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# Developing Presence in Online Undergraduate Courses

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**Developing Presence in Online Undergraduate Courses**

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

with a

Major in Education

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

Rae L. Casey

December 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Michael Kroth

**Authorization to Submit Dissertation**

This dissertation of Rae L. Casey, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a Major in Education and titled, "Developing Presence in Online Undergraduate Courses" has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) was to understand the factors that excellent online faculty perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses. Eight faculty members at two institutions in the northwest region of the United States participated in the study. Data were collected through interviews, syllabus reviews, and field notes. The data were coded and categorized, resulting in seven categories that described the findings. The seven categories were: Course Development, Course Facilitation, Assessment, Student Self Direction, Teachers as Learners, Learning Relationships, and Teacher Workload Management.

*Keywords:* presence, online teaching, online teacher-student relationships

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**To All of the Friends, Colleagues, Students, and Well Wishers**

There have been so many who have supported me along the way. Each of you has a special place in my memories and in my heart. Thank you for always saying the right thing at just the right time.

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my children: Holly, Erin, and Michael,  
and to my grandchildren: Brittany, McCall, Kerigan, Hunter, Tyler,  
and others yet to be welcomed into our family.

I love you all.

You have taught me more than I could have ever imagined.

May you never stop learning.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

According to Cranton (2001), “teaching is about people communicating and working together toward a common goal” (p. 44). In the higher education classroom or lecture hall, communication and collaboration come naturally because students and teachers meet in the same location, facilitating dialogue and interaction. Relationships can build and trust can be formed. In online teaching, though, the “social space” through which teachers and students and groups of students interact is limited to the technology interface employed (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

Technology has permeated nearly every aspect of our lives, so communicating through a technological interface is generally understood (Levensen, 2011). The rapid acceptance and increasing sophistication of the technologies supporting communication makes their use in higher education a reasonable alternative to classroom delivery (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Enrollments in online courses have continued to grow over the past decade (Allen & Seaman, 2011), making the case that demand for online courses exists. What is often mentioned in the literature as missing from this environment is a clear understanding about how to engage in meaningful dialogue and develop trusting relationships online (Allen & Seaman, 2009, 2010, 2011; Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Lehman & Conceição, 2011).

The teacher-student relationship has been identified as an important component of student learning and persistence; it has also been suggested that student and teacher satisfaction and the perceived quality of teaching are associated with the interactions between teachers and students (Barr & Clark, 2011; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). The ability to be “present” with students online is often described as an important component of the teacher-student relationship. Understanding how to be present with students online can influence the

perception of a quality educational experience for both teachers and students. With that in mind, the purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative (Merriam, 2009) study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses.

Chapter one will explore the background, context, and concepts that frame the study. The problem statement and research questions will follow, along with a statement describing the significance of this study. The limitations, delimitations, researcher's perspective, and assumptions associated with this study will conclude the chapter.

### **Background and Context**

American higher education is changing. In recent years, the national economy has been in decline, which has had an impact on educational institutions (El-Khawas, 2011). Family incomes are lower and government funding has been reduced, both of which have contributed to reduced enrollments. Concurrently, the increasing costs of higher education have become a public issue, with government officials, bankers, and consumers calling for greater accountability by educational institutions (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Kelderman, 2012; Rhoades, 2005).

Along with the financial pressures facing academic institutions, an increase in the number of for-profit institutions (Beaver, 2009; Tierney, 2011), and the proliferation of online course options (Allen & Seaman, 2009, 2010, 2011) is creating a competitive environment more robust than any other time in the history of higher education in America (Beaver, 2009). Responding to these challenges, the adoption of technology at many institutions is well underway (Allen & Seaman, 2012). Technology has added a new dimension to the teacher's role, perhaps changing their point of view about what it means to teach.

## **The Online Teacher**

The role of a teacher in higher education often includes conducting research, serving on committees, mentoring, and advising in addition to their teaching role (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). For many faculty members, the traditional teaching role was often that of lecturer, the so-called “sage on the stage,” whose primary responsibility was to impart information to students. That role changes as the venue changes. According to Lehman and Conceição (2010), a teacher teaching online becomes a facilitator or moderator whose primary function is to encourage students and partner with them to facilitate learning. A facilitator, as the title implies, is someone who encourages and helps direct the educational experience, but their primary role is guiding the learner to learn on their own. For some teachers, especially those who depend on lecture to deliver their courses, that represents a change (Garrison, 2003).

For many teachers in higher education, one of the most satisfying parts of the teaching role is the relationships formed in the classroom (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). While separation between teachers and students exists in a classroom or lecture hall, intimacy and immediacy behaviors are available. Intimacy behaviors are the nods, smiles, and other gestures that indicate listening and engagement, while immediacy describes “a measure of the psychological distance” (Gunawardena, 1995, p. 151) between communicators (Schutt, Allen, & Laumakis, 2009). Even in the lecture hall where the teacher and students may not interact regularly, students can view the teacher and other students while they attend class. Intimacy and immediacy behaviors have been associated with increased learning, motivation, and satisfaction. Online, that is lost as communication is transmitted either through a learning management system (LMS) or other electronic means. It is the differences in modes



of communication and interaction between faculty members and students that are at the root of much of the discussion about the need for presence online.

### **The Online Student**

Traditionally, the environment of higher education was separate from the rest of the day-to-day world (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), which fostered a sense of community among students and faculty. Most courses were held in classroom or lecture hall settings, where students could ask questions of their teacher or other students and get answers in person. Relationships could be built and communities formed as teachers and students or groups of students got to know one another. Students were encouraged to become self directed when they were ready.

Online, the pathway to independent learning is less gradual (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). From the start, students take responsibility for completing tasks and making meaning out of the material, relying many times on getting questions answered asynchronously (Bejerano, 2008). The time delay that can occur before questions are answered encourages students to determine on their own how to navigate the course. With the proliferation of communications devices, accessing course materials can be done from nearly anywhere (Mandell & Herman, 2007). The development of online communities has become an issue because distance always exists between teachers and students online (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), requiring an intentional effort to develop relationships and a sense of belonging (Garrison, 2003; Hrastinski, 2008; Skiba, 2010). Online course delivery and the opportunities and issues associated with this approach to education introduce a new paradigm in higher education.

The availability of online courses in American higher education is nearly ubiquitous (Allen & Seaman, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), making it an important part of American

education. The teaching experience changes online, creating a need to understand how to create a beneficial and rewarding learning environment. The literature suggests that the development of presence could help in that regard, yet there exists questions about how the teacher-student learning relationships can be developed online. With the online experience maturing, this study sought to gain insights from experienced teachers who were identified as excellent by their deans to learn more about the development of presence online.

### **Statement of the Problem**

No studies have been discovered through this search that have sought to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses. This study addressed that gap in the literature.

### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions being addressed in this study are:

- How do excellent online teachers develop presence in online courses?
- What are the factors they associate with the development of presence in their online courses?

### **Significance of the Research**

Christen and Eyring (2011) suggest that the collective identities of many American higher education institutions are “products of their history...most universities have emulated a handful of elite American schools that began to assume their modern form a century and a half ago” (p. 19). Although the model has evolved, it has been highly stable, and perpetuated

by hiring practices that replace every “retiring employee or graduating student [with] someone screened against the same criteria applied to his or her predecessor” (p. 20). Further, accrediting agencies and ranking systems that are important to institutional viability encourage consistency. The implementation of online programs represents a change to the paradigm of the traditional university and the teaching role (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Garrison, 2003). Understanding excellent faculty members’ perceptions about how to develop presence in online teaching will be of interest to experienced teachers as they reflect on their online teaching experiences and to new faculty as they learn how to teach online. It will also be of interest to administrators and human resource departments as the insights shared in this study will inform a discussion about the types of professional development activities that might be beneficial.

### **Researcher’s Perspective and Assumptions**

As a transplant later in my career from an international corporation to academia, I have had extensive experience working with technology and working in a virtual environment. I like working with technology, and my experience and comfort with it predisposes me to accept technological innovations and to be comfortable with remote communications, both of which influence my perspectives about online teaching.

I am also employed as a faculty member and teach courses both in the traditional classroom and online. Thus, I bring practical experience to the study. My experiences in the business environment taught me that virtual interactions are different than face-to-face interactions, but that they can be successful. The difference is that virtual interactions require engaged communicators who are mindful of the distance and work to overcome any barriers. Given my assumption that virtual interactions can work well, I was surprised to find some

concerns raised by others in academia regarding the viability of online course delivery. It was then that I became interested in studying online course delivery.

I am a life-long learner, excited about the many opportunities for learning that have been made possible by the advances in technology. I believe that the internet has changed our world forever, and that we are living through a time of change that is heralding new possibilities that we cannot yet even imagine. For that reason, I believe that life-long learning is essential for citizens of a world that is now more open and transparent than ever. I bring to this study an assumption that education should be available to all, and that flexibility and accommodation via technology are necessary for that to happen.

I believe that adult learners know what they need to learn and will take responsibility for their own learning if the opportunity exists. This assumption is consistent with Knowles' (1973) concept of andragogy in which adult learners are differentiated, in part, from childhood learners because they are self directing. Further, I believe, as Dewey (1938) suggested, that learning occurs best in a democratic setting and that application of student's experiences to the learning is essential.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to creating presence in their online courses. Had any participants reported that presence was not a factor in their online courses, that finding would have been included.

### **Delimitations**

This study focuses on the perceptions of excellent faculty members, which means that students, a decidedly important part of the teaching and learning process, are not included. Students and faculty have very different perceptions about teaching in general and may

perceive presence differently. To include both would distract the study from its intended purpose, and dilute the importance of understanding presence from a faculty member's perspective. This study, therefore, is limited to undergraduate faculty members who have been identified as excellent online teachers. Understanding students' perceptions about presence in online education is a worthy research topic and will be listed as a topic for future researchers.

This study seeks to understand factors that "excellent" online faculty members perceive as important to the development of presence in their courses. This statement limits the study in two ways. First, only those teachers who were identified as "excellent" by their deans were included. Deans were identified because they were in the best position to understand who the excellent online teachers were in their schools. Excellent teachers are those who, in the judgment of their deans, are above the norm, which means they have received excellent evaluations or awards for their online teaching. The vagueness of that description is not limited to this study. In their 2011 study, Edwards, Perry, and Janzen cited Sheingold and Hadley (1990) to help them with their definitions of exemplary teachers "and concluded that exemplary teachers are simply 'far better than the average'" (Edwards, Perry, & Janzen, 2011, p. 101). Further, they suggested that students identified exemplary teachers as "those teachers who influenced their learning in an especially positive way" (p. 101).

Second, implicit in this approach is the assumption that excellent teachers seek to develop presence in their online courses. Several researchers have suggested that presence can lead to improved teacher-student relationships in online courses (Lehman & Conceição, 2010), improved communication between teachers and students and among students (Gunawardena, 1995; Lehman & Conceição, 2011), and improved learning. The literature portrays teachers as seeking to do good work (Barr & Clark, 2011), and seeking ways to

make the educational experience satisfying for both students and teachers (Garrison, 2003; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Lehman & Conceição, 2011). With this evidence, I have limited this study to those who are evaluated by their deans as excellent online teachers, presuming that their goal is to achieve excellence, and that excellent teachers encourage presence in their online classrooms.

This study consists of eight participants at two higher education institutions. The findings in this study cannot be generalized to any other higher education or K-12 populations, or to other locales where access to technology or education differs.

### **Key Definitions**

Throughout this study a number of terms will be used that could have different meanings to different individuals in different contexts. In order to be clear about what is written, the following definitions are offered.

**Engage or Engagement.** Lehman and Conceição (2010) describe engagement as “only one aspect of presence: it is the participation of the instructor with learners or learners with other learners as they interact online” (p. 4). Being engaged with students describes teachers participating in learning activities, such as forums, email discussions with students for encouragement, direction, or any other learning involved activity, and any other form of interaction with students that furthers learning.

**Face-to-Face Teaching.** The terms “face-to-face,” “traditional classroom,” and “classroom” are synonymous in this study. In face-to-face teaching, it is assumed that no online learning activities are required, although syllabi or course materials may be posted online, and assignments or grades may be exchanged electronically. “Online teaching” is used in this study to describe situations where learning activities are conducted via the use of software and the web without face-to-face interactions.

**Faculty Member.** In this study, a “faculty member” is a person who develops and facilitates undergraduate learning experiences. Faculty, faculty member, and teacher are synonymous in this study. This study is focused on teachers in undergraduate higher education.

**Learning Management System.** A learning management system or LMS is frequently referred to in this study. A LMS is described as “web-based software for delivering, tracking, and managing online courses” (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 130). Teachers in online environments frequently use a LMS to create and deliver their courses. Students then access the course content and post requirements through the system.

**Learning.** In this study when the term “learning” is used, it is generally meant to describe a process that ultimately leads to a change (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010; Cranton, 2001). There are a number of theories that attempt to describe learning. For example, behaviorists define learning as something that occurs as a result of observations made when the conditions are conducive for learning to occur (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Stavredes, 2011). Humanists assume learning is focused on human development; self-directed learning may be associated with this theory. Constructivists assume that meaning is constructed within the learner, based on their experiences. Constructivists often refer to learning in terms such as “making meaning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 11) or “making sense of” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 291). In this study, the term “learning” will be used generally to describe a process that leads to change, although a humanist/constructivist viewpoint runs throughout this study. Those viewpoints typically represent my perspectives about learning.

**Online or Online Learning.** When the terms “online” or “online learning” are used in this study, they refer to learning that is conducted through technology (Bates & Sangra,

2011). In this instance, the term “technology” refers to electronic technologies that facilitate communication and commonly used in higher education, such as, but not limited to, a LMS, video, audio, recordings, conferencing, social networking, and a number of other electronic technologies currently available or soon to be available in the marketplace.

**Online Teaching.** “Online teaching” refers to the work done by teachers to develop and deliver course materials and learning activities, and to maintain continual engagement with students during online classes (Stavredes, 2011). The development of presence in online teaching is the focus of this study.

**Presence.** In this study, “presence” is described as the ability to relate to students and others online as though they were present in the same space instead of being separated by technology (Gunawardena, 1995), or the ability to “forget” that the technology interface exists (Lehman & Conceição, 2010) so that communication and collaboration continue as though there is no physical distance between participants. In this study, presence is evaluated from the perceptions of excellent, experienced undergraduate teachers. The purpose is to understand the factors they consider important to the development of presence in their online courses. Presence is thought to improve learning and student persistence online, increase teacher and student satisfaction, and improve the perception of quality in the online environment (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011).

**Self Direction.** “Self direction” and “self-directed learners” are described in this study. Observing adult students, Knowles (1973) noted that as human beings matured they reached a point where they were self directing, meaning they had a concept of themselves as individuals who make their own choices. Self direction was one of the key reasons that he believed andragogy, not pedagogy, was an appropriate approach for those who worked with



adult learners. In this study, whenever the terms “self direction” or “self-directed learners” are used it is with the assumption that the students are able to take responsibility for and make decisions about their own learning.

**Teacher.** The word “teacher” has many connotations. In this study, a teacher is a person who develops and facilitates learning experiences for others. This study is focused on teachers in undergraduate higher education. Therefore, the terms “faculty” or “faculty member” may also be used. Teacher, faculty, or faculty member are synonymous in this study.

**Teaching.** The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceive as important to creating presence in their online courses. As such, “teaching” in higher education is an important aspect of the study. Teaching in this study is defined as a professional role where teachers develop or facilitate learning experiences. In online teaching, it includes the activities associated with the development and design of the course, as well as engagement with students and content, and course management responsibilities throughout the course.

### **Chapter One: Summary**

In chapter one, the study was introduced and some key differences between online and face-to-face teaching and learning were described. The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were explained, and key terms used throughout the study were defined. With the foundation set, we move into chapter two and a summary of the literature that exists on topics relevant to this study. The literature is organized into two sections: Context and Conceptual Framework. The purpose of chapter two is to provide a solid framework upon which the results from the study will rest.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) was to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses. Presence is the ability to relate to students and others online as though they were present in the same space instead of being separated by technology (Gunawardena, 1995). It is sometimes referred to as the ability to “forget” that the technology interface exists, or the ability to project one’s personality into an online community in order to fully engage (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

Best practices in online teaching can also include the purposeful development of an environment and a teaching approach that is dynamic and allows thoughts, emotions, and experiences to be shared (Fish & Wickersham, 2009; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Presence includes the processes associated with encouraging discourse and higher order thinking online, described as important in higher education (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). Allowing for thoughts, emotions, and experiences to be shared may encourage discourse and meet the needs of human beings who are described as “basically social creatures” (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 6).

Computer mediated communication was new when Gunawardena (1995) originally explored the notion of presence, creating a need to understand the phenomenon. Today computer mediated communication has permeated almost every facet of American life (Levensen, 2011). Nonetheless, questions about how to connect to students and engage in online learning continue to emerge as important to student and faculty satisfaction, to student learning and persistence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010), and to the discussion about quality in online teaching.

## **Organization of the Chapter**

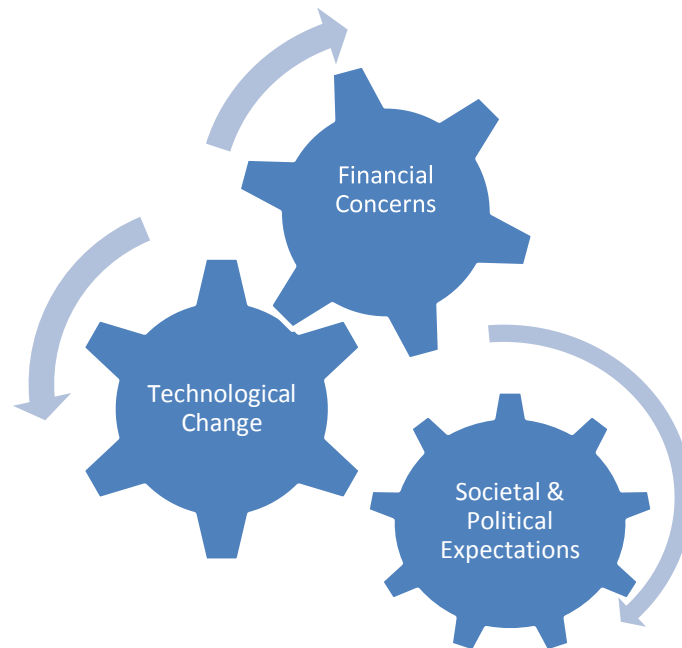
After the introduction, this chapter is organized around two major sections. First, the context of the study is described. The purpose of providing context in a study is to describe the environment, setting, and culture in which the study takes place (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The context for this study is American higher education.

