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Understanding Hispanic Women's Emotional and Social Presence Experiences: Case Studies of Three Undergraduate Online Learners

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UNDERSTANDING HISPANIC WOMEN'S EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL PRESENCE

EXPERIENCES: CASE STUDIES OF THREE UNDERGRADUATE ONLINE LEARNERS

by

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"UNDERSTANDING HISPANIC WOMEN'S EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL PRESENCE EXPERIENCES: CASE STUDIES OF THREE UNDERGRADUATE ONLINE LEARNERS," a Doctoral research project prepared by ANGEL KRAUSE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe how Hispanic women experience emotional and social presence in a fully-online program, as described within the Community of Inquiry framework. It focused on how participants articulated what it felt like to be their real selves during online learning experiences. This multiple case study consisted of a series of two individual interviews with three participants. The first phase of data analysis consisted of observational and theoretical memos, which focused on how participants described their emotional and social presence related to curriculum content, structure, or format. This was followed by a within-case and cross-case analysis to derive themes. Three findings emerged as elements that significantly affected participants' ability to be themselves. They included a) the ways professors honored students' assets, b) open access to other students/cohort and the instructor, and c) consistency in course design and facilitation. Course content and classmates minimally impacted the participants' ability to be their real selves during learning; the instructor was the single most influential factor in the social and emotional presence experienced. Implications for future practice, including recommendations for online instructors and universities who offer online courses, indicate the importance of honoring students' assets, open access to instructors, and intentional course design and facilitation.

Acknowledgements

Sometimes in not knowing where to begin, you just begin. This is how my journey into higher education started as a first-generation college student, and later as a faculty member. Through each beginning I knew that it was my lord and savior Jesus Christ who directed my path, challenging me beyond where my feet would take me. It is my desire that in all I do I point others to Christ. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

My sincerest thanks go out to all of my colleagues, especially those who shared my Ed.D. experience with me. Whether you introduced me to the program, encouraged me that I could do it, or lived the residency alongside me, I am grateful. To all my professors, thank you for standing with me, and for me, in this process and pointing to faithful stewardship of time and talents. To my committee, which guided me through a powerful experience of listening and learning, thank you for your hours and hours of time and encouragement. Susanna, thank you for believing in me from day one of residency and "pushing" me forward.

Finally, this journey would not have been possible without the support of my family. Bailey, Addilyn, and Sydnee, thank you for sharing your mom during these last years, and I pray that you, too, follow the Lord's calling in your life, pursuing your mission. To the most supportive, loving, and God-fearing man I have ever known, thank you, Bradley, for being on this journey with me. I am excited to see where the Lord continues to guide us!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Cognition and emotion have often been viewed as unconnected to each other for the larger portion of Western thought (Greenspan & Benderly, 1997). Viewing thinking and feeling as unrelated to each other led to learning theories developed that were void of considering how emotions impact the teaching and learning process. Theories espoused by Plato, Descartes, Hegel, and Kant separated cognition and emotion. Greenspan and Benderly (1997) questioned this historical dichotomy through research focused on the mind's emotional architecture and its role in shaping intellect. More recent studies have yielded emerging understandings of the impact and relationships between emotions and learning (O'Regan, 2003; Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2004). Over the past twenty years, a surge in the study of emotions and learning has reformed and reframed the way researchers understand emotions and their influence on learning experiences (Zembylas, 2002, 2003). Emotions are strongly linked to task motivation and persistence, and therefore critical to inquiry (Artino & Jones, 2012; D. K. Meyer & Turner, 2007; Pekrun, 2005).

As research on emotions and their effect on learning increased, online learning as a learning modality of choice was also increasing. The number of students at the undergraduate and graduate level taking courses online has outpaced growth in face-to-face settings for the past decade with 28% of higher education students in the United States taking one or more courses in a fully online format in the 2014-2015 academic year, and 14.1% of students exclusively taking online courses (Allen, et al., 2016). By fall 2016, the number of students taking at least one course online increased to 31.6%; and exclusive enrollment in online courses rose to 14.9% of higher education students (Seaman et al., 2018). Now with over 6.3 million students taking online courses (Seaman et al., 2018), institutions and administrators have been slowly gaining confidence in the online learning modality. In institutes of higher education that offer online

learning, chief academic officers (CAOs) showed an increasingly positive perception that online course quality was as good as or better than face-to-face instruction, growing from 57.2% in 2003 to 71.4 % in 2015 (Allen et al., 2016). Increased confidence in online courses contributes positively to the support and development of online learning. And while resource allocation for online learning increased, emotions and their impact on learning were not always considered as new courses and programs were developed.

