted the discussion forum, on which, she said, “I can comment on something that a student has said maybe after [an undergraduate assistant] has commented too.” Students in Case 4 utilized Skype to communicate with instructor directly when they needed help to clarify their understanding. At the suggestion of a previous student, this participant developed a practice of Skyping with students to go over grading on written assignments. “I would grade [their assignments] and I would return it to them. But I would then make an appointment with them” to walk through their writing assignment to question the students on their errors or ask them to explain their intentions.

Participant 1 also considered her comments on work and in the gradebook to be a direct intervention with the students. Her goal is to expose her students to different opinions about the course topics, as well as scholars and papers that would be considered “core” to the topics. She also makes sure to connect the course topics to current research.

So I think exposing them to different types of scholarship is important and there is certainly a presence in the course...I think some of the course readings that are part of the requirements highlight, you know, what is it to be a good scholar.

As the students engage in the class on their own schedules, she viewed her personal, direct feedback as primary in pushing the students on their learning journeys.

The instructor of Case 3 explained that students come to her class with very limited experience in the subject matter and in her approach to the course content. As a result, Participant 3 decided to change the intent of the course. “What I started emphasizing is just talking about what did you notice, what did you see in the text, how do you connect this to other things we’ve been working on, other big issues.” The recorded lectures, which are narrated Prezis, were one way this participant tried to push students toward deeper understanding.

I would try to kind of provide a framework for thinking, in that here’s some of the big things I see happening and here are some ways we might kind of try to make sense of some of this stuff...I try to model certain things that I think can be helpful when thinking through the [topics] so I use...phrases like, “well, I would argue...” to emphasize we’re making arguments...so I try to model some of the skills I want them to think about using.

The participant connected the subject matter to both historical context and contemporary issues; but, she said, only a fraction of her students watch her recorded lectures in the course. One decision she made was to formulate her assignments with prompts that “would give them room to explore what they see in the text and...try to guide them in a direction.” The prompts are long and require the students to provide evidence from the text for their responses. She hoped that using this method would build a conversation with the students during the week.

In responding to students, I try to show them the kind of dialogue I want them to be having with each other...And I do give a grade for the course forums so that they see that, you know, I am in some way involved...so they know that I’m reading.

The decision to use Prezi versus another presentation technology was based on its spatial design. “It helps me to see everything we’re working on...It helps me to organize myself.” There is some internal conflict over how to deliver the information to the students for this participant.

“I’m not sure how I’m supposed to communicate content to them otherwise. I don’t particularly like lecturing and I come from a background where lecturing is never a style of teaching I was exposed to.” The decision is around how to communicate a framework for the students to use in thinking about the course content. “I decided narrating [the Prezis] was good because it gives me some flexibility to respond to what’s going on. It also shows them, I hope, there’s a person teaching the class.”

Participant 4 utilized a similar intervention – tailoring videos to address issues she saw. This participant said she would review homework assignments and notice recurring patterns of mistakes. “So then, before they had to do their own writing assignment, I would do a short video where I went over some of the activities that were online. I re-explained some...points.” She wanted to be sure to engage the students early and give them a sense that the person behind the course was engaged and involved. In Case 2, the graduate assistant on this course was the primary conduit for intervening and extending the students’ learning, primarily through the course blog, where students would post their learning and their ideas regarding the course content. The graduate would encourage students by highlighting important points they made and directing them to think about related ideas. “What’s I think difficult, too, in terms of online courses...they tend to have more students...[and] that becomes difficult. So you do the best you can.”

Similarly, assignments in Case 5 were largely completed on a discussion board or through Google Docs, where all students could see each other’s work. Therefore, the participant explained, the students were the primary means of clarifying each other’s thinking or digging deeper through their comments. “I would allow a lot of those but I also, myself, would put in as many [comments] as I could just to, well, ensure that I’m there, that I’m reading what they’re

doing.” The course content drives the students’ learning in the course, as they are encouraged from the first assignment to think about what they’re interested in related to the subject matter.

It’s very constructivist in that regard. So...I don’t run into a lot of issues where I have to say, “You’re missing the point here.” I don’t know where they’re coming from. The point might be, that’s important [to the student] and then it has to happen this way.

The graduate student participant in Case 2 also utilized his weekly announcements to follow up on things brought up between the students in their blogs and assignments to keep pushing their dialogue.

If it was something that I thought would enrich the discussion or just the...materials that they saw that week, I would include a link – usually like a YouTube video or something like that – or an article or like an author. And then, also individually, I would do that. In addition, this participant utilizes an online writing guide for her students to reference with their written work. “I think in terms of, you know, seeing students as...as, you know, doing their own research and writing their own reflective thoughts, this online resource stuff only helps them guide to what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.”

The idea of modeling scholarly behavior for Participant 3 took the form of interacting in a way that will show students how professionals interact. She said she pays attention to this when writing discussion forum prompts. “I do a lot of modelling. It’s in my emails. I always have a salutation. I always end with, you know, a closing and my name and I keep my language casual but, you know, courteous and professional” Participant 3 said, noting that some of her past experience has been helpful.

I try to, in the way that I write up the forum prompts each week, I try to include some of the things I want them to do, like, “here’s a quotation.” I make sure I have the citation

included...to try to model good citational practice. I try to provide context to try to show them, ok, this is connected.

Interestingly, Participant 3 noted that she believes some of her modeling is too implicit and needs to be made more explicit. So also tries to be mindful of making connections with the students throughout the semester.

I always try to [in the discussion forums]...again, salutations, use their name, to show them how it is. And then again courteously answer their questions. I always signal, do you have more questions? Things like that...when I do the recorded lectures I try to show that I have read what they've written and try to bring that in.

The graduate assistant in Case 2 felt that being present himself – interacting with the students – was the primary way he modeled scholarly behavior, which can be thought of as a direct form of teaching presence. Related to that, he referenced the language he used in his interactions with the students. However, he felt that the students came in with a strong idea of scholarly behavior because the course is an upper-level course. “I didn’t feel I ever really needed to do that...You want to make sure that they understand how to communicate professionally...they knew how to do that very well.” When probed about how he crafted himself in an online environment to help shape the intellectual climate of the course, the graduate assistant in Case 2 reflected that he started with his introduction to the students. “How, you know, I introduced myself, telling...about my own research and work and studies so that [the students] are aware of, you know, who I am and what I do and that...this is...my field.” He said he had students challenge him on occasion and the graduate assistant could use his expertise in the field to show that he is a professional in the academic discipline of the course. The faculty member participant in Case 2 said she and her teaching partner talked about themselves more as

researchers than as scholars, but said she felt this was a stronger aspect in her face-to-face classes than in her fully asynchronous online course. During the recorded PowerPoint lectures, the faculty members would often give examples of their own research related to the concepts being taught.

We have PowerPoint slides and we talk about the readings...the PowerPoint slides are that sort of exegesis sort of process...You're kind of modeling...how you're supposed to dissect the text and come with the, kind of, the analytic meanings of it.

Then the examples the faculty member would talk about refer to her own research.

So in that way, I believe we are modeling this act, you know, the scholarly, academic way of talking here. This is why this concept is particularly important to me because I can apply it to...what I was experiencing in the real world in terms of my own research.