The second major organizing unit for this chapter is the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework in a study creates the scaffolding upon which the literature review, data collection, and reporting rests (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The framework was developed from the themes that emerged as the literature search was conducted.

## **Context**

American higher education has weathered many challenges to its leadership and direction over the years, yet its culture has essentially remained the same (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; El-Khawas, 2011). That is until recently when societal expectations, political changes, and financial concerns intersected with technological change, resulting in shifts in the culture and purpose of American higher education. In order to describe the context of this study, it is important to understand how each of these forces is affecting higher education.

Figure 1 depicts the context for this study.

**Figure 1. The Context: American Higher Education****Background: Traditional Academia**

Once a separate and self-governed body, academic institutions have historically held a unique place in American markets (Barrett, 2010). Businesses were driven by competition, but academic institutions were not. The academic environment was considered a place where students and teachers could explore scholarly works (Mandell & Herman, 2007). The “safe” context of the institution became part of the learning experience (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

The lack of competition enjoyed by academia did not insulate it from changes in the marketplace, but it did allow it to respond more slowly. The slower pace permitted teachers and administrators to partner in governance of their institutions, which was meant to ensure a balanced approach to institutional management (Rhoades, 2005).

In 2006 the Spellings Commission described American higher education as similar to a mature business, meaning that, generally, the institutions were satisfied with the status quo and increasingly unwilling to take risks (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Costs were increasing and voices were being raised that the benefit of education was eroding. The Commission urged higher education to seriously consider reform in order to avoid obsolescence.

### **Financial Concerns**

As a result of the crisis of American financial systems that began in 2007, unemployment rates increased and financial aid funding for higher education was decreased, both of which affected enrollments (El-Khawas, 2011). Tuition increases, which had become a common method of managing increasing educational costs, became less viable as parents, students, and even government officials complained that the cost of American higher education was rising beyond the public's ability to pay (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). With costs rising, administrators were asked to account for the cost increases, but the revenue-based financial model commonly used in higher education made that difficult. Administrators attempted to pull control of funds from individual departments to increase centralized control but were met with resistance to the loss of autonomy and changed culture (Brinkman & Morgan, 2010). Administrators were caught between the conflicting expectations of explaining their costs to potential funders and the autonomy expected within their institutions.

**Competition.** While managing the myriad of financial issues, leaders of educational institutions found another challenge was looming large. For several decades, for-profit institutions had begun to join the mainstream of American higher education (Beaver, 2009; Tierney, 2011). Their growth began to change the landscape of American Higher Education.

The change began in the 1970's when neo-liberalism was growing in popularity among political leaders (Tierney, 2011). At the core of neo-liberalism was the notion of privatization, which was thought to encourage competition and improve quality and cost by engaging the capitalist engine that had made American corporations successful. The political environment permitted legislative changes that eventually led for-profit institutions to become accredited and eligible for financial aid dollars that had previously been off limits (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). With financial aid funding available and with agile, market-focused tactics in place, for-profit institutions broadened their offerings to serve a greater number of students (Beaver, 2009; Tierney, 2011). Between 2003 and 2011, for-profit institutions captured a significant portion of the market share (Allen & Seaman, 2011; Beaver, 2009; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Tierney, 2011), creating a competitive environment new to those in traditional non-profit higher education.

During this same time, technology was improving. Personal computers and computing devices were maturing, and applications improved in synch with the hardware (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Having access to the internet became commonplace in households. Financial and competitive pressures may have been an impetus for adopting online teaching, but technological advances made online course delivery possible and a logical next step in the evolution of higher education (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

### **Technological Change**

The Internet became publically available in the 1990's (Friedman, 2005). The internet provided a platform for communications that had never been seen before, and the development of software and computing devices that utilized the platform soon began changing the way businesses were run.

Consumers readily adopted the new technologies and appreciated the convenience they offered (Friedman, 2005). It was not long before they began to demand that educational institutions provide courses via the internet (Allen & Seaman, 2009). Higher education had been conservative in its adoption of technological solutions (Bates & Sangrá, 2011), but saw the need to meet customer demands. Today, most institutions routinely offer online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2011, 2012, 2013).

There are some noticeable changes in higher education that have been made possible because of technology, such as the automation of administrative functions. Recruiters, for example, can and do use various forms of social media and web sites to communicate with potential students (Bates & Sangrá, 2011). Students are no longer limited to local institutions or by having to move to a new location to attend college because they can choose to participate online at institutions around the world. Other, more subtle changes have also resulted from technological innovation. For example, American higher education institutions began using a LMS to deliver coursework over 15 years ago. That change invited information technology professionals to participate in administrative and faculty discussions, changing the organizational norm.

Innovation in technology is affecting all educational levels. The K<sup>12</sup> organization (K<sup>12</sup>, 2013) has been offering an online alternative to the traditional K-12 education since 1999. The goal of the institution is to provide an alternative to the traditional classroom experience for students who felt it restricted them. Students participate in classes at their own pace from locations of their choice and pay no tuition. The Khan Academy (Khan Academy, 2013) is another well known online platform with a goal of changing education by providing free educational opportunities for anyone in the world. The site provides self-paced online education on a variety of topics, all free of charge.

Continuing that trend, massive open online courses (MOOCS) (Bousquet, 2012) are beginning to emerge. MOOCS are online courses provided free of charge to anyone with access to the internet who would like to participate or just follow along. The concept is based on “connectedness,” which pioneers Siemens and Downes (Downes, 2011) describe as a “thesis” about learning. Learning, they describe, is based on the connections we make to previous experiences. A MOOC is an opportunity to provide large numbers of people the opportunity to connect with each other via technology for the purpose of learning.

Although not necessarily adopting the thesis of connected learning propounded by Siemens and Downes (2011), the MOOC trend has been embraced by other non-profit organizations such as Coursera (Coursera, n.d.) and Udacity (Udacity, 2013). Coursera, for example, provides a variety of courses for free with the following vision:

We envision a future where everyone has access to a world-class education that has so far been available to a select few. We aim to empower people with education that will improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they live in (Coursera, n.d., About Coursera).

To achieve their vision, Coursera (Coursera, n.d.) offers a wide variety of courses free to anyone who registers. The site describes a pedagogical approach that encourages mastery of course concepts. Mastery is demonstrated as students interact via technology with teachers and through homework assignments designed to help students demonstrate understanding of the course topics.

According to the Coursera website (Coursera, n.d.), the original plan was to utilize technology to deliver education to large numbers of people in a way that encouraged interaction and mastery. While not explicitly stated, their approach suggests a desire to develop a community of learners in their large audiences by creating an environment in



which students can interact with the materials and with each other. Coursera's MOOCS are but one example of the possible changes being developed in higher education, according to the "futurist dramatization" entitled *Epic 2020* (Epic 2020, n.d.).

The predictions made in *Epic 2020* (Epic 2020, n.d.) describe a future that deemphasizes colleges and universities in favor of courses such as those offered by Coursera (Coursera, n.d.). The predictions are based on the current increase in free online courses similar to Coursera and the social and political pressures that are coming to bear on higher education. According to the video's makers, the Khan Academy (2013) was the starting point for the change in higher education. Within three years after Khan Academy's success, TED Ed (TED, n.d.) was launched. TED Ed and Ted-Ed videos extend the previously available TED by making lessons and videos available to the public. The purpose of the TED offerings is to deliver information to spur on new ideas because "ideas have the power to change attitudes, lives, and ultimately, the world" (TED, n.d., About). TED, TED Ed, and TED Videos provide new ideas through education, furthering the vision of their founder.

Free online learning such as this could have implications for American higher education. At the institutional level, there may be a long term reduction in enrollments for residential campuses (Moody's, 2012), which could reduce revenues and further erode the traditional campus experience. Smaller colleges may not be able to compete, forcing them to close. Teachers may have to change their paradigms of what it means to teach, especially for "massive" audiences. Grading homework for hundreds of students, for example, might be impossible without computer assistance (Young, 2012). Individualized learning could replace groups of students moving through subjects together. Teachers may become consultants who work with course designers to develop courses instead of being at the center of the educational experience. Some may find the current technology associated with

MOOCS lacking, although that could be updated as technology improves (Tamburri, 2012). Currently MOOCS are not accredited, which may limit academic credit for completing courses. Additionally, availability could become an issue. Of the educational institutions reporting in the 2013 study entitled, “Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States,” the majority have no plans to develop or deliver MOOCS (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

The trends described above are just emerging so their long term implications to American higher education are speculative. The trend is linked to the notion that technology is widely used in America and is accepted as a platform for learning. Innovation has improved learning technologies so that they may be considered “more stable, ubiquitous, expected, and invisible” (Tamarkin, 2010, p. 32).

It has been observed that learning “rarely occurs ‘in splendid isolation from the world in which the learner lives; ... it is intimately related to that world and affected by it’” (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007, p. 5). Similarly, teaching is considered a contextual activity (Ambrose et al., 2010), shaped and formed by the students, institutional expectations, fields of study, and the technologies available. Higher education is faced with unprecedented competition and financial concerns. Technology has become part of our everyday experiences (Levinsen, 2011), and innovation continues seemingly without end. Students entering higher education have a changed mindset about what to expect from their higher education experiences (Tamarkin, 2010). They can easily access information through their device of choice, but they come to school to learn what to do with what they find. The intersection of the needs and the technological opportunities makes the move to online course delivery a logical next step (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008), and makes technology and higher education inseparable.

## Conceptual Framework

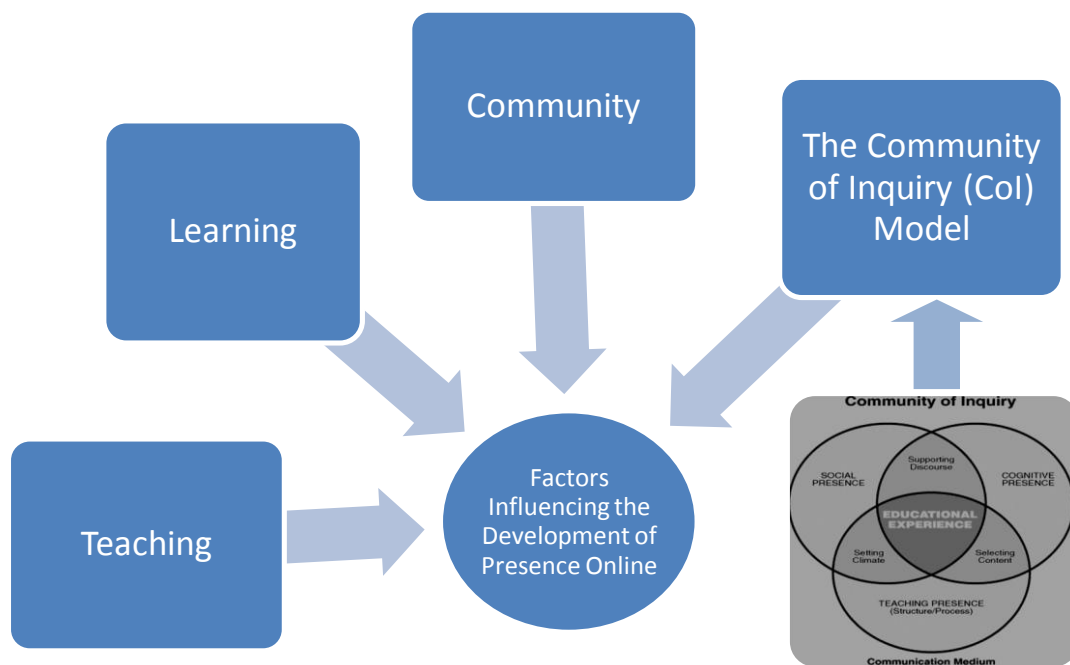
The purpose of a conceptual framework is described in a variety of ways in the literature. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest that a conceptual framework describes “the substantive focus of the inquiry,” the “what” of the study (p. 6). As such it “demands a solid rationale” (p. 7) that demonstrates how the research is relevant to the field of study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) argue that the conceptual framework is central to the dissertation process. “The review and critique of existing literature culminates in a CF that posits new relationships and perspectives vis-à-vis the literature reviewed. In this way, the CF becomes the scaffolding of the study” (p. 58). Merriam (2009) describes the importance of searching the conceptual literature before embarking on a study, but emphasizes the development of a theoretical framework and literature review rather than a conceptual framework. Maxwell (2005) describes a conceptual framework as a “conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these and why – a tentative *theory* [emphasis in original] of the phenomena that you are investigating” (p. 33). Ravitch & Riggan (2011) explain that a conceptual framework should include “personal interests, topical research, and theoretical frameworks” (p. 8). Personal interests begin the process of research in that, “as you review the literature related to a given topic, your personal interests evolve into conceptual frameworks” (p. 11). They describe a conceptual framework as a compilation of concepts from that literature that have been critically reviewed and evaluated until they come together to create a structure for the study.

The conceptual framework for this study most closely follows the structure Ravitch and Riggan (2011) propose in that it includes a compilation of concepts from the literature after critical review. Three themes emerged: teaching, learning, and community. Together with the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), they

form the structure upon which the study rests. Each of the four components of the conceptual framework will be described in this chapter.

Figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework. The framework includes representative shapes for each of the three main themes from the literature, as well as the CoI framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2009). The CoI framework in this model was copied from a publicly available website ([communitiesofinquiry.com](http://communitiesofinquiry.com)) and has been enhanced to improve readability.

**Figure 2. The Conceptual Framework**



Upon reviewing Figure 2, it is evident that the CoI framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) includes three descriptions of presence, namely teaching, cognitive, and social. The similarity of those titles to the other three themes in the conceptual framework

for this study, teaching, learning, and community, makes their inclusion seem redundant. Further explanation is warranted.

The CoI framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2009) was focused on “connecting the human issues around online, text-based communication, the teaching issues associated with the use of this mode of education, and the overall cognitive goals of this (and any) graduate program” (2009, p. 5). Specifically,

The basic premise and goal of this model of formal education, consistent with the potential of computer conferencing, was the creation and sustainability of a community of inquiry. The goal was to define, describe and measure the elements of a collaborative and worthwhile educational experience. In this regard, it must be noted that the CoI framework is a process model. The framework attempted to outline not only the core elements, (social, cognitive and teaching presence), but also the dynamics of an online educational experience (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009, p. 6).

In other words, the CoI framework was developed as a dynamic model to address concerns related to the development and delivery of online courses. Some of the research that followed the publication of the model is described later in this study, but the proliferation of studies testified to the importance of the work for online teaching. The CoI framework is included in the conceptual framework of this study because of its importance to understanding the “core elements” and “the dynamics of an online educational experience” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009, p. 6).

A search of the literature revealed a number of topics relevant to the purpose of this study that suggested more factors related to the development of presence than those described in the CoI (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2009). Upon completion of the

review, the factors were grouped and discovered to relate either to teaching, learning, or community. Although similar to the CoI framework and perhaps even dependent on it, the topics included in the conceptual framework for this study were focused on other factors.

Table 1 is provided below to facilitate a comparison of the CoI framework and the other themes associated with the conceptual framework for this study.

**Table 1. Descriptions of the Three Themes in the Conceptual Framework and the CoI**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Descriptions of the Theme in the Literature</b>	<b>Description in the CoI</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is an individual activity</li> <li>• Teaching approach may be traced to teacher's beliefs about what constitutes good teaching</li> <li>• Online teachers communicate differently with students</li> <li>• Course development and management differ online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching presence relates to the organization and development of online courses; it is a "binding element" (Garrison, Anderson, &amp; Archer, 2000, p. 96.)</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher engagement can encourage student participation and interaction, as well as provide emotional support and reduce isolation</li> <li>• Teachers may need to become learners to learn how to teach online</li> <li>• Self direction to facilitate learning occurs earlier online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive presence relates to critical thinking; it is the goal of higher education</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a community online is a purposeful activity that requires a different pedagogical approach</li> <li>• Teachers are responsible for encouraging the development of community online</li> <li>• Online communities have a shared purpose that can encourage student participation and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social presence is "the ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally, as "real" people (i. e., their full personality), through the medium of communication being used" (Garrison, Anderson, &amp; Archer, 2000, p. 94).</li> </ul>

The following pages will describe the literature that supports each of these components of the conceptual framework. For each, some background will provide context, and an argument about their importance to presence will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

## **Teaching**

What does it mean to teach in higher education? Some researchers describe teaching as an intellectual undertaking that combines the disciplines of practice, scholarship, and learning (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). In this literature, teaching is viewed as an outcome of scholarly research, with teaching becoming an opportunity to practice what has been researched (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Brew, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Jawitz, 2009).

Other researchers suggest that faculty members teach what they believe, implying a more personal or emotional perspective of teaching (Barr & Clark, 2011; Cranton, 2001). Emotions in this context are described as more than the feelings of stress or satisfaction that are often associated with a workplace, but include a broad variation of feelings that derive from interactions with the environment (Woods, 2010). In teaching, positive emotions have been shown to influence students' perceptions about their learning experience and the quality of teaching (Moore, 1997), and to have an impact on learning, beliefs, and values. Similarly, Shockley, Bond, & Rollins (2008) suggest that faculty member's perceptions inform and possibly influence their teaching. The literature describing the role of emotion in teaching suggests that without acknowledgement of the emotional side of the human experience, part of the experience of being a teacher is lost.

There is some distinction in the literature about what it means to "be" a teacher rather than engaging in the act of teaching. Cranton (2001), for example, advocates that being a

teacher is enhanced by a solid understanding of self, which she describes as “authenticity.”

The notion of self awareness is repeated in the literature related to the “spiritual” side of teaching. Spirituality is associated with the practice of contemplation, which is described as purposeful reflection on actions and experiences with a goal to understand oneself (Beer, 2010). Some suggest that gaining that level of understanding is necessary to know how to live in a world that is interconnected and multi-cultural (Henderson, Antelo, & St. Clair, 2010; Tisdell, 2006). Similarly, sensitivity to the diverse needs of individuals is a common theme (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), which suggests that faculty members may benefit from self reflection in an effort to understand how their experiences have influenced their perceptions. According to Henderson, Antelo, & St. Clair (2010), examining and understanding oneself is an important first step.