Technological advancements have helped birth and shape emerging online learning communities. A new era of teachers and learners have devoted themselves to a new form of education where participants never inhabit the same physical place, yet a sense of community and real social presence nevertheless exists (Anderson & Garrison, 1998; Tu, 2002). This new era of learning provides increased access to student populations who were previously excluded from traditional face-to-face settings due to barriers of time and distance (Kramarae, 2001). In particular, online learning is of great value to nontraditional students, especially female adult learners who have family responsibilities (Sullivan, 2001). As online learning has increased educational access for women, this has created what Kramarae (2001) describes as a "third shift." While work is considered the first shift, family and community commitments constitute the second shift. The third shift describes the time women spend completing education goals. Understanding how nontraditional female students with family responsibilities experience online learning is especially pertinent to community colleges as this has been the primary demographic profile for their institutions. Besides the development of online learning and emotion-informed pedagogy, another growth trend deserving consideration in this study is the population growth of Hispanic and Latina women. By mid-year 2017, the Hispanic population became the United States' largest ethnic minority, with 58.9 million or 18.1% of the total population. As of July

2019, an additional million Hispanics moved this number to 18.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019);

this figure is expected to drastically increase by the year 2050 to 26.6% of the total population

(Hernández et al., 2017). States with Hispanic populations nearing 30% or more of the total

population (i.e., Arizona, California, Texas, and New Mexico) will continue to see significant

growth during the next three decades. Educational data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau

includes graduation rates and percentage of population sub-groups that possess degrees. Figure

1.1 offers recent educational level comparisons across ethnic groups. While graduation rates for

Hispanics have increased at all educational levels from 2000-2016 (High School - 62.3 - 80.6%,

Bachelor's - 11.2 to 18.7%, Master's - 2.1 – 4.1%), the percentage of the Hispanic population

possessing associates, bachelors, master's, or professional degree continues to be the lowest at all

levels and across all ethnic groups reported (Hernández et al., 2017).
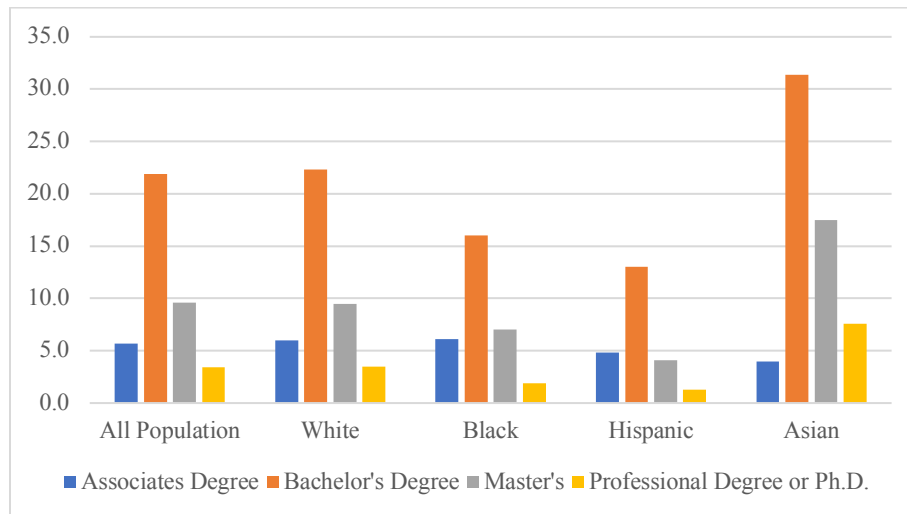
Figure 1.1. Percentage of Population Age 18 and Older Possessing a Degree
(*Educational Attainment in the United States*, 2018)

A report from Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) confirms this low

level of degree attainment, indicating only 17.2% of Hispanic adults have a bachelor's degree or

higher compared to 53.9% of Asians, 38.1% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 24.3% of African

Americans ("Hispanic Serving Institutions," 2019).

This troubling data has led the United States Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education to develop a Hispanic-Serving Institutions Division. Institutions of higher education can apply to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), allowing them access to many federal grants that expand educational opportunities for Hispanic Americans. The U.S. Department of Education defines HSI as an eligible institution (i.e., accredited, non-profit) with an undergraduate population that is at least 25% Hispanic (*U.S. Department of Education Definition of Hispanic-Serving Institutions*, 2019). In 2017-2018, Hispanic students accounted for 42.3% of all undergraduate students in California. With 170 HSIs, California boasted 33% of HSIs in the nation, including 40 public four-year and 33 private four-year institutes ("Hispanic Serving Institutions," 2019). These four-year institutions offer many fully online courses throughout their undergraduate experience and most/many offer fully online bachelor's degrees.

Gaining Understanding of Hispanic Female Online Learning Needs

For fully online programs to support student learning, they must work at understanding their student population in order to create coursework that advances student learning and accommodates their life circumstances. Kramarae (2001) describes how women returning to school via online learning often feel guilty and conflicted about the time it takes away from their children, leading to feelings of isolation and overwhelm. These feelings often lead Latino women to discontinue their educational pursuits. Müller (2008) found that engagement in the learning community facilitated women's persistence in pursuing online degrees. As the United States' Hispanic population continues to grow and women increasingly use online learning to further their education, understanding how to meet the specific needs of this student population is critical. One such study supporting this work was Plotts (2018), who looked at Hispanic female perceptions of social presence and found that cultural attributes built and maintained social

presence in online learning. She found Latino/a participants felt an obligation to assist others in the course who had the same ethnic background, which impacted who they responded to in online discussion forums. This study indicates how understanding the cultural framework of emotional and social presence in online learning from the Hispanic female perspective could inform insightful changes in teaching practice.