Participant 5 said he realizes this is an online course so students cannot see him. His focus is on communication. "If they have a problem or a question, I try to answer it as soon as I see it." He subscribes to the discussion forums and is notified of new posts, and responds to emails as soon as he sees them. In this way, he feels he is modeling professional behavior for his students.

Another area in which the faculty members were present was in establishing the climate of the class. When probed on the topic, Participant 1 also pointed to the preparatory work that she does with the students before the class even begins, the introductory video that she shares with the students, and her expectations for academic honesty and integrity.

I hope students feel that they can, you know, make their opinions heard – no matter whether they agree or disagree. And again, going back to that one controversial scholar, that's something where I already note that...you don't have to agree with this approach.

In fact, she said, she stresses that the students don't have to agree with any of the approaches as long as they can provide a good argument for their disagreement. The key, to this participant, is "creating an open atmosphere that drives...the ability to, for them, say what they think and to be intellectuals."

Participant 4 shared that her motivation for introducing herself in a video was to be seen as a "real person" and an academic in her subject area by her students. After reflection, she acknowledged an element of the class atmosphere were her attempts to humanize herself in her videos by wearing different nail polish on each finger or other eye-catching accessories:

I want [the students] to feel safe making mistakes and asking stupid questions. And so I think that's why I wanted them to see me. It's so that they would...feel that. And that's why I went for the funky nail polish and all kinds of weird stuff that I could think of so that they wouldn't be intimidated.

When asked about establishing the intellectual climate of his course, Participant 5 replied, "I'm still working on that." He pointed to the course evaluation used by the university that asks if the class was "an intellectual challenge." "I, to this day, don't fully understand what that question is asking and what it means...I don't know what I do or what I don't do to fit that mold."

Participant 5 also pointed to the curriculum in which his course is situated and the focus of the course as perhaps not fitting the mold of "intellectually challenging"; but, he said, "I think they do [fit] in the way that you do things in a practical way to have good outcomes for your students." The variety of responses show that my participants were thoughtful and actively engaged with their students.

Course Assistants as Teaching Presence

When investigating the role of an instructor in online courses, Easton (2003) found that the communication skills required were similar between in-person and online courses, though mediated through technology; however, there are differences in how the course is managed, how students are engaged, and how instructors use their instructional time in online classes. In her study, Easton investigated the use of course mentors in addition to lead faculty in online courses. The mentors became the students' primary contact, similar to Case 2 in my study and Case 1, who used undergraduate students to mentor students throughout the course. Easton discovered "two discrete roles of the...instructor: (1) instructional designer and (2) interaction facilitator" (p. 100). The lead faculty took on more of the instructional design and content expert role, while the mentors facilitated the interactions between the instructor role and the students. Similar to my participants, Easton's subjects stressed the idea of having a "strategic plan" to manage their courses. Miller (2014) highlighted another role of undergraduate student assistants, or peer teaching assistants – that of a "relatable "role model" that builds self-efficacy" (p. 187).

Two of the participants used undergraduate or graduate students to assist them with establishing teaching presence in their courses. For example, the graduate student in Case 2 runs a blog "that then models, in some ways, that improvisational aspect of the in-class [experience]." The syllabus accounts for the need to respond to discussions so "...[the students] are able to take what we're doing in terms of the content and then they can ask specific questions or they can...give examples of this on their own life." Participant 2 posited that perhaps their graduate student's presence was able to accomplish the task of presenting the "big picture" of the course, as well.

[Teaching online] is just like regular teaching. So much of it just depends on the strength of the people who are involved, and I think [the graduate assistant] was able to perhaps even kind of bring that, even though it wasn't part of the actual kind of produced class.

Keeping the students engaged and participating was also the responsibility of the graduate assistant in Case 2. He emailed students if they were falling behind and reached out via blog comments to keep them connected. However, his observation was that at least half the students never needed him to make any gestures to keep them involved and participating in the class activities.

Participant 1 also utilized student assistants but, in this case, they are undergraduates who, she said:

are designed to help with the instructor presence. Because in an online course, self-paced with up to 120 students...it's difficult to have that instructor presence or even, you know, ongoing communication because the students are all over the place, right? I mean, there is one student who is in Unit 5 [of the class] and a student who still hasn't started.

Participant 1 also intentionally builds in mechanisms to "force" student engagement with each other and connect the content throughout the course:

...so that it's not this isolated experience of one student just going through the course by themselves. But these learning assistants are students who have taken the course in the past and they are there to chime in with online discussion boards and to the students, [give] feedback on some of their other written work, and just to be a peer-mentor basically. And, you know, to have someone who is more of an expert as the student take in the course, help them in their learning process.

The undergraduate assistants tracked their student interactions through a shared Google Drive folder. The learning assistants divided up the discussion forums so each interacted with the students on two different discussion boards, while the faculty member monitored any additional forums.

Inspiration for Approaches to Course Creation

I asked the participants to reflect on their choices and what drove the decisions they made throughout all three aspects of teaching presence – course design, facilitation of discourse, and direct instruction. The responses reflected several sources of inspiration: their own experiences as students and thinking from their students’ perspectives, their teaching philosophies and beliefs around pedagogy, and their education. For some participants, they found transitioning to teaching in a fully online asynchronous environment to be difficult. “I’m a very...active teacher, right? You know, I like to engage the students. I like to be in a face-to-face classroom,” Participant 1 disclosed. “So being in this virtual world it’s...difficult, because I don’t have the connection with the students that I usually do.” As a result, she prioritized establishing her personality. “So, I think in designing this course there were a lot of considerations of how can I somehow, you know, mirror that face-to-face experience...what can I do to bring in my personality even, you know, in an online version.” Her solution was the videos that she created for the students, what Participant 1 called “asynchronous conversations.”

Participant 2 had a related viewpoint, saying her teaching presence decisions were determined by her desire to model her teaching philosophy for her students, which she characterized as student-focused or student-centered, as she designed her online class. “I still use the traditional classroom...as my model, as my standard.” Part of her thinking is inspired by the flipped classroom concept of using class time to work with the concepts and information of the

course and asking the students to use out-of-class time to access the content. She approaches her plan thinking what the students can do outside of class and then how the in-class time can be made useful. “I kind of think that online environment is the same sort of thing.”

That idea carried into the third case. Participant 3 focused on the students’ needs first.

I try to program what I think is best for the students...figuring out how to balance what works for the students with what I can actually accomplish, so that’s been the balance

I’ve been trying to strike. I try to look for what seems to not be so productive for students and what they do not seem to value and “strike a balance between making sure students get the feedback that I think is valuable for them to have versus how much feedback I can realistically give 50 people.” The graduate assistant in Case 2 also focused on the students’ needs when he approached his teaching presence, drawing on his own experiences as a student.

[When] I was an undergrad I really sucked. I barely graduated...you know, I had some really terrible professors and I know why they were terrible – ‘cause they didn’t care if you knew the information or not. They just presented it. If you passed or failed that was all up to you.

These experiences helped form his teaching philosophy, which transferred into his courses and his presence in the class. “And so looking at my own teaching philosophy, how do I not be that person?”

This led him to focus on making sure students did not struggle in the online environment.