One of the consistent assumptions throughout the teaching literature is that teachers desire to create the best educational experience they can for their students. Teaching is a complex undertaking (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Barr & Clark, 2011), evaluated in part by the social, political, economic, and technological context in which it exists (Skelton, 2004). It may also be affected by the approaches to teaching the teacher believes to be appropriate (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Teaching quality and teacher efficacy are associated with improved student learning (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Barr & Clark, 2011). The focus on quality and teacher efficacy may be particularly important in today’s changing educational arena because teachers transitioning to online may have to learn new strategies as they seek ways to challenge and stimulate learners, encourage discovery and self direction, and incorporate technology (Bembenutty, 2009; Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). Supporting this notion is the students desire to know how to integrate technology into their learning processes (Bates &



Sangrá, 2011). They expect their teachers to help them achieve that goal. In order for higher education to be relevant (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Bates & Sangrá, 2011), the needs expressed by students and other members of society are an important consideration.

**Teaching Online.** Teachers may want to evaluate their beliefs about teaching as they transition to online. The challenges facing them often include fostering self direction in students, finding new ways to interact with students, and learning how to transition their coursework from the face-to-face environment to online (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Crawley, Fewell, & Sugar 2009; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Online students soon learn that teachers may not be immediately available and that they may have to wait for answers to their questions, or find the answers themselves. That alone may foster self direction in students, and may change the assumed roles.

**The Adult Online Learner.** Understanding learning online for undergraduates (the focus of this study) begins with an understanding of the adult learners who choose the online venue. Online education came into vogue in the 1990's along with the World Wide Web and various applications that facilitated communication (Friedman, 2005; Garrison, 2011; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Stavredes, 2011). The learner at that time was often characterized as the non-traditional student, which generally meant an adult who sought education because of job-related needs. Today's technology offerings make online education possible and accessible to many (Levinsen, 2011; Arum & Roksa, 2011; Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Those who choose online learning are members of a diverse grouping of people who make that choice primarily because of its convenience and flexible scheduling (Noel-Levitz, 2012). A majority of online learners have full-time jobs and family responsibilities, making the convenience and flexibility essential to their ability to continue their education (Stavredes, 2011). The convenience has also

attracted more traditional students; approximately 20% who choose online learning live on campus.

For a student to be successful online, the literature suggests they need to become more self directing (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). In adult education, self-directed students are those who determine what is expected of them and make the decision to follow through (Knowles, 1973). Learning how to do that requires the ability to understand the problem, and then locate and critically evaluate information in order to find the relevant solution (Bates & Sangrá, 2011).

According to Bergström (2010), American students generally expect the teacher to lead the learning through discussion or lecture. Online learning changes that model, placing more responsibility on the student for their learning and possibly creating confusion about how to function in the online environment. In order to understand the differences and be successful online, students may need to change their paradigms about what it means to be a student, online.

**Why Teach Online?** The motivation to move courses online may be related to institutional pressures to increase enrollment or reduce costs, or the teacher's desire to be innovative and use new technologies (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Crawley, Fewell, & Sugar, 2009). Teaching online may seem an attractive option, especially for teachers who want to limit regular trips to campus (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). The desire to teach online is only a starting point in the process. Teachers will need to learn how to use a LMS (Fish & Wickersham, 2009) in order to effectively design, develop, and implement courses, and become a skilled online communicator (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

**The Good Teacher.** There may also be deeper ramifications for teachers as they approach teaching online. Not only do the task-oriented parts of teaching change, but some

deeply-held beliefs about what it means to provide a quality educational experience may be affected. Teaching, like learning, is personal, reflective of the teacher's beliefs about what it means to be a good teacher (Ambrose, et al., 2011; Cranton, 2001). Often teachers will choose, consciously or unconsciously, to model their teaching approaches after teachers that were influential to them when they were students (Akerlind, 2004; Ambrose, et al., 2010; Kember & Kwan, 2000). The approach reflects their conceptions about what constitutes good teaching and can become the lens through which future teaching activities are viewed. What a teacher believes constitutes good teaching may affect the ways in which they view students as learners and their approach to creating presence in online courses.

There may be many ways to describe teaching approaches, but this study focuses on the work that generally describes them as either teacher/content-centered or student/learner-centered (Akerlind, 2004; Gonzalez, 2008; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Saltmarsh & Sutherland-Smith, 2010; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). In either approach, the course is usually organized around structured syllabi and other course materials. The biggest differences in the two approaches relates to the teacher's conceptions about what constitutes good teaching.

According to Kember and Kwan (2000), the teacher who approaches good teaching from a teacher/content-centered perspective assumes students are motivated by their desire to achieve good grades. Knowledge is based on facts that are transmitted to students. Students may be viewed as passive recipients or encouraged to actively engage in discussions or activities. Relationships between faculty members and students are developed to further understand course concepts so students can apply them later.

Kember and Kwan (2000) describe teachers who believe that good teaching is student/learner-centered, on the other hand, as assuming that students are intrinsically motivated, which means they will discover their own meaning from the materials. From this

perspective, faculty members view relationships with students as opportunities to help them learn on their own or to encourage critical thinking. Student/learner-centered teachers encourage independent learning.

Although teachers from both perspectives may be successful online, it is relevant to the discussion about creating online presence to understand which approach a teacher prefers. A teacher who prefers a teacher/content-centered approach may favor collocation so that relationships with students can be developed in order to help them build meaning from what they are taught (Saltmarsh & Sutherland-Smith, 2010). Online, this teacher may feel tension about whether the students are learning (Kember & Kwan, 2000) or feel unsure how to bridge the gap between themselves and students. They may doubt the efficacy of online teaching (Osika, Johnson, & Buteau, 2009). Despite reports that suggest learning can be deeper online (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008), teachers who prefer this approach may wonder if they are reaching the students. For teachers who delivered their courses via lecture, the transition can be especially difficult. To overcome their concerns, these teachers might create a highly structured online environment for students to direct them through the learning process (Gonzalez, 2008). Creating a structured and well planned online learning experience may encourage the development of online presence, if the purpose of structure is to encourage self direction (Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Too tight a structure can increase the teacher's workload (Bates & Sangrá, 2011), and could frustrate self-directed online students.

A teacher who prefers a student/learner-centered approach to teaching may feel less tension about whether learning is occurring online, primarily because they assume that each student learns by making their own meaning from the materials (Saltmarsh & Sutherland-Smith, 2010). The student/learner-centered teacher is focused on encouraging students to

reflect on and understand what the information means in their lives. Additionally, these teachers often view themselves as learners, and may find the opportunity to improve their teaching by engaging with students online exciting (Saltmarsh & Sutherland-Smith, 2010). This teacher is more likely to develop a structured site that encourages communication, networking, and self-directed learning (Gonzalez, 2008).

As previously described, teaching is an individual activity (Ambrose, et al., 2010) that may be reflective of the teacher's personal beliefs. Preferences about teaching approach are thought to be a significant factor in teacher satisfaction with online teaching (Kember & Kwan, 2000), but they represent only part of the factors influencing teachers. Teachers are also influenced by institutional policies and the nature of the students in their courses (Gonzalez, 2008). For example, institutional leaders may ask teachers to teach more hours, or they may be asked to find ways to utilize technology so that classroom space needs are reduced.

Cranton (2001) describes the role of teacher as a "socially constructed concept" (p. 55). Further, she writes that "we cannot separate our sense of Self [*sic*] from our experiences" (p. 16). The desire to create good opportunities for learning and a teacher's core beliefs about teaching may affect the online course environment teachers create, and may affect the development of presence. As Kember and Kwan (2000) suggest, a teacher's core beliefs have a relationship to satisfaction with and confidence in online teaching. Learning how to create presence may provide a better online environment for both learners and teachers (Lehman & Conceição; 2010; Stavredes, 2011).

**Designing Online Courses to Develop Presence.** Courses designed with attention to the "dynamic interplay between thought, emotion, and behavior" (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 10) can encourage interactive discussions and inquiry, which can lead to the

development of community. A community engaged in inquiry is associated with learning in higher education (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; York & Richardson, 2012).

Designing online courses to encourage interaction and inquiry is a purposeful activity and may require a different approach to planning than is used in face-to-face courses (Fish & Wickersham, 2009; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Face-to-face course lectures and learning materials are often created once and then modified as the course is delivered, if needed (Dykman & Davis, 2008b). With online courses, it is beneficial to have the objectives, lectures, discussion questions, assignments, and other learning activities for the entire course ready and posted before the class begins so that students have time to become acquainted with the expectations and plan their workload.

Consistent and clear communications between teachers and students online encourages collaboration, just as regular feedback on coursework and teacher support throughout encourages engagement and trust (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Regular engagement can help reduce the feeling of physical distance between teachers and students and among students, and encourage the development of presence.

Teachers might encourage early engagement by opening the course with a welcome letter or by noting particularly excellent work after each learning module. Being present and involved, while not getting in the way, is an important component of online teacher presence. Not only do teachers stay in touch with students, they can also become aware of possible issues as they occur. In online education it is easy for a situation to become a crisis before a teacher is aware it is occurring (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). Being engaged and collaborative with students while encouraging their self direction is considered a best practice in online

teaching (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b; Fish & Wickersham, 2009), and may encourage learning (Bejerano, 2008) and persistence in online programs (Artino, 2010).

Another challenge that may exist online for some teachers is the issue of trust. Teachers may be concerned because they can neither confirm a student's true identity online nor ensure that the work turned in was actually done by the student enrolled in the course (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). Yet, in order to create an environment in which presence exists, a learning relationship between students and teachers is thought to be important (Stavredes, 2011). Engaging with students to develop trusting learning relationships can help, but the physical distance between students and teachers makes certainty difficult.

Creating a consistent look and feel for online course sites is a common strategy used to facilitate student success online (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b). The consistency allows focus on the content and activities rather than navigation of the site. It can also minimize the teacher's workload during course creation.

Modularization of online course content as an organizing strategy is also recognized in the literature as beneficial in encouraging student self direction (Dykman & Davis, 2008a; Lee, Dickerson, & Winslow, 2012). Modules may be arranged in weekly units or along topic lines to facilitate students' workload. Whichever approach, keeping the modules consistent throughout the course and including all lectures, readings, videos, discussion topics, learning activities, and assignments can be beneficial. Online students typically view the course in its entirety and depend on consistency for planning their workload. Making changes to online courses after posting is associated with student confusion and dissatisfaction.

Students are concerned with grades, making the need for clear, consistent expectations and grading guidelines important in a successful online course (Dykman & Davis, 2008b). Posting expectations of students in clear, concise, language that is organized

around modules also facilitates understanding. Similarly, students may benefit from being aware of what they can expect from teachers in terms of turnaround time on responses to questions and feedback on assignments, and the type of feedback they can expect. Frequent, consistent feedback is associated with excellence in online courses and student persistence (Bejerano, 2008). Dykman & Davis (2008a), which further suggests that writing clear course learning outcomes that are linked to each learning module is important to support student self direction.

Student learning has always been a primary goal for higher education teachers, regardless of the venue. Some studies suggest that online learning may foster deeper levels of critical thinking (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008) and encourage more collaboration and student persistence (Barr & Clark, 2011). The teacher's role in the learning process has been identified as an important component of presence (Garrison, 2003; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009).

## **Learning**

Learning, like teaching, has been researched extensively and yet defies a simple definition. Often learning is described as a process that leads to change (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Cranton, 2001; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Further, "learning is a personal process – but a process that is shaped by the context of adult life and the society in which one lives" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 1). The concept of societal influence on the context of adult education can be traced through history. During the industrial revolution, for example, the learning needs of the workforce changed as the type of work available changed. As the demand increased, so did the educational opportunities.

Teachers have been found to have an impact online on student learning. Teachers encourage and participate in interactions, which has been suggested to reduce isolation and



encourage collaborative learning (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2009; Kehrwald, 2010; York & Richardson, 2012). Interactions between teachers and students have also been found to encourage higher order thinking (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

Additionally, the emotional support offered by teachers can encourage reticent students and help them grow their self confidence in online learning (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

Developing an environment to encourage learning is a challenge teachers are expected to overcome. In order to do that, Stavredes (2011) suggests that teachers understand how human cognition occurs before attempting to create an effective learning environment. Berrett (2012) agrees, but explains that few doctoral students seeking to teach in higher education are taught about cognition. Especially online where new pedagogies are encouraged, understanding human cognition better might suggest an appropriate strategy for developing online courses that encourage the development of presence (Stavredes, 2011).

**Teachers as Learners.** The higher education teacher's role has always been focused on encouraging learning, but perhaps teachers did not realize that switching to online teaching may require them to assume the role of learner, as well (Ambrose, et al., 2010). The introduction of online teaching requires new pedagogical and technological skills (Garrison, 2003). Developing these skills may be beneficial to creating presence online, especially when it comes to encouraging students to become more self-directed learners (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Bembenuddy, 2009; Hutchings, Huber, Ciccone, 2011).

Embracing the role of learner may provide a solid foundation for the teacher in the online environment, reverse the perspective that online teaching increases workloads, and encourage the development of a more collaborative learning environment where students work together (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). It may also encourage the development of more professional development

opportunities that focus on developing the skills needed to incorporate technology into the teaching process, rather than adding technology on top of current teaching practices (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). By making information easily accessible to students, teachers may find that students are more empowered and self directed in learning how to incorporate information and technology (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Stavredes, 2011).

Learning is often described as an important outcome of higher education in America (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Teachers have always been responsible for assisting learners through the learning process, but online the pedagogy changes. To accommodate the changes, teachers may need to adopt the role of learner themselves in order to be successful online.

### **Community**

Presence is related to the way in which human beings perceive each other during interactions. In face-to-face interactions we can see or sense the other person and subconsciously engage with them (Lehman, & Conceição, 2010), making presence a natural outcome of face-to-face interactions. Online, however, interactions occur through technology. Creating presence with others online is thought to be a purposeful effort that includes development of the right skills and teaching approach (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Gunawardena, 1995; Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

Gunawardena (1995) studied presence related to computer conferencing, a new technology at the time. She described presence as, “the degree to which a person is perceived as a ‘real person’ in mediated communication” (p. 151). In communication, “real” is described as the ability to transmit both a sense of intimacy and immediacy. Intimacy in communications includes smiles, nods, and other behaviors that indicate engagement and concern, while immediacy is “a measure of psychological distance which a communicator

puts between himself or herself and the objective of his/her communication” (p. 151). In other words, achieving presence involves a combination of learning how to use the medium to transmit intimacy and learning to adopt a communications method that transmits a sense of immediacy.

This concept holds true in online teaching since students and teachers interact via technology. The medium is usually a course site posted on a LMS that is often designed, developed, and delivered by teaching and learning professionals (Bates & Sangrá, 2011). The LMS technologies available vary in sophistication, but generally they have features that allow the transmission of textual smiles or other icons indicating emotion that suggest intimacy. The problem, instead, often seems related to the method of communication, specifically the inability to transmit a sense of immediacy. Some studies have reported that the online experience would have been improved for students with increased or better interactions with both educators and fellow students (Baran & Correia, 2009; Schutt, Allen, & Laumakis, 2009; Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). Vanhorn, Pearson, and Child (2008) reported that completing an online program might be more challenging than some participants expected, and increasing interactions seemed to help them connect and feel more comfortable. Other studies described students as feeling isolated in online learning, which could affect their motivation (Baran & Correia, 2009). These studies suggest that the lack of satisfaction these students experienced may have been due to a lack of immediacy associated with online communication methods.

Teachers who have transitioned to online teaching may have questions about how to develop a method of communication that helps transmit a sense of immediacy. For example, some studies report that teachers feel concerned about the inability to develop relationships with students or to know if they are really learning (Crawley, Fewel, & Sugar, 2009; Osika,

Johnson, & Buteau, 2009). Some describe online teaching as “relationally unrewarding” (Allen & Seaman, 2009; Bejerano, 2008, p. 219), or rate their satisfaction with or acceptance of online teaching lower than classroom teaching (Prosser, Ramsden, Trigwell, & Martin, 2003). Among the reasons cited is the lack of nonverbal cues (intimacy and immediacy) that help the teacher know if learning has taken place.

The nearly ubiquitous acceptance of communication via technology has led to adaptations such the common use of text-based icons to transmit emotions, which social presence theory suggests should increase intimacy (Gunawardena, 1995). Technology has progressed to a point where various types of visual connections are easily and inexpensively available (Bates & Sangrá, 2011), which may help teachers transmit immediacy. Yet, Allen and Seaman (2011, 2012, 2013) suggest that some teachers still resist teaching online. They propose that the resistance is related to the lack of learning relationships, the inability to transmit immediacy or develop presence with students, rather than concerns about the technology itself.

**Components of an Online Learning Community.** An online learning community is a group of learners who are all interacting online; communicating regularly, both synchronously and asynchronously; have a shared purpose; are self directing; and interdependent (Luppicini, 2003; Nagel, Blignaut, & Cronje, 2009; Wise, Padmanabhan, & Duffy, 2009). To the learner, the benefits of online community engagement may include collaborative learning, which has been reported to improve learning skills such as critical thinking. It may also encourage participation through regular feedback from peers (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Nagel, Blignaut, & Cronje, 2009), and reduce the sense of isolation that can be part of the online learning experience (Baran & Correia, 2009). For the teacher, the emergence of a learning community can signal improved

participation, which has been shown to lead to student persistence and deeper levels of thinking, and the development of presence (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Development of an online community is an important part of the learning process (Fish & Wickersham, 2009). Factors that seem to influence development of a learning community include logical design of the technological interface, which helps students focus on the learning and not on trying to figure out what they are supposed to be doing; attention to the cognitive load put on students, with a focus on avoiding information overload (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2008); and the use of a pedagogical approach that encourages reflection and discussion and provides regular teacher presence without imposing so much structure that students become teacher dependent for their learning (Ice, Kupczynski, Wiesenmayer, & Phillips, 2008; Worley, 2000). One method of encouraging greater participation and community suggests that allowing peer leaders to emerge can help engage others in conversation and encourage greater presence by providing immediate feedback and dialogue among the learners (McIsaac, Blocher, Makes, & Vrasidas, 1999). With this approach, the teacher's role becomes one of mentor to help ensure the conversation stays on track.

Presence encompasses a perception about online learning that is important to the furtherance of an online learning community. It may help bridge some of the communication gap that can exist because of the introduction of technology. It can also help by creating an environment in which teachers and students can form learning relationships online, further supporting learning.

### **Community of Inquiry (COI) Framework**

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; 2009) was originally developed to address the human and teaching issues as well as the

cognitive goals that emerged as the authors developed their own online, text-based programs. The framework assumes that learning occurs “within a Community of Inquiry that is composed of teachers and students” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 88). The model was depicted as three interlocking circles, each labeled with one form of “presence” – cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence.