Background

Working with emotions in educational research brings significant challenges in terms of defining and measuring them (Rienties & Rivers, 2014). Studies significantly acknowledge the presence and significant impact of emotions in online learning (Artino & Jones, 2012; Tempelaar et al., 2012). Emotions are strongly linked to task motivation and persistence and are, therefore critical to learning (Artino & Jones, 2012; D. K. Meyer & Turner, 2007; Pekrun, 2005). Early research efforts to examine emotions in online learning focused on asynchronous discussion board analysis and e-chat transcripts (Gilmore & Warren, 2007; Swan et al., 2008; Zembylas, 2008). More recently, this research has grown in complexity alongside the development of shared collaboration spaces (i.e., Google Docs) and synchronous class sessions through the use of web-conferencing tools (Ke, 2010; Regan et al., 2012). This has enabled research that examines how emotions shift in real-time and with more collaborative student-student and student-teacher interactions (Rienties & Rivers, 2014; Young et al., 2014).

One of the most-used frameworks to guide understanding of how emotions exist in online educational experiences is the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). The framework creators purport that meaningful educational experiences are interactions between teachers and students, which include three essential elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2000).
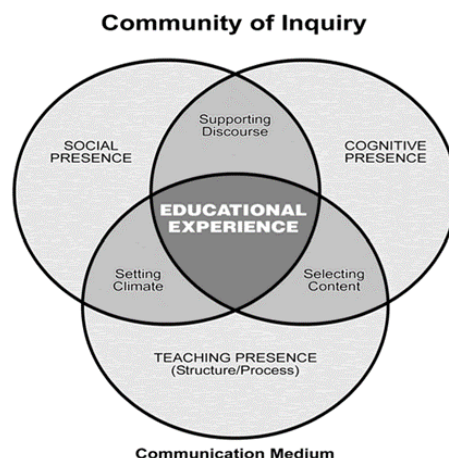
Figure 1.2. Elements of an Online Educational Experience (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 88)

The CoI framework and accompanying CoI survey has been well-accepted in the field, with research using the CoI survey increasing in recent years (Stenbom, 2018). Within the CoI framework, social presence is defined as "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 et al., 2000, p. 94). Emotions were initially acknowledged within the social presence element, but later emotional presence was proposed as a fourth presence in an expanded CoI framework developed by Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) (Figure 1.3). As researchers were examining emotions and learning on a broad scale, Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) found substantial evidence of emotional presence as a separate element in a CoI in online learning. Emotional presence existed in research before the work by Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (Akyol et al., 2009; Krish et al., 2010; Whiteside, 2015), but theirs was the first analysis to identify a distinctive operating emotional presence that could enhance the CoI framework. They define emotional presence as "the outward expression of emotions, affect, & feeling by individuals and among individuals in a Community of Inquiry, as they relate and interact with the learning technology, course content, learners, and the instructor" (p. 283). In this study, I used Cleveland-Innes and Campbell's framework, which includes

cognitive, emotional, social, and teaching presence, as the CoI+1, to distinguish it from the

original CoI framework.
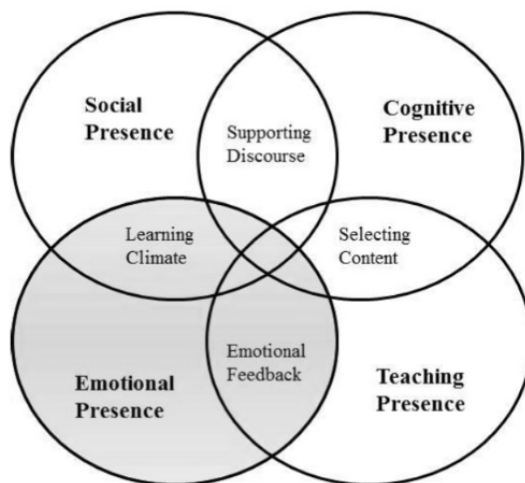
Figure 1.3. Adapted Community of Inquiry Framework CoI+1 (Rienties & Rivers, 2014, p. 5)

Emotional presence was also confirmed by Kozan and Caskurulu (2018) as a presence within the

CoI framework building on previous research (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012; Stenbom,

Hrastinski, et al., 2016; Stenbom, Jansson, et al., 2016).

As CoI+1 was being developed, a third framework based on CoI, titled the Relationship

of Inquiry (RoI) was developed, which demonstrated how cognitive, social, and teaching

presence not only exists within communities of inquiry but also within individual relationships of

inquiry (Stenbom, Hrastinski, & Cleveland-Innes, 2012). Thus, online learning occurs both at the

community level and through one-on-one interactions. RoI provides an additional lens to view

online learning interactions because it conceptualizes social presence and emotional presence as

existing in online learning experiences (Stenbom et al., 2012). Research using the RoI

framework (Stenbom, Hrastinski, et al., 2016; Stenbom, Jansson, et al., 2016) also confirmed

Rienties and Rivers' (2014) findings, showing significant evidence of emotional presence in online educational experiences fostering social presence.

In this study, CoI+1 and RoI frameworks informed plans for data collection and analysis procedures by orienting them to focus on emotional and social presence in community and within individual relationships for Hispanic women. These lenses enabled me to examine participants' descriptions of their online educational experiences more thoughtfully, and make distinctions between the larger community (CoI+1) and the 1:1 relationships (RoI) that comprised it. This meant, for instance, that students could experience low group cohesion and minimal open communication with the larger community but have a high-quality 1:1 RoI with the teacher. Students who are extrinsically motivated often gravitate toward the outskirts of a CoI, maintaining minimal involvement in the learning community (Rienties & Rivers, 2014). Others experience high group cohesion and connect with the larger community and participate in the emotional and social presence within the CoI+1 framework.