I gave people breaks when they were having issues...for students who struggle, I particularly have a really strong desire to make sure that...their struggles aren’t because of what I’m doing or the materials or the format...making sure those students don’t fall through the cracks because they give up, because they don’t know how to post a blog.

One difference he highlighted related to his presence in the class was feeling a lack of relationship to the students in the online environment:

...in terms of the...online course – and this is where the difference between online and real is – you develop a relationship with your students through that semester... You know them. You see them every day, you know you continue to talk to them about their day, you get to hear about them, and then you don't get that in an online course. And there's just no way to do that. And so that's the challenge, is develop a rapport with the student so that they know. But I think mostly it's just making sure that they see I'm there and that they know, and I set it up the right way.

For the faculty participants who indicated that their education had inspired their approaches to their teaching presence, some of their thinking was spurred by the opportunities the technology of a fully asynchronous online course afforded. Participant 1, for example, noted that “I definitely see the value of technology for supporting developing...proficiency. And then I think that kind of morphed into this...version [of the course]. But yeah, [the technology] had a big impact.” Participant 3 noted that as a graduate student, she had worked at her university's center for teaching and learning on a Massively Open Online Course project, which gave her “some experience thinking through the design issues for online courses.”

Participant 5, on the other hand, said “I don't think I treat my face-to-face classes any differently than I do my online classes, to be truthful.” However, he said he has learned things from his blended classes that have contributed to his online course design. During blended, synchronous sessions (sessions where some students would be in class while others were joining the class session online), he would sit behind the students in the classroom and witness their activities. “Just being able to sit behind the students while we're working synchronous online

and watching what they're doing gave me a lot of insight into what I needed to improve, what I could change." In addition, after finishing his doctorate, he inherited online courses that other instructors had developed, which were instructive.

I was shocked at some of the things they posted that were just single frames in a PowerPoint with random notes and no cohesion, no direction...I'm sure it worked in the classroom because they were standing in front of it talking. But even that I'm not actually 100 percent sure it worked...when I saw that, and then...

Participant 4 gained insight from a learning community for online teaching established in her college.

Some of the articles we've read were about the lack of human contact and going with that is also...accountability. Because I think that students coming to class bond with us and we bond with them...But it feels like, by seeing that I am a person, then they become much more accountable to the material. And so they had recommended that we did videos like that or that we found a way to connect with our students.

Participant 5 picked up on this thread, which was also spurred by a workgroup for online teaching within his college.

We've all talked about best practices, obviously, and we've seen different things together. And one instructor did, I thought it was kind of a cool video...like sort of her day, like she's leaving the parking lot, coming to her office...And I don't know if I'll ever do that, but a part of me was kind of like, "that's kind of neat." I don't know if any of my students care. That's the question I ask, and sometimes I often worry because it's an online program. Very few of our students, if any, are even near [the campus]...So part

of me is always like, how much of that experience do they really want?...So I'm a little nervous about that element, which is why I haven't quite gone that far.

At the time of the study, Participant 5 used audio introductions for his online courses. He said it was a conscious decision based on a variety of things: his experiences as a student, his students' needs, and accessibility issues.

I had taken courses where people had put videos up. And generally speaking, they just weren't valuable...At least in person you can maybe ask a question or talk to people around you. But with the video, you're stuck and especially with a long video. So I had always that bias against videos.

File sizes, in previous years, were unmanageably large for video files; video players would also be incompatible between operating systems. Not having video eliminated those worries.

Participant 5's students have also told him they will download audio files to listen to while doing other activities. Finally, with videos, there must be a transcript that not only contains his script but also a description of the video elements. "So, by removing the video...it's less likely you're alienating or denying access to that material because you know there's nothing on the screen."

While my findings related to the elements elaborated upon in the C of I framework largely mapped onto the framework, I found some themes that were important to the faculty teaching the asynchronous fully online classes that were not accounted for in the framework. One was the role that the technology that mediates delivery of the courses plays in teaching presence.

In and Out of the Course Management System

Online courses exist in online platforms, usually in a Course Management System (CMS) provided by the institution, which establishes a confined structure for content, interactions, assignments, and grades. The CMS of the institution in which my cases are embedded provides elements including a course calendar, a gradebook, a content area where files can be uploaded or links to outside content can be provided. Other offerings include in-CMS quizzes that can be automatically graded, ungraded surveys, dropboxes for submitting assignments, and discussion boards for interactions. The course designer is responsible for shaping and fleshing out what goes into the CMS, but that online platform mediates the faculty's presence with its pre-determined offerings. Ferster (2014), for example, cautioned that a CMS can serve as little more than a place to hang PowerPoints and lecture notes to manage courses more efficiently. Some of the participants in my study worked within that structure and allowed the CMS to shape their teaching presence, through the email, discussion board, gradebook, calendar, and homepage functions.

For example, Participant 3 used the course discussion forum to create opportunities to drive exploration into the topics. Expectations for due dates and time frames were also communicated through the syllabus and the calendar on the CMS. Participant 4 utilized the course management tools like the calendar function and the "behind the scenes" ability to see when students logged on to the system to keep track of the students. She monitored the students' accessing of course materials in the CMS and reached out if she saw a student had skipped one element.

I would send them a quick reminder, saying ‘hey, don’t forget that. The goal of this class is also to do this and this, and you may feel it’s useless and a waste of time but it’s not and here is the reason why.

Additionally, Participant 4 introduced students to the class by asking them to read the syllabus and complete a quiz over it. She also used her introductory video to talk about these elements.

“Really, it felt like I wanted [the students] to be aware of what they needed to do when, and what was due when...I needed to have that structure for them.”

The graduate student in Case 2 posted daily announcements on the course home page – the first thing a student would see on the website – to drive home important content and goals. He would often use this to highlight things to be aware of in the lectures the students would access in the weekly content area.

So, for like the second week...I would post announcements like...this is a difficult week for students because it is, you know, a lot of terms that you’re not familiar with. So, focus on those terms because a lot of the questions will be based on those...” Each week he prepared fresh reminders or notes for the students because, even though the materials were the same, “there’s always something different going on that week.

Case 5 utilized the CMS as a place to hang documents that communicate important course goals, such as his syllabus that lays out specific course objectives. Within each module are instructional objectives and instructions for how students will reach each specific objective. Participant 5 utilized the extant structure of the CMS to help provide the much-needed structure of the online course. “It goes back to that story book; you don’t jump around in a story, you follow it page by page, so I try to follow the same with the courses.” He also created what he called “course deliverables” that are outlined in the syllabus. “I give [the students] course

deliverables at the end of the syllabus with all the semester activities, assignments that are due, the due dates, it's all there...then within each module I have the due date built in." The course calendar provided by the CMS allows these dates to populate the course calendar, which he positioned on the course home page so this element of his presence was front and center for students when they logged in. Important items also appeared on the news widget on the CMS homepage.