Cognitive presence was described as the extent to which the students were able to “construct meaning through sustained communication” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009, p. 89). Cognitive presence included critical thinking and deep learning, which the authors described as one of the primary goals of higher education. Teaching presence was described as the structure and organization of the course. It was associated with the design, development, management, and leadership of the learning experience, and described as “the binding element” (p. 96) that made the CoI possible. Social presence described the shared identity and sense of community that is often referred to in the literature as important for student persistence and learning. It was described as the ability of students and teachers to learn how to “project their personal characteristics into the community” (p. 89) as a way to further learning and support cognition.

The three “presences” described an aspect of online teaching that was meant to encourage discourse and the development of a community of learners, which was thought to create a “worthwhile learning experience” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009, p. 6). The interactions that occurred between the teacher and students and among students were considered important to the development of community, and the authors described as enhancing the quality of the educational experience through the development of “presences.”

The CoI framework has been well researched. Arbaugh (2009), for example, quantitatively evaluated the dimensions of social, teaching, and cognitive presence. The

purpose of the study was to report whether the three presences described by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) existed online distinctively from other teaching environments. Gathering survey responses from 667 graduate students, Arbaugh's results suggested "some encouragement to those researchers interested in testing the generalizability of the CoI framework. The results indicate that these survey items are highly reliable, somewhat empirically distinct measures for each of the three elements" (p. 8).

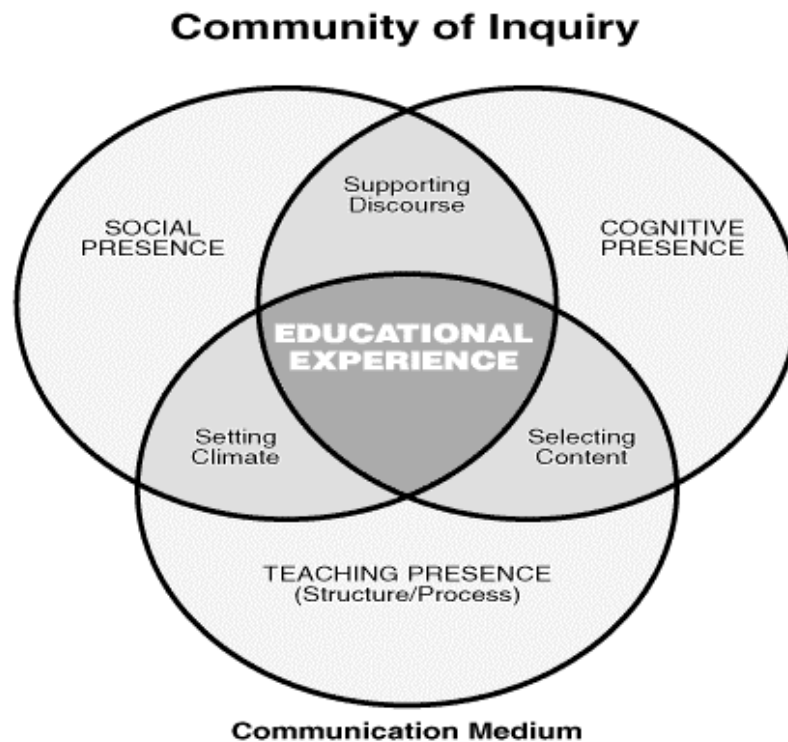
Other researchers have further explored the presences described in the CoI. For example, Boston, Diaz, Gibson, Ice, Richardson, and Swan (2009) explored social presence and its relationship to student retention in online programs. Their conclusions suggest that social presence was a factor in student persistence. Shea and Bidjerano (2012) explored the importance of student "self regulation" as a moderator in the CoI. Their results suggested the delivery approach, fully online or some combination of online and face-to-face learning may have an impact on student persistence. Further, the individual learner's ability to be self regulating may compensate for insufficient teaching or social presence. Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010) explored the causal relationships among the presences in the CoI. Using the survey instrument developed in previous research (Arbaugh, 2009), these researchers explored the usefulness of the CoI as a "theoretical tool to understand the complexities of the causal relationships among teaching, social and cognitive presences" (p. 35). The results supported previous findings that confirmed teaching presence as an important role in an online community, and provided more clarity around the "importance of teaching presence in creating and sustaining social and cognitive presence in online learning environments" (p. 35).

The importance of the CoI framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000, 2009) to the understanding of presence in online teaching has been widely described.

Presence as described in these three constructs provides the scaffolding for human interactions in the online educational experience (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2010).

The original model is pictured in Figure 3. This model is publicly available online (Communitiesofinquiry, 2011).

**Figure 3. Community of Inquiry (CoI)**



## **Chapter Two: Summary**

Chapter two summarized the literature relative to the context and the conceptual framework upon which this study is based. No studies were discovered that sought to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses. The aim of this study was to fill that gap in the literature. Understanding excellent faculty members' perceptions about how to develop presence in online teaching will be of interest to experienced teachers as they reflect on their



online teaching experiences and to new faculty as they learn how to teach online. It will also be of interest to administrators and human resource departments as the insights shared in this study will inform a discussion about the types of professional development activities that might be beneficial.

The purpose of chapter three, Method, is to describe in detail how the study was conducted. The research design will be explained, including a description of the setting and participants. The procedures that were used to gather and evaluate data will be described. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

### **Chapter Three: Method**

In all qualitative studies, a primary purpose of the research is to uncover the meaning individuals place on their experiences (Merriam & Associates, 2002). This was a basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). In basic interpretive qualitative studies, the purpose is to “understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 6). This study sought to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses. The purpose of this study aligned well with the purpose of a basic interpretive qualitative study.

Rigorous and ethical qualitative research methods were employed in all phases of this study. Before beginning, all required approvals were received from the researcher’s committee and the University of Idaho’s Office of Research Assurance (see Appendix A for University of Idaho Office of Research Assurances Approval Letter). The other two institutions’ internal review or human assurances review processes were followed, as well. Both universities approved this study, but copies of the approvals were not included to maintain confidentiality. A signed informed consent (see Appendix D for Informed Consent) was collected from each participant before data collection began. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, and data were locked in password protected data files or in drawers during data collection and analysis. After the transcripts were typed, the initial digital recordings were deleted. A backup copy was maintained until the study was approved, at which point the final digital recordings were deleted. All paper materials associated with data collection and analysis were destroyed once they were no longer needed.

## Setting

“The product of a qualitative inquiry is *richly descriptive*” [emphasis in original] (Merriam, 2009, p. 16). Referred to as rich, thick description, the practice of providing detailed information about the setting and participants is common in qualitative research. The descriptions may include “detail of recall and imagery, interpretive comment and contextual knowledge, wherever that is appropriate” (Richards, 2010, p. 57). Rich, thick descriptions may also help with transferability of the findings. Transferability may occur if the descriptions are adequately detailed and supported by quotes and field notes so that the reader may assess the similarities of the findings in the current study to another situation (Merriam, 2009). In an effort to support the richly descriptive traditions of basic interpretive qualitative research, the setting in which the study took place will be described in detail, as will the introductions of the participants that follows.

The educational institutions and participants in this study were purposefully selected (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling strategy is used in qualitative research because it provides the opportunity to choose the most appropriate sites or participants to answer the research questions. Two regionally accredited four-year universities in the northwestern region of the United States were chosen for this study. Both institutions met the criteria established for this study, which included:

- Four year institutions with regional accreditation
- Located in the northwest region of the United States
- Well established within their community
- Offering a variety of traditional face-to-face undergraduate degree programs, and a variety of online undergraduate degree programs
- Nationally recognized

Educational institutions were initially identified by reviewing the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities website (Northwest Commission, 2012). The Directory of Institutions lists several institutions and information about each including accreditation status, and, if applicable, year of accreditation, and the levels of degrees offered. The institutions' websites were also listed. Several institutions were chosen after the initial review based on the criteria established for this study. Their web addresses were noted. The websites of the institutions meeting the criteria for this study were then reviewed, and the list was reduced to those that appeared to have at least one well established online undergraduate program. For those institutions with at least one well established online undergraduate program, the web search went deeper and included a review of the web pages for each specific online undergraduate program. A final list of institutions that met the criteria was created. Using the final list, the websites were then searched for the emails of the deans of the schools that housed the online undergraduate programs. The deans for the first two schools on the list were then contacted to request their participation in the study (See Appendix A for Dean Invitation Letter). If there was no response within fourteen days, the next institution on the list was contacted. After several attempts, two universities were selected that met all criteria.

Both of the universities selected were well established, with pictures of expansive, tree-lined traditional campuses posted on their websites. Their websites included stories from satisfied students who endorsed the university by sharing their positive learning experiences. In several cases, the stories described how the students had found success after graduation, which they attributed, in large part, to their educational experiences. The websites of both institutions suggested an environment where student learning and well being were a priority. That seemed to be supported by the academic offerings, which included a

variety of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, the availability of career placement services, and a documented administrative presence.

The learning culture the institutions described in their websites seemed to be extended into their online offerings. Both institutions offered specific web pages for their online students. The pages were organized and easily navigated. The online programs were listed; each listing was linked to the corresponding program and course descriptions.

Each institution had support services assigned to assist online teachers and students. The sites listed details about the goals of the support services for online, offered suggestions for student success, listed detailed training opportunities for both students and faculty, as well as the technical and administrative services available online. At one institution the services were available 24X7. The completeness of the offerings on each website suggested that these institutions offered robust and well established online programs.

### **Participants**

Eight participants were included in this study. The participants' years of teaching experience varied between six and 32 years, with two to 12 years of online teaching experience. The participants represented various disciplines within their schools. Although all of the participants reported into either the schools of business or education, there was no effort made to limit participation to these schools in the study. Additionally, the participants were evenly split between male and female, although no effort was made to limit participation by gender. A listing of the participants, their years of experience, and school affiliations are listed in Table 2. Participants are identified by their pseudonym.

**Table 2. Participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Years Teaching</b>	<b>Years Online Teaching</b>	<b>Number of Online Courses</b>	<b>School Affiliation</b>
Grace Anders	6	2	6	Education
Maria Cooper	9	2.5	8	Business
Joe Gardener	8	4	10	Education
Shayne Karnes	22	12	Many	Business
Jennifer Palmer	16	12	Many	Business
Glen McKee	10	4	10	Education
Mitch Sayles	32	6	30	Business
Ellie Zacaria	12	7	14	Education

The study participants are introduced below. The introductions are meant to provide an overview of the participant's experiences and to give some insight into their perceptions about teaching.

**Grace Anders.** Grace has been teaching in higher education for about six years. She has two years' experience teaching online and at the time of our interview had taught six online courses. Grace described a balanced, respectful approach to creating presence in her online courses, using the phrase "being here with students" to explain how she works to create presence. Much like the connection that exists between students and teachers in a traditional classroom environment, Grace believes that we can come to know and understand each other online. She said, "I think there is a misconception that online teachers aren't there, you know, and they don't have the same kind of connection as face-to-face." She explained that she respects her students as adult learners and demonstrates that respect by reading their work carefully and holding them to high levels of quality. Grace shared a

touching story about a student who was amazed that Grace was actually taking the time to read her work, and the change that made to the student's perception about herself and learning. Grace said that teachers make a difference to students online and has established practices to reinforce her presence throughout the course. Grace said she expects students to turn in their best work and she returns the favor by giving students her best.

**Maria Cooper.** Maria has been teaching in higher education since 2004. For the last five semesters she has taught one or two online courses each semester. As we discussed creating presence online, Maria explained how important it was that students know the work they do in her classes furthers their learning. She described how she provided a solid foundation for students by making sure they know she is always available, yet not getting so involved that the students depend entirely on her for their learning. She empowers her students to learn from each other by setting up group activities and providing students with guidelines to help them solve their own group dynamics problems. She explained that she wants students to know that their work is important and that it is furthering their learning.

**Joe Gardener.** Joe has been teaching in higher education for about eight years; about half of that time he has spent teaching online courses. Joe describes himself as a very organized, sequential person, which he believes helps in online teaching. Describing his experiences as an online student, Joe described how important it was to him to have a teacher who was engaged throughout the course rather than one who joins a class periodically. He describes presence as "making a connection with students." To accomplish that, Joe said he seeks ways to communicate with his students beyond engagement in the forum discussions. He described the importance of writing clear instructions. He takes extra time with syllabi and assignment descriptions to support his students' self direction. In his welcoming letter to

students he shares LMS navigation tips and provides information about how to reach support. And, he shares his phone number with students so they can connect with him directly.

**Shayne Karnes.** Shayne has been teaching in higher education since 1991, and has been teaching online since 2001. Shayne has taken courses offered through his university to improve his online teaching practices. Other training has led him to become certified as a Quality Matters Rubric evaluator, a certification offered by the Quality Matters Program (Quality Matters, 2010). The purpose of the rubric is to provide standards that can be used by higher education institutions to promote quality teaching and learning online. Shayne described how he taught students about being successful online by encouraging self direction and then holding them accountable when they failed to engage.

**Jennifer Palmer.** Jennifer began teaching in higher education in 1997, and has been teaching online since 2001. At the beginning of her career in online teaching, she took courses offered by her institution to assist her as she began online teaching. She does not remember presence as a topic of discussion during those early courses, but she does remember how it felt during that course to get feedback from the teachers. That taught Jennifer about the importance of teacher engagement, something she said she strives to achieve while balancing her teaching workload and her institution's requirements to publish.

**Glen Mckee.** Glen has been teaching in higher education for ten years. He began teaching online about four years ago, and since then has taught more than ten courses. Glen describes presence online as beginning with a "fostering environment." He describes a fostering environment as one in which the students and the teacher work together toward the goal of learning. He explained how he works hard to create an environment where students can engage, and watches closely to make sure all are involved throughout the course. He shares his philosophy of learning and his expectations of students freely. He said, "I feel that



the more information that they have, again, the better able they are to cope with that learning environment as I define it for them.”

**Mitch Sayles.** Mitch has been teaching in higher education for 32 years. He’s been teaching online since 2007 and estimates that he has completed about 30 courses at various institutions. Mitch describes presence as one of the most difficult aspects of online teaching. He explained that he teaches courses in finance, accounting, and economics, classes he says students often describe as difficult. Online Mitch said he has found that “engaging students in some different way” can be a challenge. He describes his attempts to build presence as modeling behaviors. He says he logs into the LMS at least twice a day and to review student comments. When he reads a student comment that does not demonstrate understanding of the questions he has posed, he described responding to them with and asking probing questions to encourage them to think differently about the topic. He said his experience has taught him that early engagement from the teacher goes a long way toward helping students understand expectations and remain engaged for the rest of the course. Mitch said that the content he teaches can be difficult for some students, so he seeks ways to introduce what he describes as “personality” into his courses. He is currently considering adding cartoons at specific points in his online courses to alleviate tensions students might feel.

**Ellie Zacaria.** Ellie has been teaching in higher education for 12 years. She began teaching online classes about seven years ago and has been teaching at least two online courses a year since then. She describes the development of presence as “community.” Community to Ellie “is a place where people feel free to share where there is trust that what they do won’t be ridiculed.” Ellie works to create that trust in many ways. She said that students work in a learning experience that allows them to express their individuality, while providing opportunities for students to discover what they can learn from the activity. One

of the primary ways in which she does that is through modeling. Ellie describes herself as a creative person and uses those skills when she develops her courses. She tries to consider various learning styles and provides directions and information verbally, visually (video), and in writing. Ellie believes that learning is something her students do on their own and makes it clear those are her expectations.

### **Data Collection**

As in most qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2007). In this study, data were collected primarily through interviews, although additional information was collected through field notes taken during and after each interview and reviews of syllabi provided by the participants. The interview guide questions (see Appendix E for Interview Guide) were based on the literature included in the conceptual framework for this study, including the CoI (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). The questions were written to encourage participants to reflect on their practice as online teachers and describe the processes and factors they used to encourage the development of presence in their online courses.

Data gathering and analysis were done in parallel during this study. Merriam (2009) considers parallel analysis to be important because the researcher cannot know until data are collected what to “concentrate on, or what the final analysis will be like” (p. 171). By analyzing the data associated with each interview as it occurs, the researcher can more easily remain focused on the purpose of the study and avoid being overwhelmed by the volume of data.

To provide some structure to the data collection and analysis process, the steps outlined by Merriam (2009) were used in this study. The process included:

1. Analyzing the data as they were collected. “Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed” (p. 171).
2. Recording “thoughts, musings, speculations, and hunches” (p. 174). Records such as these can inform data analysis. In this study, thoughts and observations during data collection and analysis were tracked in field notes and memos.
3. Maintaining and managing data in an organized manner. The data in a qualitative study can include transcripts, field notes, documents and other raw data gathered during data collection. Organizing the data helps to build the “data set” (p. 174) used during analysis. Organization was accomplished by coding the data so that they could be arranged in manageable groupings referred to as categories. The codes were single words or short phrases that identified important parts of what was read.
4. “The practical goal of data analysis is to find answers to your research questions. These answers are also called categories or themes or findings” (p.176). Codes in this study were combined into categories. Categorizing data was an iterative process. As data were collected, categories were updated. The categories, supported by the data, were synthesized into the themes reported in the study findings.

Interview scheduling was done via email. The 60-minute interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. All but one of the interviews was completed within the scheduled time. One interview was extended to about 90 minutes with both the participant and the researcher in agreement about the extension.

The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, although one was conducted over the phone. Ideally, qualitative interviews are held at a natural location chosen by the participant (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) writes that the “interviewer-respondent interaction is a complex phenomenon. Both parties bring biases, predispositions, attitudes, and physical characteristics that affect the interaction and the data solicited” (p. 109). The interview location was chosen by the participants for their comfort during the interview.

All of the interviews began with a brief discussion about the study and its purpose; specifically, clarity around the definition of presence was confirmed. The Informed Consent had been emailed to all participants before the interviews. If the Informed Consent (see Appendix D for Informed Consent) had not yet been signed, the form was discussed, signed, and collected; if it had been signed and collected, then any questions were answered. When interviews were done remotely, an email acknowledging the Informed Consent and agreeing to its contents was accepted in lieu of a signature. If a syllabus had not yet been received, it was requested.

Once the preliminary discussions were completed, the participants were asked if they were ready to begin. All of the interviews were digitally recorded. The use of a digital recorder had been disclosed in both the Recruitment Letter (see Appendix C for Recruitment Letter) and the Informed Consent (see Appendix D for Informed Consent), but each participant was reminded before the interview to confirm that was still acceptable. All agreed to be recorded. With the recorder started, the interview began with demographic questions and flowed into the questions as documented in the Interview Guide (see Appendix E for Interview Guide).