Educational Problem of Practice

Research on the role of online learners' emotions has been explored within CoI social presence, but additional research focusing on emotions or emotional presence within online learning communities is essential to guide useful online learning practices (Garrison, 2016; Zembylas et al., 2008). The recent addition of emotional presence to the CoI and the introduction of the RoI offers new territories for exploration. Understanding how students experience emotional and social presence as a part of a CoI, or a RoI, can help teachers develop a greater awareness of online learners' experience. This can in turn inform teaching practices and instructional design approaches. Plotts's (2018) findings confirm there are cultural norms and social behaviors which occur in student to student relationships, and within the teacher-to-

student relationship which are unique to Latino/a students. These perceptions influence their experiences, including motivation and learning behaviors. This study addresses the need to better understand this specific student population's online learning experiences given the growing Hispanic population in the United States, increased use of online learning, and the inequitable attainment of degrees for Hispanic across all levels (associates, bachelors, master's, professional and Ph.D.).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how Hispanic women experience emotional and social presence in a fully online program, focusing on how they articulated what it felt like to be their real selves during online learning experiences. The concept of projecting one's "real self," or "being real" during online learning emerged as a colloquialism that allowed me to effectively explore participants' experiences. A multiple case study approach consisting of a series of two personal individual interviews per participant enabled me to explore how Hispanic female online learners articulated this within a CoI and within RoIs. According to Yin (2018), a multiple case study approach is a preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over the events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within real-world context; this research situation met all of these criteria. Findings highlight how Hispanic women experienced emotional and social presence in their online learning and supported successful course completion and degree attainment. Their experiences have the potential to inform online program development, instructional course design and facilitation, and offer insight into professional development priorities for faculty in online settings.

Research Questions

Three grand-tour questions guided this case study: (a) How do Hispanic women describe their experience with emotional & social presence in online learning? (b) How do Hispanic women describe what affects their ability to be their "real self" during online learning? (c) How does the ability to be their "real self" impact their learning?

Significance of the Study

Since the creation of the CoI, there has been ongoing research using the framework, confirming it as an accepted and useful framework in the field (Stenbom, 2018). And while research focusing on how Hispanic students experience online learning has emerged in recent doctoral studies (Bingham, 2017; Galarza, 2017; Lobaina, 2016), a review of the literature indicates that only a few researchers (Ke, 2010; Pan & Lu, 2015; Plotts, 2018) have specifically looked at how Hispanic students' experience of emotional or social presence within the CoI framework. Through gaining a greater understanding of Hispanic females' emotional and social presence experiences, this study offers insights into how to support them as online learners. This study also provided an opportunity to document the experiences and give voice to Hispanic women who are nontraditional students participating in the "third shift," which puts them at risk of high attrition and low completion rates (Kramarae, 2001).

Definition of Terms

There are several terms used throughout this study. The definitions below frame the research and give a common language. I drew definitions for the online learning process from research and used current governmental agency definitions for other terms as needed.

Community of Inquiry (CoI). – The CoI framework purports that meaningful educational experiences are interactions between teachers and students, which include three

essential elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2000).

Emotional presence. Emotional presence is defined as "the outward expression of emotions, affect, & feeling by individuals and among individuals in a CoI, as they relate and interact with the learning technology, course content, learners, and the instructor" (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012, p. 283). This study relied on their definition because the focus on emotions as a fourth presence in online learning was pertinent to exploring how participants projected their real self.

Hispanic. Hernández et al. (2017) notes there are not clear preferences about the use of the terms "Latino" or "Hispanic." The U.S. Census Bureau and other research centers use the terms interchangeably or paired within the same category (i.e., Hispanic or Latino). Since this study focused on participants at HSIs, the term Hispanic was used throughout.

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The U.S. Department of Education defines an HSI as an eligible institution (i.e., accredited, non-profit) with an undergraduate population that is at least 25% Hispanic ("Definition of Hispanic-Serving Institutions," 2019).

Nontraditional student. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2019), a nontraditional student is a post-secondary student who is 25 years or older. Additionally, nontraditional students may additionally have dependents other than a spouse and/or work full time while enrolled. Online programs enroll nontraditional female students at a higher rate than any other student demographic. Nontraditional students historically have a lower rate of degree attainment than traditional students.

Online learning. For this study, online learning was broadly defined as learning that is designed to occur in a computer/technology-mediated setting with no face-to-face meetings. This

can include online learning experiences that are synchronous (i.e., live online sessions) and asynchronous, not occurring at the same time (i.e., discussion boards).

Relationship of Inquiry (RoI). This framework was developed by adapting CoI to one-on-one online coaching educational experiences. Cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence can also be analyzed in dyad relationships, also known as 1:1 relationship between teacher/student in online learning (Stenbom et al., 2012).

Social presence. Within the CoI framework, social presence is defined as "the ability of participants in a CoI to project themselves socially and emotionally, as 'real' people (i.e., their full personality), through the medium of communication being used" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 94).

Organization of Study

This research study is organized into five chapters, beginning with this introduction which includes the background for the study, research questions, and rationale. Chapter 2 contains a review of the relevant literature as it relates to the CoI framework and research on emotional and social presence in online learning. Additionally, literature around the topics of women and Hispanics and online learning was included due to relevancy to the research topic and questions. The methodological approach for this study is outlined in Chapter 3.