The CMS also provides an opportunity for the instructor to create "widgets" that are not automatically provided in the course structure. It is an available function, but it is an additional functionality and could easily be missed by a facilitator. In response to students requesting an easier way to access resources from one module to another, Participant 5 created a widget that has all the course texts with ISBN number listed so students can easily access the course's e-texts and avoid confusion or misunderstandings. In addition, to facilitate the student interaction that would engage in these tasks, he put together another widget that contained all the students' introductions for easier reference when responding to each other in discussion board posts. In this way, Participant 5 sort of broke out of the contained structure of the CMS to enhance his presence – a move none of the other participants made. Several participants broke out of the constraints of the CMS structure to utilize outside resources to establish parts of their presence. For example, Case 3 utilized an outside resource as an assignment – requiring her students to create and edit content for Wikipedia. Participant 3 explained:

There's this platform that kind of helps us facilitate that work. And they have tutorials, so student work through tutorials on some of the technical aspects and then some of the kind of more theoretical aspects of sources and citations and what Wikipedia is and how you write for Wikipedia.

Each week's assignments within the course structure asked the students to practice what they had learned through these tutorials by actually working on Wikipedia entries. "Students are always skeptical...[because] they don't know how to do it and they get real frustrated, which I understand. But then I've gotten the sense that they feel very accomplished at the end." Participant 4 utilized a Facebook group for student to talk to each other about the course materials and subject matter. She also sent text reminders to the students through Remind, a text messaging service that allows students to enroll using a course code to receive text messages from the instructor and to send messages, all without disclosing their personal contact information to others.

One tool Participant 1 used was a virtual bulletin board, on which student responses could be posted to be revisited later in the course once more learning had taken place, leading to evolution or deepening of ideas. Participant 1 thought carefully about how to keep students engaged in dialogue, choosing to utilize applications outside the CMS with different looks and feels than the typical CMS discussion forum so they would "feel like it's a community, not the same old discussion forum." She used these forums for a collaborative writing assignment.

Participant 5 used Google docs and discussion boards for students to present their thoughts and work while seeking feedback from each other on their topics of interest. "This course, in particular, everything is up to them. Whatever topics they want to cover, they cover and they run with it." Participant 5 also utilized an outside application, Padlet, which he characterized as "OneNote but online" to drive exploration. As students start determining their focus areas in Case 5, they display their research and interests on the Padlet app so other students can learn from their peer's work. This additional piece of technology allowed the students to

copy and paste information or add information for public consumption within the learning community.

...it works collaboratively. You can just throw stuff up there. You can make it organized or you can just have like a wall where people just throw stuff up there. So, as we go through the course, after every element, I'll put all the things [the students reference in their assignments] on their Padlet and I share that through the news widget [on the CMS] and then I tell them, feel free to go in there and throw more things up there. Throw some screenshots of your stuff you've done. And they give that sort of inspiration to see all those [things] that are out there that they might want to explore.

In addition to the utilization of tools outside the CMS to establish teaching presence, another finding outside the bounds established by the C of I framework was the reaction of the students to the faculty members on a personal level. The "Instructor as Text" element described in Chapter 4 raises an interesting question about what students expect from the person embodied in teaching presence. While Participant 1 noted that students will recognize her from her presence in the online course but she does not recognize them by sight, she disclosed that she does not inquire about the impact of her presence with her students. Participant 2 shared her disquieted feeling when a student did not realize he had taken her online course despite her video content delivery. In her words, she and the other faculty member were "textbooks" or "talking heads." Participant 3 encountered a student who seemed to have an idea of what a professor should look like and, despite her videos, made an inappropriate observation about her appearance when meeting her in person. Participant 3, then, further considered gender as a social construct and authority in an online environment and how those two elements play out. The C of I framework is uniform; as currently constructed, there is no consideration about the interplay of gender and

authority. The idea of a faculty member as a text, divorced from the person that text embodies, is an interesting concept that could spur further investigation.

Conclusion

I identified several key themes that emerged from my data: a need for structure, predictability, and redundancy in asynchronous fully online courses; that participants experienced advantages and disadvantages of the online format; varied influences on the design of each course; participants desire and methods for creating a sense of community in their courses; teaching presence used for both intervention and instruction; how course assistants fulfilled some elements of teaching presence; insights into each participants' inspiration for creating their courses; and participants' use of the institution's course management system and outside tools.

All my participants responded favorably to the idea of structure and predictability in their asynchronous fully online courses. Many drew the blueprint for their course structure from the length of the semester in which their courses were taught. All recognized that they must make information is easily available as possible for the students.

My participants also found certain advantages to the facilitating their courses online. Participant 4 particularly found value in having online exercises for her students to complete; she also believed it was an advantage that students could go back to her recorded lectures as often as they needed to in order to understand the concepts. Participant 2 noted that she felt more free to use videos in the online course than she would in an in-person course, where she felt pressure to cover content she provided. Others, however, highlighted the disadvantages of not being in a classroom with the students and not being able to connect with them face-to-face.

While some of my participants had previous experience and education creating online courses and drew from that, most were inspired by teaching their courses in person first prior to moving them to an online space. Rather than envisioning their online courses in that context, they envisioned their courses as they taught them in-person and tried to recreate that in the asynchronous online environment. To that end, many of the participants made efforts to create a sense of community among their students. Others, like Participants 1 and 2, did not; Participant 1's course was self-paced to allow students flexibility and she knowingly chose flexibility over community. Participant 2, on the other hand, said it was not even a consideration as she designed her course.

After reviewing my data, I found that my participants used their teaching presence for both intervention and instruction, a distinction useful when considering how teaching presence functions in an online course. Throughout the course, my participants would largely "show up" to offer the direct instructional role of teaching presence. At other times, however, their teaching presence would be used to intervene in the students' experience. While this is expected in some elements of teaching presence, it also offered a boundary for their teaching presence. In addition to their own efforts at intervention, several had undergraduate or graduate student assistants who helped create their teaching presence, largely in an interventional role. Having course assistants help manage and create teaching presence offers another lens into teaching presence.

I also gained insight into each participants' inspiration for creating their courses. Many drew inspiration from their experience with learning communities, previous course work or experience as students working in an online or blended environment. Others drew inspiration from their own learning experiences as students; most considered how they would do something in person as a normal part or expectation of their teaching presence. Finally, I found that my

participants did not all feel constrained by the tools provided by their institution to create their online “classroom.” Several utilized outside tools to assist them in creating their asynchronous online courses or tailored their online environment to suit their – and their students’ – needs. This demonstrated an important element to consider when creating teaching presence in an online course – how technological tools can help create, maintain or facilitate teaching presence but may also constrain some instructors’ choices. The tools used in facilitating an online course become part of the representation of the instructor so deserve attention when planning and constructing a course. In the next section I will use the findings from my study to answer my research questions and provide recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: Implications and Conclusions

In this study, I sought to discern how instructors teaching asynchronous fully online courses create their teaching presence. Specifically, the research questions were:

- What practices do instructors in fully asynchronous online courses employ to create their teaching presence in their courses?
- How do they establish this presence?
- What do they draw upon to accomplish the elements of their teaching presence?

To answer these questions, I performed an embedded case study consisting of five fully online asynchronous courses at a large Midwestern research-intensive university. I interviewed five full-time faculty members and one graduate student assistant using an interview protocol derived from the questions in the Community of Inquiry questionnaire section pertaining to teaching presence. Upon completion of the interviews I reviewed the transcribed responses to pull out themes for each question and then grouped those themes into larger themes to describe the major outcomes of the interviews.