Qualitative research is inductive, meaning that findings come out of the data collected from participants (Merriam, 2009). The open-ended questions asked were generally meant to gather the participant's experiences and knowledge. Follow up questions, often referred to as probes, were also asked in every interview as topics were raised that needed clarification or expansion.

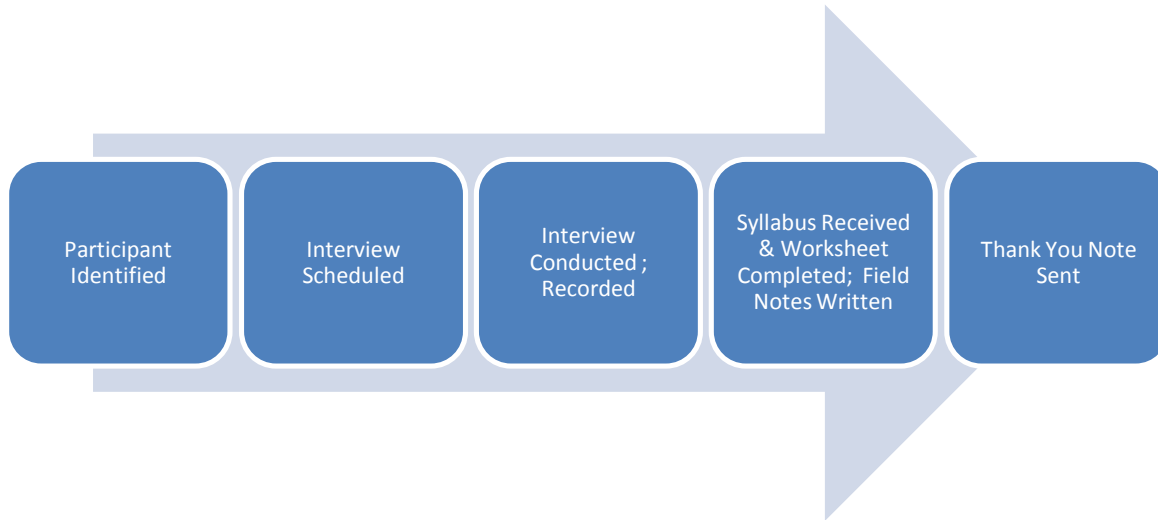
A notebook containing field notes was maintained throughout the study. Notes were taken during the interviews and reflective notes were documented after the interview was completed. The purpose of the field notes was to capture contextual details of the study and researcher reflections as the study progressed (Merriam, 2009). The notes were handwritten in a spiral bound notebook that was kept locked when not in use. Some of the field notes were transferred to the methodological log that was kept from the beginning of the study. The methodological log contains reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of the researcher's process in order to provide insights for improving future studies.

Data were also collected from the syllabus each teacher was asked to provide. Each syllabus was reviewed and the Syllabus Review Worksheet (see Appendix F for Syllabus Review Worksheet) was completed. The worksheet was developed after review of the Quality Matters Rubric Standards 2011 – 2013 edition (Quality Matters Program: QM, 2013) and relevant literature (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). The worksheet was used to help maintain rigor and consistency in the review process.

To maintain confidentiality throughout the study, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant. For all documentation in the study, pseudonyms were used when referring to participants. Care was taken so that no other potentially identifying information was

included in the study. Within 48 hours of the interview, a thank you note was sent via email to each participant. The data collection process is depicted in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. The Data Collection Process**



### **Data Analysis Procedures**

As Merriam (2009) suggests, the data analysis process began in this study as interviews were completed. The verbatim transcript, field notes, and syllabus were reviewed after each interview. The goal of this study was to answer the research questions, so after each interview and before coding began the research questions were reviewed.

During the initial reviews of the documents, key words were highlighted, quotes of particular interest were identified, and some notes were written into the margins. During subsequent reviews of the documents, the highlighted sections and notations were synthesized into codes. Known as open coding, this is an early process in data analysis where words and short phrases are used to identify data that might be useful in the final analysis (Merriam, 2009). The key words associated with the codes were documented in a table. This process continued after each interview, but with interviews two through eight the table of key words and codes from the current interview were compared with the previous

tables. Comparing data as they are collected is referred to as “the constant comparative method of data analysis. Basically, the constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 30). According to Merriam, the constant comparative method was appropriate because the “final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process...data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (Merriam, 2009, p. 171).

After the data were coded, the codes were documented in tables and memos. Once complete, the researcher reflected on the codes that emerged, and documented the reflections in a separate memo. It is not possible to remove all human biases and assumptions from data collection in a qualitative study, because the researcher as the instrument of collection cannot remove their human traits and be completely objective (Merriam, 2009). By being reflexive during the process of data collection and consistent in documenting when it occurs, the researcher may identify biases, which could improve the validity of the project.

As the interviews were completed and codes and categories documented, patterns emerged. When patterns are identified and no new insights discovered with subsequent interviews, “saturation” is said to have occurred (Creswell, 2007, p. 160). If patterns do not emerge, then additional interviews may be required. Saturation was achieved in this study.

During this process attention was paid to the following suggestions by Merriam, (2009) that categories should be:

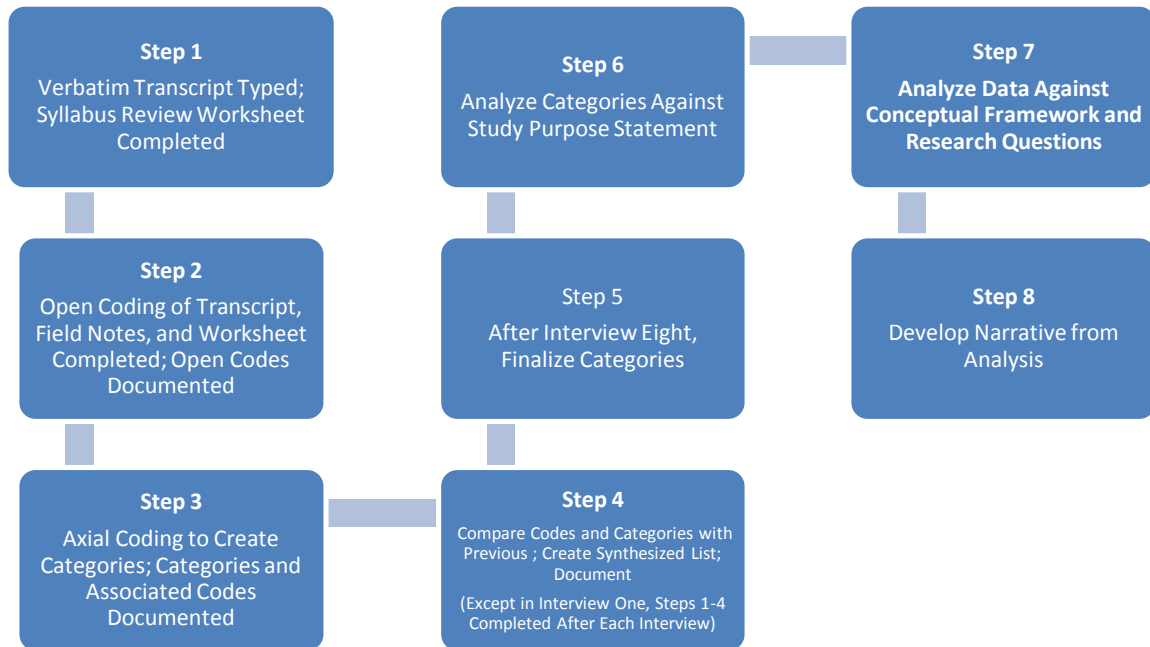
1. “Responsive” to the research. It is beneficial to review the purpose of the study and keep it in mind as categories emerge. The “names” given to the categories should be “responsive to the purpose of the research.”

2. “Exhaustive,” meaning that all data relevant to the study should be able to be categorized.
3. “Mutually exclusive.” If data could be placed into more than one category, more refinement of the categories was needed.
4. “Sensitizing,” meaning that the category name should be clear enough that anyone reading it would have a sense of what it contained.
5. “Conceptually congruent.” Categories should be developed using words at the same level of abstraction. For example, teaching or homework are at the same level, but essay writing is more specific and would likely fall as a subcategory of homework (pp. 185 – 186).

Once the interviews were completed and the data analyzed, the results were compiled into a narrative.

Figure 5 depicts the data analysis process.



**Figure 5. The Data Analysis Process**

### Validity and Reliability

Validity, the degree to which the questions posed in the study were accurately answered, and reliability, the degree to which the answers could be replicated under similar circumstances (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009), are important concepts in quantitative research, but harder to describe in qualitative research because “reality” varies depending on “people’s constructions of reality – how they understand the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 214). Since “researchers can never capture an objective ‘truth’ or ‘reality’” (p. 215), other strategies are often employed to aid in the researcher’s interpretation and improve the credibility of the findings. One, which was used in this study, is triangulation. Triangulation refers to a strategy where multiple points of data are collected as a method of checking and cross-checking data (Merriam, 2009).

Triangulation was achieved in this study through data collection. Data were collected from three sources – interviews, syllabi, and field notes. Each of the data sources were evaluated and coded. By evaluating three data sources, it was possible to compare the interview findings with the other data to check consistency (Merriam, 2009).

Member checking, another strategy commonly employed in qualitative studies to increase credibility or internal validity (Merriam, 2009), was also used in this study. During member checking, a narrative of the findings is sent to the participants for review before the study is finalized. The participants review the narrative to see if the researcher's interpretation is consistent with their intended message. If the participant has any concerns, they notify the researcher. The researcher then checks the original data and considers the participant's concerns. The researcher makes the final determination about how to present the findings.

Member checking was done in this study after the narrative of the findings was completed. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was emailed separately with the narrative provided as an attachment. The participants were asked to review the findings and determine if the interpretation of their interview seemed consistent with their intended message. All of the participants acknowledged receipt of the member check narrative; seven of the eight participants agreed with the findings as stated. One participant did not comment beyond receipt of the member check memo.

### **Categorizing the Data**

The development of categories was completed through axial coding (Merriam, 2009), which is the grouping of open codes. As the codes were developed and documented in a table, each code and the associated key words were also written on note paper and the note paper was taped to a flip chart. The note papers were arranged into groupings, and then

added to and rearranged as additional interviews were completed. The purpose of this process was to confirm the organization of the codes and keyword groupings and to help identify the categories. According to Merriam (2009), categories, or themes, are developed initially through an inductive process that, as saturation nears, shifts to a more deductive mode, “that is, you are now largely ‘testing’ your tentative category scheme against the data” (p. 183). To test that the codes and categories are responding to the research questions, Merriam suggests creating a table with the categories and codes and “writing out the purpose statement at the top of your display...to see whether the categories are *answers* [emphasis in original] to the research question(s)” (p. 187). That step was done in this study. The synthesized list of codes and categories and the purpose statement for this study is listed in Table 3. The detailed listing of codes and categories is available in the appendix of this study (see Appendix G for a detailed listing of codes and categories).

**Table 3. Synthesized List of Codes and Categories with Purpose Statement**

<b>The Purpose Statement</b>	
The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceived as important to the development of presence in their online courses.	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Course Development	Content; Planning; Organized; Use of technology
Course Facilitation	Communication; Community; Group Work; Student Engagement
Assessment	Accountability; Critical thinking; Quality
Student Self Direction	Provides clear direction; Forum discussion; Self direction
Teachers as Learners	Online awareness; Teacher reflection; Teaching strategies
Learning Relationships	Models behaviors; Relationships; Respect; Teacher engagement
Teacher Workload Management	Workload management

**Chapter Three: Summary**

The purpose of chapter three was to review the process that was used during data collection and analysis. Once data collection and analysis were complete, the findings from the study were presented. The purpose of chapter four is to present the findings.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

As is suggested in the literature, there is no one factor that leads to a learning environment that encourages presence (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000; Gunawardena, 1995; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). Presence describes a component of human interactions online. As such, presence emerges in large part from what the teacher brings to the environment, meaning the teacher's personality, teaching approach, and beliefs influence the development of presence. The findings related to this study were consistent with the literature in this regard. In describing presence, Joe referred to it as a combination of factors that "cemented a connection" between himself and his students. Jennifer believed it was achieved through "personal content," as in sharing personal stories to help explain the concepts in that week's lesson. She described posting "frequent announcements" and described herself as "online a lot, and letting them know that I'm there." Ellie described presence as "community... a community is a place where people feel free to share and that there's trust that what they say won't be ridiculed, and that there is no wrong answer. There's just different ways of looking at questions."

As the findings are presented, it is important to keep in mind that the focus of this study was teachers, meaning that all of the findings are presented from the teachers' perspectives. Keeping that in mind is important because students may perceive some of the factors that relate to presence differently than teachers. While students' perspectives about this topic are important, they are out of scope for this study.

It is also important to keep in mind that the findings presented here emerged from the participants' responses during our interviews, my review of the syllabi they provided, and the notes I wrote during and after the interview. What follows in this chapter represents the voices of the participants. My conclusions and suggestions will follow in chapter five.

## **Presentation of the Findings**

The findings are represented by seven categories, which were synthesized from the codes during data analysis. Each of the seven categories was compared with the conceptual framework, which includes three themes that emerged from the literature – teaching, learning, and community – and the Community of Inquiry (CoI) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). Each category is described separately, supported by the literature included in the conceptual framework for the study and the participants' voices. The categories will be presented in the following order. There is no priority or rank implied by the order of their presentation.

- Course development
- Course facilitation
- Assessment
- Student self direction
- Teachers as learners
- Learning relationships
- Teacher workload management

## **Course Development**

One consistency among all of the study participants was that a well planned and organized course site and syllabus was important to support learners (Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). All described their courses as organized by modules or topics. Some also described how they created their course site to facilitate student navigation by including headers, links, and directions that helped students find course materials, understand expectations, and know what they needed to do. Shayne, for example, described an

introductory page for each module to help students navigate the course. The introductory page he showed me during our interview listed what was due that week and provided hyperlinks to more detailed descriptions. He used the same strategy for the syllabus he submitted for review. On the “Course Calendar” page, Shayne laid out the entire course in a table that was organized by weekly modules. Each module entry included the week’s topic, reading assignments, and a listing of the specific activities due that week. Where more detail was necessary, Shayne provided students with a hyperlink they could click to get to the details associated with assignments and activities.

Consistency across all course documentation supports students as they plan their learning experience (Dykman & Davis, 2008b). Similarly, having the entire course prepared and available on the start date makes planning time and activities easier for online students, and is associated with increased self direction and satisfaction with the learning process (Artino, 2010; Bejerano, 2008 ). Self direction as described by Knowles (1973) is an important concept in adult education, including online learning (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). In order for a student to direct their own learning, they have to understand what is expected. Being organized and methodical about course development can encourage self direction, which has been shown to improve the likelihood that online students will persist in their programs, and it may increase their learning (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Barr & Clark, 2011). Stavredes (2011) also suggests that organized sites may support students emotionally by helping “alleviate frustration and self-doubt” (p. 21). If the course site is not organized, or if the entire course is not properly laid out on the course start date, those students who seek to be self directing may be stymied in their efforts to plan their time appropriately, and students who have self doubt may find it difficult to continue.

Maria described two experiences that demonstrated to her the importance of a well organized site. In response to an interview question about experiences she had as an online student, she responded,

The first online experience I had felt very unorganized and disjointed. And, the instructor had decided to create the course so it looked good online and unfortunately for those of us who liked to have paper, if you tried to print what she posted, it didn't work very well. So, it felt very disorganized. Then I had another instructor where everything was very sequential, and, I always knew where I could find it in the website. I never thought of myself as a sequential learner but when it comes to things being organized, if you don't have a lot of time and, for many of us the appeal is that you're trying to juggle all of these different balls, if you have an online website that is not very organized, it's very frustrating. You feel like you're posting things that no one is really reading.

Maria's story emphasizes an important concept about the need for organization in online courses. Stavredes (2011) describes online learners as a diverse population in terms of age, cultural backgrounds, and responsibilities, who need both flexibility and clear expectations because of their busy schedules. For some, the ability to take classes online makes the difference between being able to continue their education and having to quit (Noel-Levitz, 2012).

Reviewing the field notes taken during my discussion with Maria, she expressed frustration when describing this situation, and negative feelings about the teacher's lack of understanding of student needs. According to Wlodkowski (2008), adults desire to be effective in what they do, which is one motivation for seeking out additional education. When they find themselves in situations where they cannot be successful, adults may lose



confidence or disengage. To create presence, engagement, not disengagement, is essential (Garrison, 2003; Lehman & Conceição, 2011; Stavredes, 2010). Lehman and Conceição (2011), emphasize this distinction in their description about how presence is experienced.

In the physical space, presence is easier to recognize through observation and perception. In the virtual space, presence needs to be intentionally created. The feeling of presence in the virtual space is the result of the dynamic interplay between thought, emotion, and behavior between the private world and the shared world. It is rooted in the interactive perceptual process (Lehman and Conceição, 2011, p. 11).

One other consideration for teachers as they plan their online courses is how much work to require of students. Teachers generally expect the same rigor from online students as they do face-to-face, so choosing the same assignments online may seem appropriate (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). According to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000), one advantage of distance learning is that it allows students time to consider their responses, which can encourage deeper thinking. Deeper thinking can take longer, as can the extra reading and writing that is typical of online work, which means that teachers should be mindful of the extra time requirements when they plan their students' workload. Dykman and Davis (2008b) suggest that teacher's keep the additional workload in mind as they prepare online courses to help students avoid falling behind and becoming frustrated.

### **Course Facilitation**

Stavredes (2010) suggests that organizing and planning a course is not enough to encourage presence. Learning how to facilitate a course to encourage student engagement is also important. Lehman and Conceição (2010) describe engagement as an aspect of presence that includes participation in online courses by teachers and students. Engagement in an online course may include day-to-day involvement in activities, projects, and oversight of

forum discussions as well as regular announcements to keep students informed, but, depending on the topic and student readiness, may also include counseling and encouragement of students who are struggling.

Glen explained that “communication, communication, communication” was important to him as he engaged with online students. Consistent communication with students is described as important to encourage engagement through collaboration and the development of trusting learning relationships (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Communication can take a variety of forms. Ambrose, et al. (2010) suggests that teacher feedback can help students reflect on their approaches to learning in order to become more self directing, but “unfortunately, students tend not to engage in these processes naturally” (p. 7). By engaging with students online in their discussions and through their activities, the teacher may be able to help students develop “intellectual habits that not only improve their performance but also their effectiveness as learners” (p. 7).