Understanding Hispanic students' learning experience is critical to developing more equitable instruction and content delivery approaches. The CoI, CoI+1, and RoI frameworks provide key insights into emotional and social presence as critical elements for successful online learning. Through an exploration of how Hispanic females experience emotional and social presence, this study offers critical insights into their experiences and their ability to be real in online spaces.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

A broad examination of the literature from the last eighteen years informed the current review and the development and revisions of the research questions. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) conceptual framework, which included cognitive, social, and teaching presence in online learning, served as an entry into the social presence concept outlined in Chapter 1 (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Stenbom, Hrastinski, & Cleveland-Innes, 2012). Key search terms for the review included: *social presence*, *emotional presence*, *emotions*, *online learning*, and *distance education*. Seminal researchers and works emerged that outlined the relationship between online learning and emotions (Artino & Jones, 2012; Pekrun, 2005; Zembylas, 2008; Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2004).

This review includes studies focused on emotional and social presence in online environments between 2000-2019. Although studies conducted before Cleveland-Innes and Campbell's (2012) introduction of emotional presence to CoI did not extrapolate emotional presence in their analysis of social presence, emotional presence indicators were nevertheless evident in their analysis. In research with online learning settings where the community was minimally developed, the Relationship of Inquiry (RoI) framework (Stenbom et al., 2012) informed the research regarding emotional and social presence in one-on-one mentoring relationships. Research studies on emotions in online learning, which were largely quantitative in nature and did not use the CoI, CoI+1, or RoI frameworks as lenses on the data, were excluded from this review due to their divergence in both conceptual lens and methodological approach.

Additionally, it is important to note that the first stage of research looking at emotional and social presence in online learning focused primarily on asynchronous discussion board analysis and e-chat transcripts (Gilmore & Warren, 2007; Swan et al., 2008; Zembylas, 2008). A

second, more multifaceted stage of research complexity emerged as online learning focused on community development with the addition of shared collaboration spaces (i.e., Google Docs) and synchronous class sessions through the use of web-conferencing tools (Ke, 2010; Regan et al., 2012; Young et al., 2014). This literature review focused on the second of these stages, because of the significant impact shared spaces and synchronous online sessions have on the development of community and online presence.

Therefore, this literature review explored the foundational CoI research leading to the development of emotional presence as a fourth component of the framework, emotional presence as experienced within the didactic triangle (interactions between learner, teacher, and content), and a short review of selected studies focused on women in online learning and Hispanic online learners relevant to the topic of emotional presence.

Understanding Emotional Presence Within the CoI Framework

Learning is socially constructed and a reflective process that takes place in community (Garrison et al., 2000, 2010). Emotions occur within the social structure, the learning community. To explore emotions in online learning, an understanding of the community in which they exist is crucial. The CoI framework developed by Garrison et al. (2000) provided a process-oriented framework to approach the exploration of emotions in online learning communities.

The Community of Inquiry framework. The CoI framework was developed to explore the process of learning, and it has served as both a theoretical framework and a practical model (Akyol et al., 2009; Garrison et al., 2010). As a theoretical framework, it introduced and described the idea of three presences within a community of learners. The elements of cognitive, social, and teaching presence interact to create an educational experience. As a practical model,

it informed teaching and learning practice. Widely accepted and applied in the research community since its creation, the CoI framework is supported in several studies as a useful theoretical framework (Akyol et al., 2009; Rienties & Rivers, 2014). Rourke (2009) and Rientes & Rivers (2014) reviewed the literature on CoI and found that the framework had been applied in multiple settings and analyzed through various methodological approaches. The social presence aspect of CoI is the most frequently-used element, while very few studies address the cognitive, social, and teaching presence at the same time (Garrison et al., 2010). The focus on social presence can be attributed to the early challenge to the existence and importance of creating community in online learning settings. An integrated approach to studying all three CoI elements has proved challenging in both data collection and analysis due to the complexity and overlap of the three types of presence.

The CoI framework has also drawn criticism despite wide application and acceptance (Jézégou, 2010; Xin, 2012). This was primarily due to how the framework was developed and the lack of directly linking student learning outcomes with the framework. The CoI framework was built and then applied, instead of being constructed through inductive theory building in applied settings. Before the application of the framework, community and the self-direction of learning involved in a CoI was not fully developed (Jézégou, 2010). Further, defining what constitutes a CoI is an ongoing challenge due to how technology is continually impacting socio-cultural changes. The development of social media and online culture drastically altered how communities are created and maintained in face-to-face and online educational settings. Thus, the discussion of community is highly contextual and ever-evolving.

The predominate critical appraisal of the CoI framework is the lack of direct linkage between the CoI framework and student learning outcomes (Jézégou, 2010; Rienties & Rivers,

2014; Rourke & Kanuka, 2009). Studies which examined student learning outcomes and their relation to the CoI framework are greatly inhibited by the primary usage of CoI in research: a focus on text-based analysis (i.e., discussion boards and e-chats). Akyol et al. (2009) suggested a direct application of CoI to student learning outcomes is a misunderstanding of the framework and devalues understanding the learning process. Research using the CoI framework to explore student learning has added to the body of knowledge regarding how we come to know and learn, not its direct impact on learning outcomes.