Envisioned Teaching Presence

The participants in my study were able to answer most of the questions drawn from the C of I questionnaire with some specific recollection of actions they took or elements they included to satisfy the elements established by the C of I framework. For many of the elements, the faculty member had made a conscious decision to include them – but not because of a “best practices” framework. Some of the participants drew upon previous knowledge of what works in an online course – either from personal experience or from their educational background – while others translated their in-person courses into the online environment. However, none of my participants indicated that they were aware of each of the elements that the C of I framework

uses to describe teaching presence and intentionally selected activities or processes to fulfill those elements. In other words, the participants in my study did not know *a priori* what the C of I framework denoted as “teaching presence” to design their courses accordingly. Rather, they drew upon other areas to create their courses – graduate education, previous experience, learning by doing, or resources provided through learning communities in their work environment.

Interestingly, none of my participants utilized an instructional designer to assist them with creating their courses. One of the participants earned grant money to hire a person to assist in translating materials into the online environment. One used an existing class he had created at another institution as the basis for his current class. Another took over a course someone else had created and tailored it. The final two courses were created from existing in-person courses. Some took part in workshops sponsored by their department or college about online courses, but those were primarily technical workshops to understand the course management system and how to use the tools contained within.

The elements of the C of I framework seemed intuitive to the faculty members or were simply a function of their practical experience of teaching courses. As the C of I framework was created by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), teaching presence was conceptualized as functions that are present in a successful learning experience; it was noted that the design of the educational experience was primarily a function of the teacher. It appears the elements of teaching presence were predetermined as vital functions of a Community of Inquiry, with the focus on the functions; the person fulfilling those functions seems secondary in the framework. The functions of teaching presence are the focus, not the teacher who performs those functions. I would argue, based on my interviews, that my participants did not view their work with their classes in that light. They were all experienced teachers, even the graduate assistant who, by the

time of our interview, had facilitated the course multiple times. As they talked about how they approached creating teaching presence in their course, they talked about creating their teaching self – their “teacher presence” – virtually. They fulfilled the functions of teaching presence, but it was not because these functions have to be fulfilled to create a successful learning experience but because they do these things in their classes to teach their students. While this may seem like a merely semantic difference, I believe it is important to keep in mind as we consider recommendations for using this study. My participants did not respond to my questions as “these are the areas of teaching presence that are required, and so I do them” but rather “this is how I teach my students.” They, as the teachers, were not inseparable from the functions of teaching presence; the functions are integral to who they are as the teachers of their courses and students.

Established Teaching Presence

As stated previously, my participants could answer for each of the elements contained within the C of I framework questionnaire that served as the basis for my interview protocol. Two of my participants did not respond to the element of creating a community in their courses – Participant 1’s course is a self-paced course, which she knew would preclude creating a community within her course, but she traded that for the ability to offer a flexible learning opportunity for her students. Participant 4 really envisioned her course as a singular, personal learning opportunity and, therefore, did not engage with the thought of creating a community at all beyond herself as the teacher to the students as they needed. All of my participants in some way tried to establish themselves as “real people” within their courses, either by video introductions, instructional videos, emails, comments on student work, holding office hours, etc. Participant 4 was intentional about trying to draw attention to herself as a person in her videos, for example, by wearing different colors of nail polish on each of her fingers. Related to this

concept, the participants' presence was undergirded by their understanding of the need for a "grand plan" for their course that is readily accessible by the students. It also became clear through my interviews that the participants used their presence to both instruct and intervene in the community of their courses. This became a theme in the interviews as their presence seemed to fall into those categories. Direct instruction is one of the three categories that comprises teaching presence so it was not surprising to have a strong response to elements of instruction. However, participants also cited occasions when their presence took the form of intervening either with the students' work or with their interactions for the good of the class as a whole. While descriptors of direct instruction contain elements that could be thought of as "intervention" (focusing discussion, questioning, direct feedback), it is a subtle but worthwhile distinction to consider from the participants' perspective, who seemed to highlight the intervention elements separate from what they conceptualized as "direct instruction" in my interviews.

All acknowledged in one way or another the need for redundancy, structure, and predictability within the course. As one participant noted, there is no opportunity to stand in front of a class and make changes to the schedule or assignments. Everything needs to be planned out to avoid "chaos." Others highlighted their realization that they had to make information readily accessible to the students to ease frustration and facilitate the course more successfully. In fact, Participant 5 created new widgets at the request of his students when they made suggestions for elements that may be of assistance. Several used tools outside the institution's Course Management System to help establish the elements of teaching presence. Even in traditional, in-person courses, instructors bring in outside elements and tools to the classroom to help facilitate learning. Similarly, my participants looked for outside tools that corresponded to elements of

teaching presence (such as an outside blog on WordPress, using Google Docs, or utilizing Padlet applications).

Inspiration

As noted in Chapter 4, sources of inspiration for how my participants shaped their teaching presence were varied among my participants though none noted specific instruction or professional development dedicated to establishing a teaching presence. My participants' responses reflected several sources of inspiration for creating their teaching presence in their asynchronous fully online courses, including their own experiences as students and thinking from their students' perspectives, their teaching philosophies and beliefs around pedagogy, and their education. Participant 1 prioritized establishing her personality and simulating her presence as it would be in person via "asynchronous conversations." Several participants drew inspiration from their traditional in-person classes to create their online courses (this element will be elaborated upon in my recommendations for future research). Participant 2 drew from her student-focused or student-centered teaching philosophy and tried to bring the experience of her in-person course to the online space. Other participants were inspired by the opportunities afforded with an online class. Participants 1 and 5 drew on learning from their Ph.D. programs. Participant 5, in particular, brought inspiration from teaching blended courses into the fully online course environment.

The C of I Framework

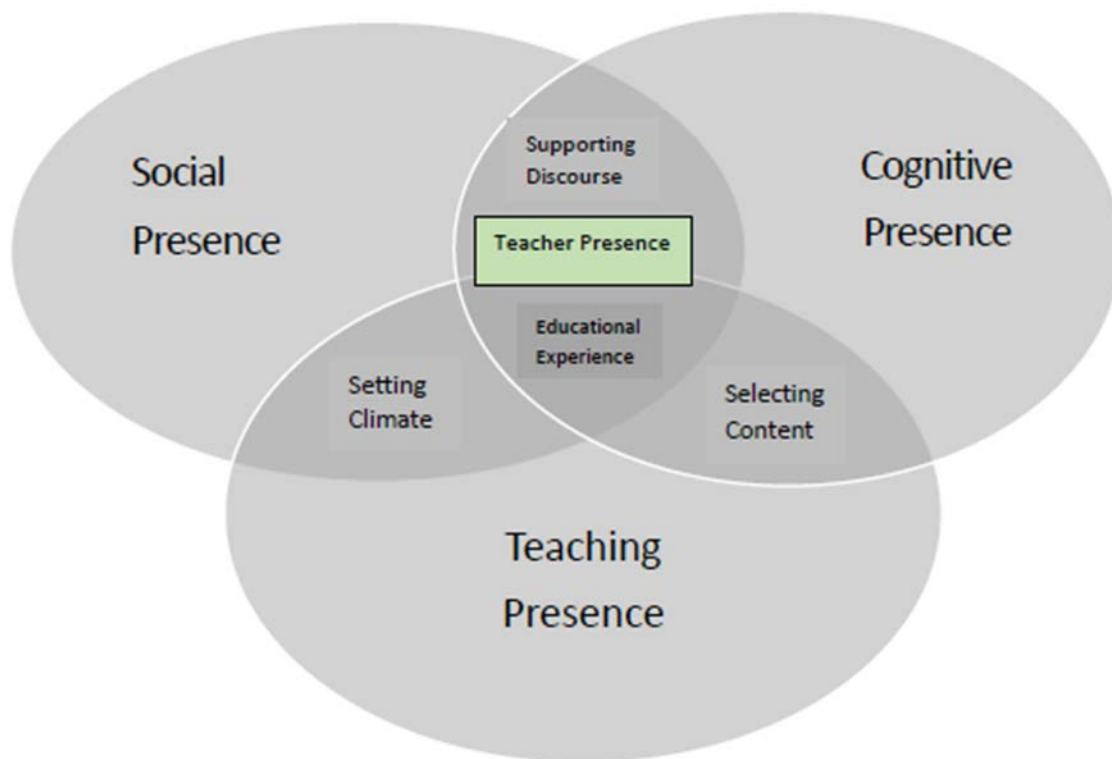
There is little research into what I have termed teacher presence or, as Richardson and Alsup (2015) termed it, online teacher identity. As noted in Chapter 4, the C of I framework provides for teaching presence, or the "things" the instructor does to provide the sense of a master plan and instructional and pedagogical maneuvers that carry out the course. As previously