Glen expanded on his comments about communication by adding, “In whatever I set up, I want them to interact. I think as adults we learn better in community.” The notion that community can encourage learning is consistent with the CoI (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). “The phrase community of inquiry was borrowed from Lipman (1991) whose work was also founded on that of Dewey. Dewey believed that inquiry was a social activity and went to the essence of an educational experience” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2009, p. 6). In the CoI, community is foundational to the process of learning.

During my interviews, I made note of several occurrences where participants described what they had learned about facilitating their online courses. Maria, for example, reflected on her teaching style and reported that she was working to find ways for students to interact better in their forums. She said, “I want them to take the assignment seriously...those

people may wait till an hour before the deadline [to post]. That's not helpful for presence. That is just posting." Jennifer had modified her lecture-based survey courses to be delivered online, and said that engaging students in ongoing discussions was difficult. To help students understand the concepts better, she created lecture notes based on her personal experiences. Regarding the lecture notes, Jennifer stated,

In my classes I develop a lot of personal content...it's my personal narrative, and my explanation of the material that I would give in a live class...I provide the lecture notes of the personal narrative to my online students...reading the textbook, in my opinion, especially for my class, is not enough for them to understand the concepts.

That's why I developed the lecture notes for each chapter when I first taught the class.

Ellie shared two best practices that she believed were effective with her online students. Based on feedback from a colleague, she said she set up her LMS so that all posting responses were sent to her email. In that way, she described being able to respond to each student individually as they posted. She said that the "professor's quality of perceived availability, I think, went way up when I started doing what he [the colleague] did." In addition, she shares her personality with her students by starting each week with what she called a "chatty email." She explained that her chatty emails include "pictures of the grandbabies and I do silly little things, just to open up my life a little bit. I think they enjoy that--um, the real person idea."

Engaging with students during course facilitation can encourage trust (Dykman & Davis, 2008b) and encourage the development of a learning community (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

## Assessment

Teachers create assessment plans to help students know what is expected, and students look to grades to know how they are doing. Online the reasons for assessment are no different, but what is assessed may change. For example, presence online is often associated with the development of a learning community (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). In order for a community to form, students must participate in the course and engage with each other regularly. Assigning grades for student participation may be adequate to encourage interaction, but the “social presence of the e-learning environment must be welcoming and positive enough that students willingly respond and support each other in cognitive growth” (Garrison, 2003, p. 103). Teachers who seek to encourage presence may want to assess a collaborative activity on the level or types of interactions between students in addition to the results of their collaboration.

The teachers in this study described using assessment to encourage quality work. For example, Grace wanted her students to be proud of their work. She said, “Don’t turn in junk. The expectations are high and this is how you can achieve them.” She holds students accountable for meeting that high bar by encouraging them to proof their work carefully and by reducing grades when there are errors that should have been corrected. She said she holds herself to the same high standard, too, by,

Just taking the time...give that paper the attention it deserves...our students deserve to know that we are reviewing every word, and that we care...I’ll have them rewrite things and resubmit if there is a minor revision. I know that sometimes you just want to finish and want to just turn it in, but you get docked for minor editing errors...I think it’s important that students get prompted to improve their writing process.

Glen also holds students to a high standard when it comes to improving their writing ability. That standard requires Glen to be engaged with his students in terms of providing feedback.

I provide lots of feedback to students on their papers...perhaps more about the content, but I also comment on their writing. Because I believe a graduate should be able to write at a reasonable level...I assume that is their desire if they are not there already. I believe...all forms of communication are critical.

Glen points out that providing feedback may not be something students expect. He told a story about a student who was surprised at his diligence.

I remember that a young guy came to me and said, 'You really read everything that I write, don't you?' Glen replied, 'Oh yeah. If I am going to ask you to write it, I need to read it and understand what you are saying'...He laughed and said, 'I've had teachers over the years I knew they weren't reading the papers, they just looked at the number of pages and gave me a grade.' In high school he had a teacher he knew wasn't reading, so in the middle of the paper he wrote, 'I know Mr. so and so that you are not reading this at all.' We laughed about it.

These teachers describe setting clear expectations about the level of quality and learning they expect from their students, and the ways they themselves are willing to work to help their students achieve. Shayne helps his students understand the importance of doing the work and learning the course material. He explained,

After the first exam, anyone who gets a D or an F is required to call or stop back if they are on campus so we can talk about how they studied for the exam and what they can do to improve for the next one. Nine times out of ten it is because they didn't

study or they crammed the night before or some other excuse. It builds on the accountability – it's up to you.

Mitch describes how his ongoing engagement with students holds them accountable and increases their opportunities to learn.

It's a real challenge to keep everyone on task, and to remind them that this is an academic endeavor... if I get a posting that is just ubiquitous, where they filled up two paragraphs with no focus, sort of the warning shot that I fire first is, 'your post met the minimum requirements for volume, but I am confused about the content.'

These teachers planned their courses to expect learning, and used assessment as a means to help them achieve it online by engaging students in collaborative activities, using firm standards, and remaining involved with students to support and maintain a quality learning environment.

### **Student Self Direction**

Self direction is not a new concept in adult education (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Knowles, 1973; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Stavredes, 2010). In the online environment, Garrison (2003) described self directedness as more than students taking responsibility for their learning while in school; it is critical to their ongoing ability to learn "in a knowledge and creative society and economy" (p. 12). Being self directed means one is self motivated and aware of the issues associated with learning online, and knows how to overcome them (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Grow (as cited in Stavredes, 2011) argued that adults are not always self directed and may need direction when they encounter new situations. That can be important in the online environment because the physical distance that exists between teachers and students and

among students means that a situation can become a crisis before a teacher is even aware of the problem (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Stavredes, 2011).

Ellie creates videos for her students and uses them to build self direction in her students. She said, “In online courses, I determine what is best taught in a video and what resources I can build in, and I also think about content in terms of what they can discover on their own.” She goes on to say that “they become the bringers of knowledge. They don’t see me as the only source of knowledge. They see each other as sources of knowledge.” As students share what they have learned and begin to identify with each other, their interactions may signal the development of a community of inquiry (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000).

Mitch has learned to gauge his interactions with his students according to how well they are taking responsibility for the discussion. He said, “I’ve also had to learn and gain appreciation for the class dynamics...if you’re getting good comments and good counter knowledge, then just stay out of the way. You’re not there to demonstrate your knowledge.”

Shayne tries to teach students how to be self directing by using announcements and direct email features in the LMS to remind students about important things coming up. He said he also keeps “pinging them until they get the message.” The message in this case is that they are responsible for their learning and must engage with the activities presented. He says about self direction that “it has to be. That was the biggest thing I noticed between 2001 and more recent times is that students in the early years had such a difficult time figuring out that it was up to them.”

Maria determined that self direction was important if she was going to include collaborative activities in her online classes. Before engaging in group work, Maria has her student groups create a “Code of Performance” for their group. The code describes the rules

of engagement and also a process for resolving conflicts within the team. By completing that activity first, students feel empowered with the knowledge they need to coach others in their groups who do not comply, but also learn that they can depend on themselves and their team to complete the work. Maria said about the activity,

I don't know what happens in that group. Only the group members know. So, if there is an occasional group where things aren't gelling, if someone comes to me and complains, I'll ask what kind of discussion they have had with this person. They are also told they can 'vote someone off the island' if they are not adhering to the code. But, before I go along with that, I ask them to make sure they have talked with that person about what they are or are not doing. So far, in all the semesters, I've never had to get involved.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) list several theories related to self direction that describe it as a linear process, where students move through levels or steps; non-linear models where learners move through clusters of learning activities instead of linear steps; and collaborative models that combine context, motivation, and self monitoring. Stavredes (2010) cites Grow's model (p. 15) and suggests that self direction is achieved through instruction, meaning that the student's growth is supported by the teacher who adjusts feedback depending on the student's level of readiness. For example, a student new to online learning would receive frequent supportive feedback. As the student became more confident, the feedback would become less frequent and more specific.

One of the most important strategies for encouraging self direction mentioned by the participants was providing explicit instructions to students. As a practical matter, the inability to easily clarify directions or answer questions motivated some of the teachers to be explicit with their written word. Glen, for example, explained,



I am more in detail with the online stuff than I am in the face-to-face because I don't have the opportunity to correct a missed perception right away like I do in the classroom. I try to be really careful in what I say, the way I say it...I use my wife as a sounding board, and she gladly does this for me...I always ask her to read it or I read it to her and get her reflection on it to see if it is connecting or if there is something in the way that I phrased things or if I left something unclear. That's the extent that I go to; I try to be very careful.

Glen's approach is described by Dykman & Davis (2008b) as essential to avoid misunderstandings and help the student maintain focus on the learning. Online classes can include so much written material that students can get lost. Especially when students are not familiar with online learning, providing clear directions can support their efforts and make online learning more relevant to their needs.

Besides writing instructions, the online environment provides an opportunity to use technology to provide directions to students. Grace, for example, described using videos to explain the week ahead to her students. She creates her videos using software that allows her to develop video presentations or voiceovers for slide presentations and "presents direction for the week and describes the upcoming assignments. It's like homeroom...it sets the tone for the week." She described adding personality to the video through voice inflections.

Mitch believes that students online struggle at times to understand what it takes to be a successful student. Using the functions available in the LMS to deliver messages, he tries to describe what it takes to be successful in one of his courses. Mitch said,

I post announcements regularly, particularly early on in the first half of the course that tell student success stories. I write things like 'students who were particularly

successful in this course have done this.’ A lot of times I’ll give three to five bullet points that are success items.

Providing clear directions describes a teaching technique supported by the literature related to self direction, but it also supports the notion of presence. The Community of Inquiry was thus named to denote the importance of asking questions of others in order to learn. The care and concern expressed by the participants in this study suggests that the teachers are considering their student’s needs and are working to try and meet them. The attention to detail described here is demonstrated in the syllabus Grace provided. In that document she provides students with explicit directions for success, including clear descriptions of activities and assignments, explanations about why the work is important to the learning process, and rubrics that describe the level of expectation. Students can read the expectations and know how to meet them, which allows them to make their own decisions about moving forward.

Stavredes (2011) suggests that a student’s level of self awareness and knowledge about self direction, as well as their social style, cultural expectations, experience levels, and age, can all influence their readiness for online learning, including the ability to become self directed. She suggests that self direction “is a critical factor in [*sic*] learner’s ability to persist” (p. 17).

### **Teachers as Learners**

In response to questions about online teaching, Grace thoughtfully replied, “Online is unique teaching.” She described to me during the interview ways in which she had attempted to improve her online practice in order to meet the needs of students. Glen shared a story about an early unsuccessful attempt to incorporate technology into his classes, and then a later more successful attempt. As he reflected on these two experiences, he said, “It

demonstrated that I wanted to work with them [students] to make it possible...I felt that was positive and it's caused me to want to look at other ways we can use electronic media to further this whole thing [teaching]." He summed it up nicely by stating, "That's the key, don't you think, that we're willing to try again."

Teachers who choose to work online might be motivated to try new technologies (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Crawley, Fewell, & Sugar, 2009) or may desire to cut back on commute times to their classroom locations (Dykman & Davis, 2008a). Regardless of the motivation, once the decision is made to teach online teachers need to understand that the change to online calls for a new approach to teaching (Ambrose, et al., 2010; Garrison, 2003). For example, using a LMS exclusively for instruction and communication requires a new paradigm, as does writing clear and concise directions for online students to avoid misunderstandings that can so easily occur with the written word. As Jennifer stated, "it's a different pedagogical tool that we're not really trained to use." She explained that in her experience you have to be,

A proactive instructor to go out into the world and find this kind of information...if you're not, and that's what tends to happen with online teaching, I think...you have to be forced or motivated to find a different method of teaching and a different training.

Jennifer was able to attend some training at her university and learned to use the LMS. Using the LMS and the techniques she learned in another course, she recently revised her online courses to meet new quality standards. But, she said, "I think there are a lot of people who teach online who haven't necessarily done that."

Jennifer continued,

I can only assume that online course development is going to continue to change...

It's certainly better now than it was in 2001 when I started, and this is only through my lens, but you're not going to get professors motivated...because the development of an online course is so labor intensive that without the adequate financial support and maybe nuts and bolts support, they are not going to be motivated to create a stellar class.

Providing professional development opportunities that encourage collaboration between development experts and teaching experts may ease the perception that online teaching increases workloads (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Additionally, learning ways to incorporate technologies into the learning environment could help teachers manage their online workloads (Bates & Sangrá, 2011). With knowledge of how to help students become more self-directed in terms of technology use, teachers may have free time for other professional responsibilities (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Stavredes, 2011).

Online, purposeful engagement with students is considered a best practice (Fish & Wickersham, 2009), but in order to do that teachers need to understand the differences in teaching approach, the differences in students, and the technology (Bates & Sangrá, 2011). The CoI was developed specifically because of the differences noted in computer conferencing as it was developing (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), and the advances in technology since then have only added to the complexity. Adopting the role of learner may help teachers adapt to their changing role (Ambrose, et al., 2010).

### **Learning Relationships**

According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), American students generally expect to have a learning relationship with their teachers. The authors attribute that expectation to the egalitarian culture common in America. If all involved in the educational

experience were equal, then one might expect that a teacher's presence, especially online, would not be important. Yet, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) note that a teacher's presence online is "the binding element in creating a community of inquiry for educational purposes" (p. 96). Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fung (2010) confirmed causal relationships between the three presences. They wrote,

Student perceptions of teaching presence predicted a significant direct effect on perceptions of cognitive presence. In addition, perceptions of teaching presence were significantly associated with social presence. The indirect or mediated effect of social presence on cognitive presence was also confirmed (p. 34).

The development of learning relationships between teachers and students and among students is included in many of the discussions about presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Gunawardena, 1995; Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Studies suggest that developing learning relationships online is a complex process that includes the right technical and communication skills and teaching approach. Consistent communications, trust, and understanding the needs of students are but a few of the suggestions made.

The teachers in this study have discovered their own ways to develop learning relationships with students. In response to a question about the development of learning relationships online, Ellie said,

I think students need to understand that we're all in this together, that we're all common learners, and, especially my adult learners, need to know life is sometimes crazy for me as well as for them; they can appreciate that a little bit more.

Glen made similar comments, saying,

I stay with my students. I write to them if I miss them for more than one week. I write and ask, 'what's going on'? 'Can I help you'?...I understand adults have a

zillion things going on in their lives and they can't absolutely stay up on everything that is going on, perhaps. And, yet, if they are going to make a commitment to this program and to getting their degree...this is part of it.

Mitch had similar expectations of himself and his students in terms of developing meaningful learning relationships. He said,

I think demonstrating a consistent but not overbearing presence [is important in developing learning relationships]...they [teachers] have other demands that are taking their time and attention, and students figure that out. And, so everybody ends up just doing what they have to do to get the grade. I have an ideal of college or university life, which may have become so outdated, but it's the place to expand one's thought processes. The great instructors would go in and they would challenge the students...but I think that you've still got to find a way to be able to be present and let the student know that you are there, and let the student know you have expectations for development. They need to leave the course better than they started, and that you're going to hold them accountable.

Joe gets to know his students through a survey he sends out at the beginning of his course. The survey asks them questions about their hobbies, work life, etc., so that he has an idea of what they are like and their skill level. He said,

The primary purpose is to get to know the student so that when I communicate with them I know them, so I'm not talking with someone who is unemployed about their work. If I know they are unemployed, I don't want to rub it in. It may be hurtful to them. Part of presence or part of that connection is that you know the students more deeply...It allows me to get to know them better and personalize my interactions with them.

As these teachers have described and the literature has supported, learning relationships online are important for the development of presence. Taking the time to get to know students is time consuming, but for some of these teachers an important part of developing presence. The importance of managing the workload represents the final finding in this study.

### **Teacher Workload Management**

Teaching online was commonly perceived to require more work by the teachers in this study. Jennifer commented that “it’s a different type of workload because it’s very front-loaded.” Shayne thought that “development time is a lot, but once it’s running it’s not so bad. As you start adding discussion board and things to monitor and projects, it gets tough.” Shayne also noted that “students are getting more into the 24X7 mentality and so the comments and emails come all day long. Trying to respond to those does take more time.”

As documented in the field notes, Shayne explained during the interview that he does not use forums because he feels they have limited educational value. Coupled with his comments about workload, Shayne’s decision to eliminate forum discussions may have been strategic. Experienced teachers like Shayne may have to make other decisions like this to manage their online teaching workloads. Jennifer, for example, found different ways to improve her presence online while managing her workload. Using the LMS, she simplifies daily work by using “canned” responses for responses to posts that occur in every course. She explains,

Again, I have canned comments. I have the same questions every single online discussion, so it’s not a lot of work for me [to add comments for students]. But, they don’t know that. They think I’m looking at their discussions and monitoring them,

and sometimes I do, but I don't read every single comment. But, not from their perspective...to them it looks like they are getting a message from me.

Jennifer is describing a way she utilizes the features in the LMS to help manage workload. She continues,

I suppose they might look a little bit canned, but I have created on the LMS automatic announcements that are posted on a specific day. When I am getting a class prepared, I can prepare the announcements that just show up on certain days when assignments are due. To them [the students] it looks like they are getting an email from me, which they are, but I just wrote it three months ago. I think that increases presence.

Jennifer described giving this topic significant thought and discovered ways to use the features in the LMS to help her send automated messages to help streamline her workload during course facilitation. Providing professional development that teaches methods of incorporating technology into teaching may help faculty manage the online teaching workload and support the development of presence (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Stavredes, 2011). The CoI developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) might also be used as a guide to help teachers in the online environment.

### **Teaching Presence in the CoI**

In their original work on the CoI framework, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) identified the importance of teaching presence to reach the goal of “a worthwhile educational experience.” In 2006, Arbaugh and Hwang found the three components of teaching presence, which they described as “(1) Instructional Design and Organization, (2) Facilitating Discourse, and (3) Direct Instruction” (p. 16) were “empirically validated...as posited by Garrison et al. (2000)” (p. 16). In their retrospective article a decade after the introduction of the CoI, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2009) wrote, “The main finding over the last



decade with regard to teaching presence is the growing evidence as to the importance of this element” (p. 7). Although teaching presence was considered important there was “a conceptual lack of consensus as to the morphology of its dimension (design, facilitation and direction) across populations of students” (p. 7). They speculated that the “lack of consensus” might be a relic of the student sample, but concluded that describing teaching presence with three dimensions continued to have merit.

Morgan (2011) took a different perspective, suggesting that teaching presence as described in the CoI did not take into consideration all of the aspects of teaching, especially in light of the dynamics of the role. Decision making, for example, was not considered, nor was the importance of previous teacher history and experiences. Morgan’s work may have some bearing on the current study, especially considering the experience levels of the teachers who participated. Jennifer, for example, described her need to manage her workload and chose methods of utilizing the LMS to help her reduce daily work.