A thorough review of research using the CoI survey continued to confirm it is an accepted framework in the field (Stenbom, 2018). Stenbom (2018) warned that even though published research articles using CoI have increased over the past three years, 24% of these are by original CoI researchers raising concern about a "mutual admiration society" (p. 27). To date, the research utilizing CoI focused predominantly on the field of education and business in higher education settings. Business and education are two of the largest online educational sectors. Researchers argued that expansion into other populations and disciplines could further validate the framework as well (Pekrun, 2005; Pekrun et al., 2011; Rourke & Kanuka, 2009). Even amid critical analysis, Rourke and Kanuka (2009) indicated that the core concept CoI purports is accurate: when an environment is cognitively and socially supportive, and guided by a skilled and knowledgeable teacher, powerful learning occurs.

Distinct categories of social presence. The primary purpose of social presence is to serve as a support for cognitive presence within the CoI framework, but it was also be a direct contributor when goals exist that relate to affect or behavioral goals (Garrison et al., 2000). Swan et al. (2008) argued social presence is necessary and supports online education, but social presence alone did not create an effective learning experience. Identifiable and distinct categories

within social presence included emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion.

These groupings allowed for clearer analysis of discussion board transcripts, e-chat, and other

written text collected from online learning environments. Garrison et al. (2000) developed

example indicators to help to determine what social presence categories were present in online

learning experiences, which can be found in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Social Presence Coding Template

Element	Categories	Indicator Examples
Social Presence	Emotional Expression	Emoticons, autobiographical narratives
	Open Communication	Risk-free expression, acknowledging others, being encouraging
	Group Cohesion	Encouraging collaboration, helping, and supporting

Source: Adapted from Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89

Coding a single instance of interactions with the developed indicators informed how

social presence existed in each online discussion or e-chat session. This research revealed that

the ways social presence is encouraged, developed, maintained, and changes over time are also

important to explore. Group cohesion may not remain at the same level throughout the course;

there may be higher group cohesion present at the beginning of a course, which then decreases

over time (Swan et al., 2008; Whiteside, 2015). The ways social presence categories change over

the duration of a course or program needs additional research focus. Students' familiarity with

technology, skills, motivation, organization, commitment, activities, and length of time in an

online learning environment all directly impacted the social presence (Garrison et al., 2000;

Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Moving beyond coding text from online learning experiences to

coding data collected from a focus group and individual interviews allowed for a more comprehensive application of Garrison's social presence coding template.

Pentaraki and Burkholder (2018) suggested that emotions have a mediating effect on online learning as emotional states directly impacted the way in which students engaged with online learning and educational performance. Suggested strategies include the use of emoticons, humor, and audio in the online classroom, along with feedback that reflected student growth over time, and having course assignments that are valuable to the learner. In addition to these strategies, Pentaraki and Burkholder (2018) noted that the relationship between how emotions are perceived and students' cultural background is important in online learning, making it necessary for instructors to gain cross-cultural understanding of emotions. If researchers fail to acknowledge and conceptualize emotional presence, they miss opportunities to understand the effect of emotional presence on learning. This unexamined emotional presence effects group cohesion and open communication in online learning experiences. In order to gain understanding of emotional presence, researchers and educators needed to look at how it exists within the learning process, along with interactions between the student, the teacher, and the content of the learning experience.

Online Emotional Presence in Learning: A Threefold Investigation

The didactic triangle is a concept developed to help describe the process of teaching and learning (Kansanen, 1999) (Figure 2.1). The student, teacher, and content each reside at vertices of the triangle, which interact to produce learning. This second theme of the literature review is organized around the emotional considerations of each element of the triangle. An investigation of the interactions of the student, teacher, and content allowed an investigation of how emotions exist in a CoI during the educational experience. The interaction between the three components

is strongly impacted by context; in online learning environments, technology constitutes the

context.
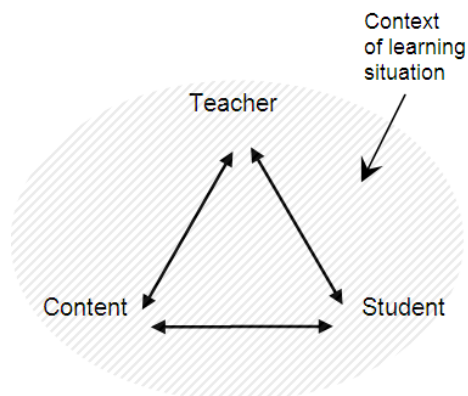
Figure 2.1: The Didactic Triangle

(Kansanen, 1999, Kinnunen as cited in Berglund & Lister, 2010, p. 35)

Student emotions in online learning. The study of student emotions in online learning

settings has been investigated extensively through quantitative survey studies. These surveys

have offered significant findings in the associations between achievement emotions and online

self-efficacy (Artino & Jones, 2012; Pekrun, 2005; Pekrun et al., 2011; Tempelaar et al., 2012)

and indicated positive correlations between emotions of belonging to the learning community

and engagement (Liu et al., 2007). They also suggested that high perceptions of social presence

correlated to perceived learning and satisfaction with the teacher (Richardson & Swan, 2003).

Numerous survey studies indicated that learners' feelings of trust in a course are critical to

participation in a CoI (Bhagat et al., 2016; Krejins et al., 2014; Mayne & Wu, 2007). Results

indicated clear connections between existing emotions and their influence on student perceptions

and actions in online settings. They established the link between online student emotions and

their impact on the learning experience, yet there was room to better understand the lived

experience of student emotions within CoI and RoI settings.