detailed, my findings suggested a difference between teaching presence and the actual personality, or teacher presence, of the instructor. Richardson and Alsup (2015) noted that the online persona or “online teacher identity” of the instructor is “significantly and necessarily different from that of a teacher in a face to face class; the instructor’s sense of teacher self is not an extension of that in a traditional setting, but rather it is a unique creation specific to the online context” (2015, p. 144). As my study suggested, there is a difference between the “teacherly” things my participants did in order to administer an online course and their desire to somehow humanize their instructional presence or, as my participants said, to let the students know there was a person behind the words. As a result, my study has implications for continued research with the C of I framework.

As detailed in Chapter 2, several researchers have begun suggesting adjustments or additions to the C of I framework as it was established almost two decades ago. Suggestions have included adding a fourth presence to the framework; Shea and Bidjerano (2010) and Shea et al. (2012) suggested adding Learning Presence, while Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) recommended adding Emotional Presence. Some of the recommended additions included infusing distributed learning throughout the framework (Amemado & Manca, 2017) and Paz and Pereira (2015) proposed adding Regulation of Learning to the Teaching Presence category in the C of I. Shea, Vickers, and Hayes (2010) named a possible fourth element of Teaching Presence – assessment. My study, however, connects with the shift suggested by Sheridan et al. (2013). These researchers found that one of the most important constructs for students in online classes was instructor disposition, or the instructor’s persona (teacher presence). Additionally, Pollard, Minor, and Swanson (2014) recommended adding Instructor Social Presence to the existing framework; my study has implications for further exploring adding elements of “teacher

presence” to the existing category of teaching presence in the C of I framework. As a result, I would suggest consideration be given to revising the C of I framework to add teacher presence into the C of I framework’s description of teaching presence, to denote the distinct element of teacher presence. This addition comes from the instructor’s perspective and allows the very people fulfilling the role of teaching presence a voice in how it is conceptualized and operationalized (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Suggested Revision to C of I Framework



Additionally, my findings also illustrate the complexity of teaching presence in the online environment. All my participants used videos in some way but creating online teaching presence is more complex than whether or not students watch a video versus listen to audio only versus read static information. It is worth considering whether the C of I framework may not provide a

full understanding or framework for describing teaching presence in asynchronous online courses. The framework provides for more technical aspects of teaching presence but does not necessarily account for the more esoteric elements of teaching presence. Instructors teaching online courses may find the voices of my participants useful as they approach their own practice; they may gain new ideas to utilize or inspiration for their own courses.

This study also provides a fresh perspective on how teaching presence interacts with students in asynchronous fully online courses, and how instructors seek to create community (social presence) in their courses. One of my cases was a self-paced course and, therefore, creating a sense of community between the students was sacrificed. Another participant responded that she gave no thought at all to creating a community between the students in the class, instead believing her course was a more independent pursuit. However, all my participants in some way tried to humanize their teaching presence in order to let the students know “there is a real person” behind the course. In the C of I framework, teaching presence plays a part in establishing the social presence necessary to create the community that supports learning. While the C of I framework does not encompass the efforts of my participants to want to interject their teacher presence, or “personas,” into their classes, that drive was something that all the participants acknowledged in some way, an area for further investigation. The C of I framework provides a useful structure for considering teaching presence in the online environment, but it was not created from interactions in the online space as we experience it today. Rather, it was derived from emerging practices in environments outside the brick and mortar classroom. It may be useful to utilize my findings in reconsidering the C of I framework from the standpoint of the online environment – using what we know now about asynchronous fully online courses to inform the framework.

Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

Beyond the implications for the C of I framework itself, several recommendations for how instructors in asynchronous online courses approach the creation and facilitation of their courses and for areas of practice emerged from my data. They include implications for preparation for teaching online courses, for how instructors create their online courses, and for future research into teaching presence.

Implications for preparation. As mentioned previously, few of my participants had any professional development to prepare them to teach in an online environment. Those that had some professional development mainly focused on how to use the university's course management system but not about the actual practice of teaching in an online environment. Yet, research on the C of I framework highlights the key moderating role that teaching presence plays in student learning. Though some of my participants received support from their departments in preparation for initiating their online courses, none of the training focused on creating a community of inquiry, establishing teaching presence, or considering their teacher persona in their courses. Two of my participants studied technology in education and engaged online teaching as graduate students, but neither spoke specifically of these subjects. Participant 4 participated in a faculty learning community about online education but did not mention any familiarity with the concepts of the C of I framework. Some of the articles she read in that learning community inspired her choices of presenting herself as a person to try to create a "bond" with her students for accountability purposes. Similarly, Participant 5 had participated in a workgroup for online teaching within his college that engaged with "best practices." Since the C of I framework provides a valid framework for online learning, as educational institutions seek to offer quality learning experiences for their students, it is worthwhile to consider how this topic

could help train faculty members in high-quality online course facilitation. In addition, with the research showing that it takes longer to prepare and administer online courses, it is important from a personnel perspective to help support the faculty teaching online courses; it would be far more cost effective to support existing faculty members versus seeking new faculty members if the current instructors have negative experiences or burn out.