Ambrose et al. (2010) suggested that most higher education teachers are not taught pedagogical skills in school, which leaves them to decide how to teach from their own experiences. Some teachers may find their previous experiences adequate to help them deal with the changed skill sets required online, but those who do not may have negative perceptions about workload, online collaboration, and student self direction, all of which are suggested in the literature to help reduce the negative perceptions about online work (Ambrose et al., 2010; Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Bembenutty, 2009; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011).

### **Responding to the Research Questions**

In this section of the chapter, responses to the two research questions posed in this study will be addressed. To facilitate reading the responses, each question will be addressed

separately using the categories from the findings to support the discussion. The two research questions being addressed are:

- How do excellent online teachers develop presence in online courses?
- What are the factors they associate with the development of presence in their online courses?

**Research Question One.** The intent of research question one was to understand the plans or processes participants used to encourage presence in their online courses. From the seven categories that described the findings, four categories were associated with this research question. They were course development, course facilitation, assessment, and teacher workload management. The categories are described in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Categories Associated with Research Question One**

Category	Description
Course Development	Course development includes planning and organizing the course site and syllabus, but also requires consideration of other student needs including course navigation and workload requirements
Course Facilitation	Course facilitation describes processes associated with communication, feedback, engagement with students, and providing encouragement.
Assessment	Assessment describes processes and procedures used by participants to encourage quality work, while meeting students' needs for flexibility.
Teacher Workload Management	Teacher workload management describes the ways in which teachers might utilize the LMS or class structure to balance their work requirements.

The need to plan online courses carefully was an important finding in this study. Planning and organization are common in any formal learning situation (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), but planning for presence takes an additional level of consideration (Garrison, 2003; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2009; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008;

Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). The participants described how they carefully planned and organized their courses so that navigation, expectations, and instructions were easily understandable and accessible to students. During their planning they considered the students' workload and how it would be managed and evaluated, and balanced their own workloads to create the best environment possible.

Jennifer's process for developing a course included a methodical evaluation of the workload and course calendar. Relying on her experience with the course and the LMS, Jennifer was able to predict what communications would be needed by students and when. By taking the time to carefully consider the students' needs throughout the course, she planned, created, and posted several emails and announcements and scheduled them for later delivery, saving some day-to-day work during course facilitation.

Joe took the time to plan for the course by learning about student needs. He said that he sought information from students to help him know their experience levels and better understand their needs, but also to facilitate a dialogue with them. Joe said he preferred to be an engaged teacher, and wanted his students to interact with each other by engaging in learning activities. Engaging with students can increase the numbers of interactions among them and between students and teachers (Dykman & Davis, 2008b; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). Additionally, Joe shared two experiences he had as a student, comparing and contrasting an engaged teacher and a disengaged teacher. The engaged teacher helped him learn because Joe felt like the topic was important, whereas the other felt distant. Joe said,

You would hear from them at the beginning the course, you would get your papers graded, you would hear from them at the end of the course. Then you would have

those teachers who were engaged. They were in the course, responding to students, and that's the kind of online instructor I choose to be, one that is engaged.

Grace described a methodical approach to managing her work week. Each module began on Monday. The module was introduced to students through a video she created during the planning stages of the course. Each video was seven to ten minutes long, which she described as an appropriate length based on her research, and explained to students what the expectations were for the week. She said that students were held accountable for opening the videos. As each week began she would watch the posts for the first few days to see if there was engagement. Midweek she would remind students that posts were due or would make suggestions to those who were running late. At the end of the week she would post the answers to the scenarios they had been discussing for the week and would make any final comments necessary to summarize the module.

Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2009) developed the CoI because “we needed to connect the human issues around online, text-based communication, the teaching issues associated with the use of this model of education, and the overall cognitive goals of this (and any) graduate program” (p. 5). The framework was intended to provide structure to help understand a new approach to teaching. The teachers in this study described needing the same thing. None of the teachers described any formal training that helped them understand presence, but all recognized that what they were doing instinctively to resolve the problems in their courses ultimately led to environments that encouraged presence.

There is information available in the literature about how to create online courses (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b); many describe ways in which presence might be encouraged (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; 2009; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). Some of the participants undoubtedly researched online teaching and, like

Grace, found ways in which they might improve their practice. As Ambrose et al. (2010) describe, higher education teachers are not taught pedagogy and often teach as they prefer to learn themselves. None of the participants described training that helped them achieve presence online; instead, presence seemed to be a side effect of the plans and processes they had implemented to make the online learning environment a success.

**Research Question Two.** Research question two asked, “What are the factors they associate with the development of presence in their online courses?” The findings associated with the second research question described the specific techniques participants believed increased presence in their online courses. The categories associated with research question two are described in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Categories Associated with Research Question Two**

Category	Description
Teachers as Learners	Teachers as learners refers to the practice of reflection and revision that participants engaged in to develop their online teaching techniques
Learning Relationships	Learning relationships describes the ways in which the teachers reached out to students to encourage learning and collaboration
Student Self Direction	Student self direction refers to the ways in which the participants encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning

The overarching theme of the findings associated with the second research question might be entitled, “Teachers as Learners.” Most of the participants shared with me that my request to participate in the study caused them to reflect on their online course experiences and the transitions they had been through. Some had not considered the importance of presence in their courses until they began thinking about participating in this study.

Shayne, Glen, Mitch, and Jennifer revealed how their online practice had changed over time as they learned through trial and error what worked and what did not. Their willingness and motivation to change was a key factor in their successes online, as was their diligence in continuing to learn. Grace and Ellie described how they learned to share their personalities through the written word and through videos, and to encourage trust with students they may never meet face-to-face. Ellie described the development of community as “making a sterile place a community.” In doing all of these things, they demonstrated they were willing to become learners themselves.

Self direction is something that happens in all formal adult learning environments (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), but recognizing when it is occurring online requires additional understanding. Mitch, for example, explained that he “had to learn and gain appreciation for the class dynamics...if you’re getting good comments and good counter knowledge then just stay out of the way.” Mitch was describing how he had learned to recognize when students were demonstrating their ability to self direct the learning process online.

In addition to recognizing self direction in students, teachers also have to learn how to teach their online students to be self directing. Mitch described supporting students in their learning in two ways. He said he carefully describes what is expected of students, and provides examples of what he means by providing a bulleted list of what previously successful students have done in his classes. He says he is also very diligent about reading posts to help avoid students going too far off track from the week’s topic.

Ellie explained to me that students know that learning is up to them because she includes statements in her syllabus and course site that describe her expectations. She

supports them in their efforts by providing clear directions and engaging them through emails and postings, but ultimately what they learned was their responsibility.

Shayne and Jennifer described their requirements clearly in their syllabus and on their course sites, and helped students understand the importance of self direction by holding them accountable. Joe described how he included peer reviews as part of his grading process. He said that students were provided with a rubric and some instructions on what was expected, and then they exchanged papers and provided feedback to each other. Through that process he said that student writing and teamwork improved. Maria said that empowering students to take responsibility for holding their peer groups accountable during a collaborative activity increased their learning and satisfaction with the course. Their final reflection paper and course evaluations were positive, which she believed demonstrated their support of the process.

It was out of scope for this study to ask teachers about their teaching approaches in the classroom, but Jennifer and Shayne each described a little about how they adapted their understanding of teaching in the classroom to online. Jennifer said that her classes were lecture-based, which she described as including very little student-to-student interaction. Online she realized students were not getting enough from their textbook reading, so she described how she engaged students in discussions and shared her lecture notes with them to aid their understanding about related topics. Shayne includes a collaborative project in his course. In the classroom, he says he meets with students to get them started and monitors their progress throughout the course. Online he was not able to meet with his students, so he adjusted the project to be student driven. He assigned team leaders and communicated regularly with the leads to ensure progress. He also extended the due dates for his online students, explaining to me that remote collaboration requires more time. These teachers

demonstrated how they adapted their classroom teaching experience to meet the needs of the online environment. Further, they described two other important factors, and that is the willingness to change and the persistence to keep trying.

Self direction may not immediately seem important to the development of presence online, but, as these teachers have described, developing presence takes into consideration the needs of the learner in the online environment (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Lehman & Conceição, 2010; Stavredes, 2011). Lacking collocation with teachers, students benefit from being self directed because of the independent nature of online learning. Further, self direction may improve students' sense of confidence, which can increase persistence and their sense of satisfaction with the online program (Artino, 2010; Bejerano, 2008).

The participants described the online environment as requiring different pedagogical, technical, and adaptive skills that were not included in their professional development training at their institutions. Jennifer mentioned that teachers who sought to remain current might have to proactively seek out training, something she thought not every busy faculty member could do. Professional development that describes and supports presence may be assistive to online teachers (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

#### **Chapter Four: Summary**

The purpose of chapter four was to describe the findings from this study. The seven categories that represented the findings were analyzed in terms of the conceptual framework; responses to the two research questions followed. Generally the participants described plans and processes they used to support their students as contributing to development of presence. They also described reflecting on their courses to learn how to improve their practice as a factor in their online successes. As Mitch said, "I think it [presence] is very important if



online is going to become what it has the potential to become. And we need to figure it out.” I hope this study has provided some new information that will help us “figure it out.”

From this point, I turn to chapter five. Chapter five concludes this study. In it I will reflect on the findings and draw some conclusions and attempt to make some actionable recommendations. In chapter five I will also share my reflections about this study.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

The purpose of chapter five is to draw conclusions and suggest actionable recommendations from the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The conclusions in this chapter are organized by the categories and listed in the same order as they were in the findings. The chapter will conclude with suggestions for future research and a reflective discussion about this study.

### **Course Development**

Planning and organization is described as important to online students and teachers (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b; Lee, Dickerson, & Winslow, 2012). Planning and organization are not new to education; face-to-face classes must also be planned and organized. Online, however, students anticipate being able to view the whole course at once in order to plan their time (Stavredes, 2011). Especially for self-directed students, due dates or materials that are difficult to find or a confusing array of activities and assignments can feel frustrating and demotivating. For students who are learning how to be good online students, a poorly planned or organized course can leave them feeling demotivated, incompetent, or confused.

One approach to organizing online courses is by modules, organized chronologically or by topic (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b). Each module should have a similar look and feel, meaning that items on each page should be located in the same place with fonts and pictures similar enough that students are not confused by the new appearance. In my experience, clearly identifying what needs to be done in each module with headers that make misunderstanding difficult can be helpful. For example, the headers might be “Read” with a description of that week’s reading assignment, or “Write” with a description of the essays due. Shayne described using a course overview page in the LMS for each module. The

course overview page lists the learning objectives and expectations for the module with links to assignments and activities to help students navigate the week's requirements. Whatever approach is identified, I would recommend that it be used consistently throughout the course to avoid student confusion. One student described to me her frustration with trying to find things in various parts of the LMS. The headings used made no sense to her, and changed each week. She said she spent considerable time each week just trying to figure out what was expected, let alone getting the work done. Her perception of the course and the teacher was very negative, which she said was included in feedback to her school.

### **Course Facilitation**

The participants in this study described ways in which they facilitated their courses to encourage engagement and collaboration. Group work was described as a form of collaboration that required planning and support, primarily because students may not be collocated. For example, Maria described how she accomplished collaboration with accountability online, by asking students to create a Code of Performance to which they held each other accountable. The students in the group were asked to use the code to have a discussion with anyone who was not meeting the expectations of the group. Maria described offering students the opportunity to expel a student from their team, with her approval, if the problem continued after a discussion. Finally, she used the code as a teaching tool to help students understand teamwork and assess their own leadership skills.

Maria's activity described a practical approach to facilitating collaborative activities online. The students were asked to collaborate but were given the tools necessary to make the activity a success. Maria oversaw the development of the activity, but once the code was in place, she asked students to use their team code to solve problems before coming to her. As of the interview, Maria said that none of her students had come to her to solve any

problems in their groups. She said the activity encouraged student self direction and increased accountability in the online classroom, both of which can create a sense of presence.

Presence is described in this study as the sense that someone is “real” on the other end of the technology. As counterintuitive as it may seem, teachers who want to achieve presence online may consider activities that engage students in managing themselves. To the student, the work done in collaboration with other students may make the online situation seem less distant, and may encourage self direction, which, as previously described, can lead to a positive online learning experience.

### **Assessment**

The findings in this study suggest that the teachers used assessment to encourage quality work, which is the same as many teachers in the face-to-face environment. Glen, for example, held students to high writing standards. Grace did the same, making it clear what was expected and then following through to encourage its achievement. According to Stavredes (2011), quality writing skills can support the development of online presence since nearly all interactions take place in writing. Having good writing skills facilitates a discussion that is well understood. It may also encourage interactions as students and teachers work together to achieve the quality goals set.

As Garrison (2003) described, the development of presence may also be encouraged by the use of assessment to encourage collaboration. Student-to-student and teacher-to-student engagement in activities is a component of presence (Stavredes, 2011) in that it encourages connection and a sense of community among the participants. Garrison (2003) described how assessment might be used to encourage collaboration if the grades were associated with the collaborative activities. In reviewing the syllabi I find statements that

indicate how grades are associated with weekly participation in forums, where they were used. Maria associated grades with the group work she assigned, including the Code of Performance document and the final reflective paper, but I found no indicators that the group work itself was assessed.

In light of this data, I think the participants have done a good job encouraging engagement through their assessment of weekly forums when they use them. To further encourage collaboration, teachers might consider assessing the collaborative experience itself. Papers completed by the team as a whole or by individual members that describe the collaborative experience might be appropriate for assessment. Peer reviews of the team's collaborative efforts or team evaluations of the process might also be appropriate (Stavredes, 2011).

### **Student Self Direction**

The literature suggests that online learners need to be self directing sooner than their classroom counterparts, primarily because of the asynchronous nature of the online learning experience and the physical distance that exists between the participants (Bejerano, 2008; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The participants in this study frequently mentioned the importance of student self direction and the methods they employed to encourage students to take responsibility for their own for learning.

I conclude from these findings that it is very important for online learners to take responsibility for their own learning. I believe that students construct their own meaning from the information provided in any venue, so the issue for me becomes supporting students to learn *how they* will learn online, and to develop the discipline to be successful. For teachers who do not subscribe to the same perspective about learning, it may seem the

problem with encouraging student self direction is that the teacher is not able to provide adequate instruction online.

In light of the data, I think teachers can best address this question during their planning for online courses. Before starting to write anything down, I would recommend that online teachers reflect on what they believe constitutes good teaching, and how their beliefs can be translated into the online environment. For some teachers, providing a supportive structure that helps students discover what they can learn may seem enough. The course would be organized and well documented so that the student can find what they need. With this approach, it would be important to provide students with a way to ask questions either through the LMS or through email. Equally important is that they receive a response quickly.

Other teachers may think that providing supportive scaffolding for students might not be enough. These teachers may feel it important to create structures that direct students to activities and materials associated with the week's topic, limiting access through the LMS to other materials. This approach may be useful, but I believe there are two associated risks. First, many online students seek online learning because they want or need the flexibility it provides (Noel-Levitz, 2012). I believe that self-directed learners are intrinsically motivated and have generally found what it takes for them to be successful online learners. The explanations of activities and assignments in online courses must support them in completing their work, and they generally move through the activities and assignments at their own pace, within the course guidelines. If the instructor feels it is important to create a structure that limits their self direction, the self-directed student may feel stifled in their learning. I witnessed that happening to a student who struggled with a teacher who felt the need to control access to each weekly module. The student felt frustrated and demotivated by the

approach to teaching. The complaint that came to me nearer the end of the class described the process as frustrating but also included a concern about the teacher's credibility, a very serious concern.

Second, is the issue of teacher workload. When a teacher creates a structured online course that is meant to control the student's pace through the modules, there is a possibility that the course will increase the teacher's workload (Bates & Sangrá, 2011). I would recommend that teachers consider ways to balance their workload as they create the structure and flow of their online courses.

### **Teachers as Learners**

Ambrose, et al. (2010) suggested that teachers may not have realized that online teaching was different than face-to-face teaching when they first ventured into the online environment. The participants in the study were experienced, and they clearly said they understood the differences. They mentioned that having training or learning about online teaching accessible was important, especially if they also had research and teaching load requirements. Jennifer said that teachers have to be proactive in seeking their own training if they want to be good at creating presence online. Her concern with that approach was the time required to find the training.

In light of the data I believe that technical training to learn how to use the LMS and other online tools is important. The training, like the technology, would require regular updating. I also recommend training that allows teachers to understand how they can adapt their teaching practice for the online environment. But, more than that, I believe that the best approach for learning how to be a good online teacher is a peer mentoring program. I believe in collaborative teaching, where teachers with a variety of teaching skills come together to

share their experiences and help each other. Similar to what has been shared by the participants in this study, there is value in hearing what others have already learned.

### **Learning Relationships**

Being engaged in learning activities with students is considered a best practice in online teaching (Dykman & Davis, 2008a, 2008b; Fish & Wickersham, 2009). Engaging with students in learning relationships can increase teacher satisfaction, and can encourage students to think deeper and feel part of the learning environment, which has been described as supportive of student persistence (Artino, 2010; Bejerano, 2008; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

I agree that engagement in the learning process can be beneficial to both students and teachers. Online engagement with students is not restricted to the LMS, but may also include email or video discussions. As Shayne pointed out, many students have become accustomed to 24X7 availability in the technical world. In that environment, I think teachers have to be cognizant of the boundaries they need to establish to avoid work overload.

As I reflect on the findings in this study, I have learned something very important about the differences between the development of learning relationships and the development of presence online. I realize now that I assumed that online learning relationships and presence were synonymous. My experiences online have generally been limited to classes of 20 or fewer students. In that environment, the development of learning relationships is accessible and preferable, at least for me. For faculty members who work with large class sizes or who tend to avoid learning relationships with students, the development of online learning relationships may not be possible or preferable. Yet, when I spoke with these teachers, they all described ways in which they sought to develop presence online.

Reviewing the literature, part of presence is immediacy, which is described as a measure of



psychological distance (Gunawardena, 1995). If students believe the psychological distance has been overcome, then the benefits to them may exist.