Lived student experiences with emotional presence. Qualitative approaches to exploring student emotions and online learning used a variety of approaches, including case studies, participatory action research, and ethnographic studies. Positive and negative emotions in online learning situations were evident across the qualitative studies reviewed for this study, yet the intensity and relation to online learning aspects varied. In a participatory case study, Zembylas (2008) found student emotions described as joy, enthusiasm, and excitement related to the flexibility of online learning. Additional studies affirmed students' positive emotional response to online learning flexibility (Cui et al., 2013; Zembylas et al., 2008). While flexibility does not ensure successful learning, the positive emotional response that proceeded from the flexibility creates increased opportunities for learning.

Learners also exhibited positive emotional responses in the forms of surprise and excitement to the emotional intensity of their feelings in online environments (Kennedy & Gray, 2016; Zembylas, 2008; Zembylas et al., 2008). The finding of learners who experienced surprise to the intensity of emotions in online learning was of interest. The disbelief of the amount of emotional intensity experienced indicated online learners approached the modality with preconceived ideas of how they would experience emotions during the online learning process. This finding purported that online learning environment as an active community of inquirers whose interactions both created and sustained social and emotional presence (Garrison et al., 2000; Xin, 2012).

In a case study involving 15 graduate-level students, Glazer (2008) found the online learning community of inquirers not only had emotional presence on the individual level but additionally found a shared distributed emotional presence in the social group. Glazer identified the ways that many students played distinct and constant emotional roles throughout the course,

which impacted all class members. She identified the following roles: cognitive task-based (focus on organization and flow), perspective-based (focus on giving new perspective ex. toward technology use), emotion-based roles (encourager, mediator, conflict avoider), and some students' roles were a combination of all three roles. Glazer concluded online teachers ought to observe how the emotional presence is distributed in the course interactions, which may allow for insights as to how a class will react to learning occurrences. Additionally, understanding students' emotional roles could inform how groups are constructed, balancing emotional roles within a group.

The impact of the adult learner's role on emotions. Qualitative approaches to understanding emotions in online learning allowed for an exploration of the depth and complexity of variables unexamined in quantitative approaches. Adult learner role expectations and personal responsibilities also impacted emotions and emotional presence in online learning settings. Zembylas (2008) found learners experienced stress and guilt as they attempted to balance multiple roles and responsibilities while participating as online learners. In the same year, an additional study by Zembylas et al. (2008) found adult learners experience significant emotional stress due to their inability to fulfill personal obligations. Adults learners in the Zembylas et al. (2008) study communicated that emotional presence in the learning setting may have been reducing their ability to perform personal roles and responsibilities. In a small phenomenological study focused on the experience of seven female online doctoral students, 50% indicated they have guilt about not fulfilling their responsibilities in their personal lives, and all participants indicated the feeling of having to do more than their male counterparts (Wilton, 2010).

Negative emotions of fear, anxiety, stress, guilt, frustration, alienation, shame, and embarrassment coexisted alongside positive emotions (Zembylas, 2008). While negative emotions were present, this does not always result in negative experiences. The largest grouping of negative emotions in online learning converge around the context of learning online, including general unknowns of the online methodology (Kennedy & Gray, 2016; Zembylas, 2008), lack of ability to use technology (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012), demands of online learning (Zembylas et al., 2008), and challenges with course organization, instructions, content relevance, and trusting the technology (O'Regan, 2003). Additional support and increased communication about the online learning context, including technology use and course design and facilitation, are areas that are in the locus of control of the teacher and instructional designers involved in the online learning experience.

Student emotional presence and teacher facilitation and feedback. Kennedy and Gray (2016) conducted a case study of two doctoral-level cohorts and found the online learners in this study experienced positive and negative affect around three sites of intensity: a sense of progression, community interaction, and assignment feedback. Since both positive and negative emotions were found in relation to these three areas, their research suggested there is a clear path toward minimizing the negative emotions through continual improvement of the online learning environment, suggesting it is a continual process of improvement. Allowing students to see a sense of progression in a course, supporting CoI and RoI, and adjusting teacher feedback all provided opportunities for continual improvement.

The area of teacher feedback was the focus of an exploratory case study conducted by Sarsar and Harmon (2017) with the use of Keller's (2016) ARCS model. Online instructors provided feedback, which included attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction to students

throughout the online learning experience. Students in the study experienced increased motivation, positivity to course content, closer relationship with the instructor, and an increase in emotions used by the end of the course (Sarsar & Harmon, 2017). While negative emotions have shown to exist in relation to teacher feedback, approaches and structures that take this into account can minimize negative emotions in this area.

Positive emotions have been shown to have a positive impact on online learning experiences; conversely, negative emotions have the potential to negatively impact students' online experiences (Artino & Jones, 2012; Tempelaar et al., 2012). Research suggested that negative emotional responses are within the locus of control of a community of inquirers (Kennedy & Gray, 2016). The teacher can work to minimize negative emotions through support, facilitation, and course design. Findings of how emotion-based roles develop within a CoI and how adult learner roles and responsibilities impact emotions can both be explored through additional qualitative case studies using the CoI and RoI as frameworks. How students experience emotional presence within a CoI, and simultaneously in a RoI, can inform online facilitation and instructional design for student success.