Some elements of the C of I framework did not resonate with my participants. Toward the end of the interview protocol, when exploring the later elements of the C of I framework, the participants had less and less to say, leading me to believe that perhaps several of the elements that are used to describe teaching presence are not that distinct from one another. As we explored all areas of the C of I framework, it became clear that some of the decisions faculty members made when creating their teaching presence served multiple, broader purposes. This could lead to developing a set of practices that would establish “necessary elements” of teaching presence in online courses, which could contribute toward future professional development for online course instructors.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, this research could also help faculty understand that the technology itself plays a large role as a mediator of teaching presence. In some situations, the technology is a stand-in for teaching presence. For this reason, it is useful for instructors to acknowledge and understand how technology interacts with them as people and with their online presence. The CMS is both a positive and a negative force. It provides a tool to create the structure that so many faculty members highlighted as key to a successful online course. However, it also may limit the choices of the faculty members. While Participant 5 utilized a function of the CMS to create his own widgets, this function is not one that is readily apparent to all faculty members and may be a complex process that others avoid. Though none of the

participants in my study mentioned expressly wishing to “break free” from the constraints of the CMS, several looked outside what was provided to them by the university to help answer their needs related to items in the C of I teaching presence framework. Further exploration in this area would help future instructors in the online environment understand the positive and negative aspects of the technology involved in their asynchronous online courses. It would also help the instructors understand there are more tools in their toolbox than just the university’s CMS, as well as how to thoughtfully interact with those tools and choices.

Implications for creation and facilitation. Future applications of this research provide useful guidelines for instructors as they create their own asynchronous fully online courses. My findings related to the need for structure, predictability, and redundancy offer a fertile area for practice. Several participants noted the need for structure was two-fold – for them and for their students. Envisioning an asynchronous fully online course takes a mindset unique from envisioning an in-person course. From personal experience, I know it takes time working in the online environment to really embody how it feels and what it means to teach online. Instructors need to get into the space of the online course and that takes time. Any work that can be done to assist instructors ahead of time with understanding that “head space” would lead to an easier adjustment for the instructors and a better experience for the students.

As instructors begin to design their online courses, they must understand that the basic structure of the course has to be in place from the first day the course opens; as such, the instructor needs to anticipate much of what the students will need to be successful. Being highly structured, such as the blueprint utilized by Participant 2, provides benefits for both the instructor and the students. Participant 2’s blueprint laid out the activities and goals, and their relevance, for each point of the semester. This contrasted with her approach to an in-person course, where

Participant 2 shared that she prepares ahead of time but uses her notes as a guide for what actually occurs during each course meeting. The graduate assistant in Case 2 acknowledged that he felt the need to be clear, explicit, and deliberate as well because students would not be able to ask clarifying or follow up questions. Similarly, Participant 4 acknowledged her need for a routine, but also was inspired by thinking about her course from the students' perspective. That perspective also spurred the element of redundancy highlighted as an important element of the online course environment. Several participants noted the need to put information for the students in as many places as possible within the CMS. Others were very active in contacting students – sending emails to prepare them for the week's work, following up with a video and further contact through the CMS or email. Several participants also made a point of using the text-based environment to keep the topics, goals, and outcomes up front for the students – titling modules, units, presentations, etc. with overt references.

Because the online course environment presents specific communication challenges that must be addressed, maintaining a strict routine, like Participant 4 did with the flow of her course (with similar recurring activities due on the same days each week) further creates a dependable routine for the students. As the participants reflected on the need for routine and predictability, they described their decisions as intended to usher their students through their courses. Their structure became a surrogate for an active, synchronous teaching presence. This notion is key for instructors as they engage with teaching online and should be a prominent part of any preparation for creating and facilitating asynchronous fully online courses. Capitalizing on the description offered by Participant 5 – the online course as a coherent story and the students as readers of that story – would offer a rich and useful context for preparation and professional development of instructors entering the online environment.

When creating their online courses, most of my participants mentioned being inspired by their existing practices in in-person courses, trying to recreate the in-person courses in the online environment. While some acknowledged (in Chapter 4) advantages and disadvantages to the online environment, many of their choices were made to attempt to create their brick and mortar courses in an online environment. However, as discussed previously, creating a course for an online environment is its own activity – it is a unique context that should be considered apart from an in-person structure. Considering the advantages and disadvantages and the tools available inside and outside the CMS should be integral to course design and, therefore, to practice and professional development for online course instructors.

Further, my research opens up questions regarding how faculty members think about establishing their teaching presence in light of the environment in which they teach. Matching the choices they made to the C of I framework for teaching presence yielded much information that can be used to inform future research and practice in considering teaching presence. But it raises new questions to explore further – are there different ways of thinking about presence using the asynchronous online environment as the starting place? Where are there cross-overs between in-person and online presence and are their other elements to be considered when thinking about teaching presence in the online environment?

While student reactions to and expectations of teaching presence in asynchronous online courses has been a frequently researched area, none of my participants considered formally asking their students what they expected from, reactions to or needs related to their teaching presence. For example, when I asked Participant 2 if she'd ever asked her students for their feedback on her teaching presence, she responded that she had not, and that it was an interesting idea. Even though some used their own evaluations in addition to the institution-provided course

evaluation, they did not include questions probing teaching presence. It raises the question of whether faculty members believe that their teaching presence as a stand-alone element of the class is as important as the content and the outcomes. While all the participants were able to respond to questioning about the activities that represent teaching presence, none indicated connecting the activities to the definition of teaching presence. No participant said anything related to making choices of activities as a way to establish their teaching presence, which creates an element for consideration in practice and in research – why do instructors do what they do?

Another finding that could affect future practice is the choice of activities in an online course and their use in establishing teaching presence. Despite the desire to have students recognize the presence of a real person behind their courses, the activities my participants chose did not seem to intentionally center their activities in their teaching presence. Their teaching presence was ancillary to the activities selected for their courses – present, but not centered. I do not intend to imply that any course activity should be about the instructor, but it is worth inquiring into whether the activities chosen can enhance or detract from teaching presence and what effect that may have on the students. Can some activities help establish teaching presence while others may detract? Are there considerations for instructors when creating the activities in light of teaching presence? A better understanding of the connection between what and how activities are formulated and carried out and their connection to teaching presence would provide useful information for instructors in the online environment.

Implications for future research. In addition to research implications into the C of I framework itself, there are several areas for future research suggested by my study. While there has been quite a bit of research into internet identity and cyberculture studies, the research into

the identities of instructors teaching fully online asynchronous courses in higher education contexts is sparse. Future research into instructor identity in online course contexts offers a fertile field for investigation for the benefit of instructors, students, and their institutions as we offer support for the faculty members to embrace their identities in their online courses as well as differentiate and integrate their in-person personas with those they establish online.

Another related implication for future research is that of identity as derived from the text. Much of the interaction in online courses is text based. Some researchers highlight the anonymity of virtual identities, especially those established in text-based environments, which have been characterized as “fluid” or “democratic” due to “the absence of visual clues” (Kennedy, 2006, p. 864). While some indicators can be obscured in a virtual environment, text-based communication is not impartial. Future research in this area could utilize text analysis to gather more information about continuity between in-person instruction and online identities. My theme of the instructor as a text resource connects to this area for future research and also to further research into the students’ perspective on the faculty member in asynchronous fully online courses. The ideas of the role of the faculty member from the students’ perspective and the issues of authority and gender exist outside this framework as it currently exists but offer areas of inquiry that could lead to future developments in the C of I framework.

Finally, as noted previously, my respondents began to blur the teaching presence elements of direct instruction and facilitation of discourse as we proceeded through my interview protocol. As researchers continue to reconsider the C of I framework, my findings suggest a more robust inquiry into the elements used to describe teaching presence.

Conclusion

In this embedded case study, I investigated teaching presence from the perspective of instructors teaching asynchronous fully online courses. Specifically, the research questions were:

- What practices do instructors in fully asynchronous online courses employ to create their teaching presence in their courses?
- How do they establish this presence?
- What do they draw upon to accomplish the elements of their teaching presence?