With this revelation, I have come to understand that the development of learning relationships may be supportive of the development of presence, but may not necessarily be required. The findings in this study suggest that presence involves purposeful engagement with students, whether it is through the development of learning relationships or by using the features in the LMS. For example, all of the teachers in this study described welcoming students into their online courses through memos, announcements, or letters. As students replied to the welcome, each teacher responded to help the students feel at home. When it came to day-to-day contact, however, there were differences in the ways they worked to develop presence. Jennifer created standard or “canned” responses to questions she was routinely asked. Shayne kept in touch via email, but did not engage students in forums. Ellie responded to every student’s forum posts via email, just to let them know that she was there. She also started each week with a personal email, sharing stories and pictures from her life.

Each teacher, in their own way, described how they sought to develop presence with their students; some focused on limiting the psychological distance (Gunawardena, 1995) to increase presence, while others developed learning relationships by being present with their students. It is possible that the teacher-student learning relationships in the traditional sense might not form for all online, but the findings suggest that if students perceive their teacher’s presence, that may be enough to support their learning.

As I reflected on the findings from this study, I realized that the desire to create presence online is one factor that can increase the perception that the online workload is greater. Presence, at its core, is the sense that parties who are communicating remotely are present with each other, or communicating as though they are in the same physical location.

To accomplish that, even with today's greatly improved technologies, takes work. It takes planning, organization, writing, engagement, persistence, and a number of other factors that have been raised in this study. One of the benefits of creating presence is thought to be improved learning, which is generally accepted to be the goal of higher education. For teachers, it is reasonable and likely expected that they engage with students to help them learn, but to some teachers developing relationships may come at too great a cost. Training teachers about what presence is and how it can be achieved is important, but mentoring teachers to understand the online environment and to balance the workload seems equally important.

### **Teacher Workload Management**

Participants in this study shared with me that online teaching is more work than face-to-face teaching. For some, the workload was perceived to be higher during planning and development. That was generally true for those who did not require written assignments or routinely engage in student postings. For those who engaged in postings and included written assignments throughout the course, the workload was thought to be higher in terms of day-to-day work.

As a practitioner, I have taught both online and in face-to-face venues. For me, there is additional work required online, but, more than that, it is different. For me, online teaching seems to flow best when the course is fully planned and posted before it begins. I also find that students will become more self directing if I engage with them frequently in online discussions and announcements in the early days of the course. The program in which I teach assesses student results primarily through writing, therefore providing students with clear directions and staying in close contact with them helps me to manage the workload. As the participants suggested, I provide students with enough feedback to understand how they

are doing and I provide it quickly so they can learn to trust that I have not drifted away and that I am engaged in the learning process with them.

Jennifer suggested that additional professional development opportunities to help teachers become better online teachers might be appropriate. I believe that professional development that encourages teachers to learn how to integrate technology into the learning process instead of adding it to the current teaching workload is beneficial (Bates & Sangrá, 2011; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

I also believe that teaching online is different and does require a different pedagogy. Providing teachers with an understanding of how the pedagogy is different could be beneficial, but I do not support a fully structured approach to all aspects of online teaching. According to Ambrose et al. (2010) teachers often teach in ways that reflect how they like to learn. I believe that speaks to the passion for learning teachers often have. Instead of structured must-use pedagogies, I would recommend that professional development programs be structured to help teachers discover who they are as teachers (Cranton, 2001), and then provide them with information about how to adapt various teaching approaches to online teaching. With that information, the teachers will be able to apply what they learn about online teaching to their teaching practice. Students benefit from a consistent look and feel in the LMS and course site policies that encourage the use of best practices, but I also think they thrive when the passions of their teachers are allowed to come through. If presence is felt as Lehman and Conceição (2010) describe as “the result of the dynamic interplay of thought, emotion, and behavior between the private world and the shared world” (p. 11) then balancing the needs of the students for adequate structure with the teacher’s need to choose an approach that is appropriate for them will further the development of presence.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

There are some suggestions I might make to future researchers who want to explore the notion of presence further. This study was limited to undergraduate teachers who were experienced in online teaching. That limitation was imposed because I thought there might be differences between undergraduate and graduate teachers when it came to the factors associated with developing presence in their courses. As I gathered data, however, I had the opportunity to speak with a teacher who teaches only graduate students online. As we spoke, I realized that the issues he was facing were the same as those I was gathering from the undergraduate faculty. It may be beneficial to study undergraduate and graduate faculty together to see if that one experience bears out.

Additionally, this study was limited to the teachers' perspectives. That limitation was imposed because I thought teachers and students would have very different perceptions about teaching and learning, and that it might be difficult to understand presence if both were included. One of the biggest benefits of presence, though, is that it may increase student learning, a goal of most teachers. Perhaps an interesting approach would be to study an intact course from both the teacher's and the students' perspectives.

The participants were identified as excellent by their deans, and I can certainly see why they were identified that way. After completing this study, I can attribute their success to attentiveness to their students' needs and their commitment to creating a good learning environment. As has been described throughout this study, presence refers to the psychological connection we can achieve with others through technology. Caring enough about the learning environment to make the changes these teachers have made, I believe they achieved presence. Whether that makes them excellent or not, is perhaps another topic for future research.

**Final Thoughts**

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to complete this work. I believe in higher education and believe that it should be available to all. Without the availability of online educational opportunities, many could be left out. The notion of presence needs to be discussed to help teachers find ways, within their own styles of teaching, to achieve the connection with their students some teachers report is missing online. As I have learned from this study, there is no one right way to be present with online students. Perhaps seeking advice from experienced teachers or creating collaborative groups of teachers should be considered a best practice when it comes to achieving online teaching presence. I know that, for me, this experience has informed my practice.

I have also come to appreciate different teaching styles. I recently attended a student gathering where a student said, “Online teaching requires a particular approach and personality.” From my perspective, I believe that there is neither one particular approach nor one particular personality that can be successful online. I believe that teachers can be successful online if they seek to support student learning, whatever that means for them. That, for me, is the bottom line.

Finally, in this study I asked two research questions, seeking to understand the participants’ perceptions about what presence is, and then trying to understand the key factors that they believed created presence in their online courses. In reality, I think developing presence, like all human interactions, is complex and not easily understood. The two research questions yielded findings that I thought were beneficial, but I do not think the concepts can be separated. As Lehman and Conceição (2010) describe, presence is dynamic. As a dynamic, it has to be expected that a variety of concepts will blend to create

the result. I think that has happened with this study. I hope it has provided some food for thought and some ideas for action about how to achieve presence online.

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**Appendix A****University of Idaho Office of Research Assurances Approval Letter****University of Idaho**

February 6, 2013

**Office of Research Assurances****Institutional Review Board**

PO Box 443010

Moscow ID 83844-3010

Phone: 208-885-6162

Fax: 208-885-5752

irb@uidaho.edu

To: Kroth, Michael  
Cc: Casey, Rae  
  
From: Traci Craig  
Chair, University of Idaho Institutional Review Board  
University Research Office  
Moscow, ID 83844-3010

Your modification request has been approved.

Modification Requested: 01/24/13

Modification Approved: 02/04/13

Title: 'Developing Presence in Online Undergraduate Courses'

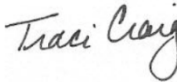
Please note that this does not change your approval period.

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On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the proposed protocol modification for the above-named research project has been approved as offering no significant risk to human subjects.

A modification **does not** change your approval period. Should there be significant changes in the protocol for this project, it will be necessary for you to resubmit the protocol for review by the Committee.

Thank you for submitting your modification request.



Traci Craig

## **Appendix B**

### **Dean Invitation Letter**

My name is Rae Casey. I am a doctoral student at the University of Idaho. I am entering the dissertation phase of my studies at the University of Idaho. I will soon be conducting a qualitative study during which I will seek to understand the factors that experienced online faculty members believe are important to the development of presence in their online teaching. I am writing you because I am hoping to interview faculty known to their deans as excellent online teachers, and who have at least two years experience (at least four courses) teaching undergraduate students online.

If you believe some of your faculty meet the criteria and might be willing to participate in this study, please provide me by return email their names and email addresses. I will in turn write the potential participants you identify and ask if they would be willing participate in the study, mentioning your name as my first point of contact.

This protocol has been certified as exempt by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (Protocol 12-078). I will seek additional permissions through your school's approval process before I proceed with the study.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns, I would be happy to discuss them with you via email, by phone, or in a face-to-face meeting.

Best regards,

Rae Casey, Ph.D. Candidate  
[case7629@vandals.uidaho.edu](mailto:case7629@vandals.uidaho.edu)  
208-573-1963

## **Appendix C**

### **Recruitment Letter**

My name is Rae Casey. I am a doctoral student at the University of Idaho.

I am entering the dissertation phase of my studies at the University of Idaho. In the winter of 2012 and spring of 2013 I will be conducting a qualitative study during which I will seek to understand the factors that experienced online faculty members believe are important to the development of presence in their online teaching. The reason for this memo is to request your participation in the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses. Basic qualitative studies seek to understand participant's experiences through their stories. People who are invited to participate in this study are, like you, experienced higher education professors who have at least two years of experience teaching undergraduate students online (at least four courses), and have been identified by their deans or department chairs as an excellent online teacher. The results of this study will benefit experienced faculty as they reflect on their online teaching experiences, new faculty members as they learn how to teach online, and will inform professional development opportunities.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in one or two interviews and provide a syllabus for review. The first interview will be scheduled for 60 minutes, with a follow up interview arranged if needed. The interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or via technology, and will be digitally recorded. The syllabus would be kept confidential (you may remove any identifying information from them before providing them, if you like) and used during data analysis to provide depth to the study. Once all of the interviews are complete, I will send you a copy of the narrative for your review.

If you agree to participate, I will communicate with you via whatever means you prefer to arrange for an interview time. I will email you the interview questions once we agree on an interview time so that you can review them prior to our meeting. This protocol has been certified as exempt by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (Protocol 12-078).

I appreciate your consideration of this request. If you are willing to participate, please let me know by return email. If you have any questions or concerns, I would be happy to discuss them with you via email, by phone, or in a face-to-face meeting.

## **Appendix D**

### **Informed Consent**

The University of Idaho Institutional Review Board has certified this project as exempt (protocol 12-078).

The following information is provided so that you can decide whether or not to participate in the present study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and, if you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time without any impact to you.

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses. Basic qualitative studies seek to understand participant's experiences through their stories. People who are invited to participate in this study are, like you, experienced higher education professors who have at least two years of experience teaching undergraduate students online (have taught at least four online courses), and have been identified by their deans or department chairs as an excellent online teacher. The results of this study will benefit experienced faculty as they reflect on their online teaching experiences, new faculty members as they learn how to teach online, and will inform professional development opportunities.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to provide data in two ways. The primary source of data will be interviews. Initially I will schedule a 60 minute interview with you at your convenience. If additional questions are raised, a follow up interview may be requested. During the interview I will take notes and record the session so that a transcript can be generated from our discussion to facilitate analysis. Additionally, I will request that you provide a current copy of a syllabus that you use during your best online course. The syllabus, like all of the materials, will be kept confidential. If you prefer, you can remove all identifying names from the documents before you provide them. The purpose of the syllabus is to provide insight into ways in which you develop presence in online courses. After all of the interviews are completed, a copy of the narrative will be



sent to you for comment. This protocol has been certified as exempt by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (Protocol 12-078).

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to opt out at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits. No physical harm will come to you from participating in this study. If you are uncomfortable with any of the questions asked, you can choose not to respond to them individually or opt out of the study at that point with no repercussions.

Your identity will not be disclosed if you choose to participate in this study. Pseudonyms will be used in place of names, locations, or businesses or any other identifiers that might identify you. The recordings of our conversations will be destroyed after the analysis is complete. The typewritten transcripts of our conversations will be kept electronically in a password-protected PC. Any paper copies will be kept in a locked location.

If you have any questions or concerns before or after the study, please do not hesitate to contact the investigator or faculty sponsor

**Investigator**

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Student, University of Idaho  
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**Faculty Sponsor**

Dr. Michael Kroth  
University of Idaho  
Department of Leadership & Counseling  
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Ph. 208-364-4024

I have read the Informed Consent Form and agree to participate in this study. By signing this form I am voluntarily participating in this research project. I understand that I can choose not to answer any of the questions asked or opt out of the study simply by stating "I no longer wish to participate" at any time without penalty, loss of benefits, or any impacts to relationships. I will receive a copy of this form so that I can refer to it during the interview.

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### Interview Guide

The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses. Basic qualitative studies seek to understand participant's experiences through their stories. The responses of participants to the following questions will form the narrative for this study. Thank you once again for agreeing to participate. The following interview guide will be used during the interview to guide our discussion.

#### Definitions

- **Factors** in this study relate to the activities or actions taken to encourage the development of presence in your online courses.
- **Online** courses are those that are conducted fully online and that include limited or no face-to-face learning activities.
- **Presence** is the ability to relate to students and others online as though they were present in the same space instead of being separated by technology. It is sometimes referred to as the ability to “forget” that the technology interface exists, or the ability to project one's personality into an online community in order to fully engage.

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today. Before we begin, I have a few demographic questions. Would you mind telling me how many years you have been teaching in higher education? How many at this institution? How many of those years have you been teaching online?

Thank you. The rest of the questions posed relate directly to the development of presence in your online courses.

1. When you think about developing presence in your online courses, what comes to mind?
2. In your experience, what factors do you consider when you determine the content for your online courses?
3. What factors do you think best support the right climate for the development of presence in your online courses?
4. In what ways do you support discourse in your online courses?
5. In your experience, what kinds of things best encourage the development of student/faculty relationships or student/student relationships online?

6. As you reflect on your experiences as a student or a teacher, is there one experience that stands out in your mind as a great example of presence in an online or distance course? Can you please tell me about that?
7. Along the same line, was there one experience that you can identify where presence was missing or poorly done? Can you please tell me about that experience?
8. Are there any other factors related to the development of presence in your courses that we haven't discussed that you would like to add?

Thank you for your time. Once I have completed all of the interviews, I will send you a copy of the narrative for your review. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me any time at [case7629@vandals.uidaho.edu](mailto:case7629@vandals.uidaho.edu).

Sincerely,

Rae

# Syllabus Review Worksheet

Overview of the Course	Yes	No
<b>Does the syllabus being reviewed include:</b>		
A description of the purpose of the course		
Clearly written learning outcomes/objectives		
Expectations for participation (reading, writing, quizzes, lectures, etc.)		
Descriptions of acceptable methods and types of communications		
An explanation of how students can communicate privately with instructor		
A description of any term that may be unfamiliar to the student		
Instructions for students on how to enroll or access the course site		
Any information about other forms of communication besides text, such as podcasts, videos, recordings, etc. that will be included in the course		
Information about optional materials, if any, and how they may be accessed		
Is the course organized by date, topic, etc. to help create a logical flow (describe)		
Is there a schedule of due dates in syllabus		
Are any questions left unanswered after reading the syllabus?		
Notes:		
<b>Development of Presence</b>	Yes	No
<b>Does the syllabus being reviewed include:</b>		
A welcome from the teacher		
Statements emphasizing the importance of engagement or communication		
Statements that encourage collaboration (general)		
Evidence of learning activities to encourage student-to-student interactions		
Evidence that the teacher is accessible to students		
Evidence of a process for consistent and supportive feedback		
Notes:		

This form was developed from information in the Quality Matters Rubric Standards 2011 – 2013 edition ([www.QMprogram.org](http://www.QMprogram.org)) and related literature.

## Appendix G

### Detailed Listing of Codes and Categories

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Purpose Statement</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to understand the factors that excellent online faculty members perceive as important to the development of presence in their online courses.</p>	
Category	Codes
Course Development	<p><b>Content:</b> No busywork--focus on relevance</p> <p><b>Planning:</b> Course planning is essential; must plan for engagement; skill building online is harder; understanding student demographics</p> <p><b>Organized:</b> Be methodical; modularize; sequential; students want efficiency</p> <p><b>Use of technology:</b> No forums; uses screen casts regularly; uses technology to improve communications; uses video conferencing</p>
Course Facilitation	<p><b>Communication:</b> Ongoing email communication throughout course; welcome letters; introductions; reminder memos; shares teaching philosophy with students</p> <p><b>Community:</b> Community is important for learning; teacher as a member of the learning community</p> <p><b>Group work:</b> Allow students extra time to work together when all directions are written; encourage collaboration; group work to deliver something; peer reviews</p> <p><b>Student engagement:</b> Learn from each other; learning takes place through interaction; student engagement is important; student's thoughts are being read by others</p>
Assessment	<p><b>Accountability:</b> Be flexible, but hold accountable; flexibility with accountability; students should turn in their best work</p> <p><b>Critical thinking:</b> Ask students the right questions; challenge students by asking the right questions; critical thinking is expected; groups encourage depth of thought; posts must represent critical thinking</p> <p><b>Quality:</b> Provide lots of feedback; set the bar high; quality writing is expected; students should be proud of their work; student success is measured by changed lives; teachers matter to students; watch for low engagement</p>
	<p><b>Online awareness:</b> Considers adding videos in weekly modules; considers adding an overview page for weekly modules; online teaching is unique; technology is getting better for online; stays current with technology</p>

Teachers as Learners	<p><b>Teacher reflection:</b> Can perfect online teaching; need to find ways for students to post earlier; students have learned how to be more self directing; teachers need to keep trying – persistence is important</p> <p><b>Teaching strategies:</b> Fast turnaround time; includes various teaching approaches for different learning styles; need more creativity in online teaching – more hands on use grading to encourage engagement; struggles to create dialogue online</p>
Learning Relationships	<p><b>Models behaviors:</b> Encourages trust and sharing by modeling behaviors; teacher transparency-- I'm not always right</p> <p><b>Relationships:</b> Add personality into online; encourage learning relationships; include pictures in emails; know students; let students know you're present; personality is missing online</p> <p><b>Respect:</b> Students are adults and they should be treated that way</p> <p><b>Teacher engagement:</b> Being there for students; facilitate the feeling that a real person is on the other end; I engage with students at least twice a day; make sure students know I am there; "pings" students who don't engage; regular contact with students; teacher stays with students; teacher commitment; teacher presence is important; presence is connecting with students; making a sterile place a community</p>
Student Self Direction	<p><b>Clear Direction:</b> All directions have to be clearly written; clearly written syllabus; consistency when describing writing assignments is important; provide explicit instructions; provide LMS navigation tips in syllabus; set clear expectations; set tone</p> <p><b>Forum discussions:</b> Learning occurs through interaction; monitors, but doesn't engage in forums; stay out of good discussions; students engaged in forums student reflection is encouraged in forums</p> <p><b>Self direction:</b> Empowers students to learn; learning is through discovery; students are told that learning is up to them</p>
Teacher Workload Management	<p><b>Workload management:</b> Canned posting responses; class is structured for efficiency; previously written emails are scheduled for future delivery; uses technology to manage workload</p>