To answer these questions, I created an interview protocol derived from the Community of Inquiry framework to interview five faculty and one graduate student teaching fully online asynchronous courses at a large Midwestern research-intensive university.

After transcribing my interviews, I coded the data and derived eight main themes related to teaching presence as described by the C of I framework: (1) the need for structure, predictability and redundancy; (2) advantages and disadvantages of the online environment; (3) influence on course design; (4) creating a sense of community; (5) intervention vs. instructional teaching presence; (6) course assistants as teaching presence; (7) inspiration to approaches to course creation; and (8) utilizing tools within and outside of the course management system. These themes have yielded implications for the C of I framework itself, for professional development and practice of instructors teaching in the online environment, and for research related to teaching presence in the future. Since online education is a factor in today's higher education landscape, and appears to not be going away, using research to further investigate, understand, and inform development and facilitation of asynchronous online courses is important for the faculty member, the students, and the institution.

When I started this research project, I was framing my research as evaluating what the C of I framework described as teaching presence against what instructors actually did in their online courses, with a mindset on assessing how and why instructors in asynchronous fully online courses addressed the actions that make up teaching presence. As I progressed through my data collection, my purpose began to evolve away from a “checklist” assessment. I discovered through my interviews that my participants just *did* these things that the C of I denotes as “teaching presence,” not because a framework told them to, but because they were experienced teachers and these elements described what they just naturally did as teachers. The really interesting data emerging out of my interviews lay outside the C of I framework elements. As I considered what this meant in relation to the framework, I realized that I was bumping into a limitation of the framework, which was developed after the act of incorporating technology into an in-person course. As Terry Anderson (2015) wrote of the creation of the C of I framework:

When my colleagues Randy Garrison, Walter Archer, and I developed and tested the community-of-inquiry model, our view of online learning was constrained by the asynchronous text forums of the then-current computer conferencing tools. We documented the advantages and measured the type and quality of asynchronous communications, but we readily adopted more of the mixed- delivery methods—such as web conferencing and, later, immersive environments—as synchronous tools became available. (p. 231)

In effect, the framework was created by looking back to describe what was done using computer conferencing and, therefore, a technology-mediated course, with a focus not on the person teaching the course, but the actions of that person.

As I delved into the meaning-making process of analyzing my data, I was captivated by the instructors' experiences, feelings, and reasons behind how they established and demonstrated their online presence and personas. And that became the focus of my analysis. I discovered that the C of I framework's attempt to prescribe boundaries around teaching presence to remove the person and limit that portion of teaching online to "things" exacerbated existing limits of the framework. The very act, or art, of teaching lies outside the hard boundaries of the C of I framework. As Ferster (2014) explained:

As fuzzy as educational research can often be, one fact is clear: the single most important factor in effective teaching is an effective teacher, one who is competent and engaging. Many researchers suggest that the instructor's contribution is the largest factor in student success. But effective teaching is, unfortunately, an elusive quality, often described more as an art than a science. (p. 10)

My participants blurred those boundaries by engaging in the "acts" but still attempting to establish the art via their person-hood, their personas, their *physical presence* in a virtual environment. Of the four important relations of online teaching highlighted by Major (2015), my study came to engage with three: technology as context, technology as extension of selves, and technology as a humanlike interface. Furthermore, "There are both philosophical and practical choices we make when developing an online teaching persona, and these differ from the ones we create when we teach onsite. (Major, 2015, p. 164). The desire of my participants to establish that persona in addition to the elements of teaching presence became the focus, the complication, and the contribution of my research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Questions

Approach to Designing the Course

1. Have you taught this course both in person and online?
2. How did you approach the design and administration of your online course? (This includes the process, structure, evaluation, and interaction components, curriculum materials, activities, processes and the overall design and narrative path through the learning goals.) Did you seek assistance from an instructional designer or did you make the decisions on your own? If this course was also taught face-to-face, how does the online version differ from the in-person version?
3. Have you done any professional development around asynchronous online course development or teaching?

Design and Organization of the Course

1. How did you introduce your students to the course and to taking an online course?
2. How did you communicate important course topics to the students, both at the outset and progressively throughout the course?
3. How did you communicate important course goals to the students, both at the outset and progressively throughout the course?
4. What instructions did you give on course participation and how did you communicate them?
5. How did you communicate due dates and time frames for learning activities?

Facilitation of the Course

1. How do you plan to engage students in course topics where there are different opinions or conflicting sides?

2. How do you plan to guide students' understanding of the course topics to clarify thinking or lead to deeper understanding?
3. How do you plan to keep student engaged and participating in productive dialogue?
4. How do you plan to keep students on task?
5. How do you plan to drive exploration of new concepts?
6. How do you plan to develop of a sense of community among course participants?
7. How do you plan to model behavior to your students?

Direct Instruction

1. What tools do you plan to use to help students explore relevant issues to drive learning?
2. How do you plan to establish the intellectual climate of the course?
3. How will you advance discussion, clarify misconceptions, check for understanding, and provide resource suggestions?
4. How do you plan to deliver feedback to students on their strengths and weaknesses?
5. How often do you plan to deliver feedback to students?

APPENDIX 2: Observation Guide

Design and Organization of the Course

1. Course introduction
 - a. Goals
 - b. Learning outcomes
 - c. Communicating a “grand design”
 - d. Narrative path through learning goals
 - e. Timelines
2. Online course success guide
 - a. Netiquette
 - b. How and where to get help
3. Introduction of curriculum materials
 - a. External readings
 - b. External resources
 - c. Lecture notes
 - d. Mini-lectures
 - e. Personal insights
4. Activities
 - a. Group activities
 - b. Individual exercises
 - c. Projects

Facilitation of the Course

1. Setting the tone for the community
 - a. Activities to create community among students
 - b. Keeping students engaged and on task
2. Encouragement of student discourse
 - a. Reading and responding to student postings
 - b. Moderating discussions
 - c. Student-instructor interactions
 - d. Opportunities for student-student interactions

Direct Instruction

1. Content delivery
2. Intellectual and scholarly leadership
 - a. Instructor modeling scholarly discourse and behavior
 - b. Instructor modeling and encouraging students toward inquiry and intellectual curiosity
3. Student learning interactions
 - a. Advancing discussions
 - b. Clarifying misconceptions
 - c. Checking for understanding
 - d. Providing resource suggestions
 - e. Pointing to new ideas
4. Driving deeper thinking and engagement
 - a. Mediating differing opinions
 - b. Clarifying thinking

- c. Driving deeper understanding or extending learning
 - i. Pointing to other ideas or resources
- 5. Providing feedback

APPENDIX 3: IRB Exempt Approval

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

October 18, 2016

To: Kristen A. Renn
428 Erickson

Re: **IRB# x16-1341e** Category: Exempt 1
Approval Date: October 18, 2016

Title: Faculty Teaching Presence in Asynchronous Online Courses

Initial IRB Application Determination ***Exempt***

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

Renewals: Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.

Revisions: Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

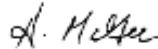
Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

Follow-up: If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at IRB@msu.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Harry McGee, MPH
SIRB Chair

c: Joy Milano



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