Teacher emotions in online learning. While there is a predominance of literature which focused on students' emotional presence, teacher emotions have also gained considerable attention. It is critical to acknowledge teacher emotions within the didactic triangle impact their interactions with students and content within the learning experience. The concept of teachers' emotional labor (Schutz & Lee, 2014) sought to describe the process of how teachers are expected to show emotions that are acceptable and positive and suppress other emotions, which may be seen negative in the educational experience. A conflict is created as teachers monitor their emotions and attempt to follow the emotional rules of the profession as they interacted with

students and course content. Studies found emotional labor is linked to job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion, often leading to teacher burnout (Schutz & Lee, 2014; Yilmaz et al., 2015). The suppression of emotions contributed to depersonalize the role of the teacher, thus impacting their ability to participate in the learning experience (Näring et al., 2006). Previously discussed for her contribution to understanding student emotional presence, Glazer (2008) offered insight into how student emotional role development may provide a distributive emotional load, which can lessen the emotional labor felt by the instructor.

Cook (2018) found the most frequent emotion experienced by online teachers was enjoyment, followed by pride and hope. While teachers participating in the study sometimes experienced frustration and disappointment, feelings of enjoyment, pride, and hope were the most prevalent in the open-ended responses. This research also indicated how critical preparation and support are for teachers to have positive experiences (Cook, 2018) and in turn, students. Students may be able to recognize the emotional labor of their teachers and how positive and negative emotions projected by the teacher impact their interaction in the community and in turn their own emotional presence.

Online teachers becoming "real." How teachers projected themselves as "real" people through emotional presence was greatly determined by technology-mediated communications and how they sought to connect with students. During communication, affinity-seeking often occurred as an individual attempts to get others to feel positively toward them (Bell & Daly, 1984). Research on the effect of affinity-seeking confirmed how a teacher projects sensitivity, self-inclusion, the inclusion of others, comfortable self, and supportiveness is a predictor of the level of out-of-class communication with their students (Myers et al., 2005). Brooks and Young

(2015) investigated how teachers' affinity-seeking impacted students' emotions online but did not address how affinity-seeking conversely impacted the emotional presence of the teacher.

A case study by Liu et al. (2007), which included 28 instructors in a graduate-level online program, provided one example of when instructors were unaware of the importance of social presence. Researchers learned that while instructors knew the concept of social presence in online learning, they were not showing awareness of this type of presence while teaching, and thus concluded it was not very important. Exploratory and grounded theory case studies such as this looked beyond the influence of emotional presence on the lived experience of online teachers. Gilmore and Warren (2007) found online teachers often renegotiated emotional expression rules in online spaces, since they did not believe they needed to suppress emotions in online settings in the same ways as face-to-face settings. After teachers adapted their live online seminars with attention to body language and modifying hierarchical course content that was seen as threatening, teachers described teacher-student relationships as more intimate with increased virtuality and emotion (Gilmore & Warren, 2007).

Online virtuality is related to the concept of humanization, which assists teachers in anchoring social presence into an online course. Cox-Davenport (2014) found teacher perceptions (meaningful socialization, facilitating connections, student control) and teaching patterns (cyber role model, maintain, awareness) were critical in anchoring humanization in their online learning experience. Their experiences suggested teachers would better experience the CoI if they worked on humanization, which was central to the emotional climate of the course. Social presence at its core is participants of the community of inquirers being human, being emotionally real (Garrison et al., 2000).

Online teachers' emotional presence in feedback. It is important to note that the process of coming to understand virtuality as a teacher, or humanizing the online learning experience, may increase the emotional cost for the teacher. The use of an emotional motivational feedback message (EMFEM) (Keller, 2000) was used in a single case study of an online course to determine its impact on students and the teacher. Findings indicated that although students felt more emotionally connected to the teacher, the teacher felt overwhelmed with the work required to provide EMFEM. Despite this, teachers recognized the benefits of putting in the extra emotional effort (Sarsar & Harmon, 2017). Sarsar and Harmon (2017) found that the teacher's use of emotional motivation led him to reflect on himself as a better, more involved instructor. This realization may offset the emotional labor and contribute to increased emotional presence in current and future online learning settings. While this study suggested an increase in positive emotional presence may reduce emotional labor, it was limited in scope. The teacher in this study viewed his intensification in emotional presence as requiring him to approach teaching in a positive fashion by choosing to be friendly, social, and responsive. Thus, one could say the teacher's emotional disposition impacted how he viewed the increased emotional labor and subsequently impacted their relationship within the didactic triangle with both the students and course content.

Emotions within the instructional content, design, and facilitation. This final aspect of the didactic triangle consists of the content of a course. For this review, research on emotions within course content focused on the design elements of the content and the facilitation of the online content. While emotional presence is often discussed in the context of interactions between student-student or student-teacher, instructional content, design, and facilitation directly impacted how emotional presence is experienced in online learning. Garrison (2016) provided

guidelines for best practice when using his CoI framework that included learning activities, teaching-learning guidelines, and assessment. With a focus on instructional content, design, and facilitation, Garrison (2016) offered a clear path for best practices in using CoI in online learning.

Garrison's (2016) recommendations were informed by a significant number of studies that have used the CoI framework as a theoretical foundation for research since it was first applied to online learning in 1996. While many studies looked at the cognitive, social, and teaching presence from the view of the student or the teacher, other researchers (Archer, 2010; Frisby et al., 2013; Shea et al., 2010) have suggested looking at the whole course including curriculum, instructional design, and facilitation. In a case study involving semi-structured interviews and surveys with an online instructor and 16 adult students, combined with an analysis of 10 online courses, Ke (2010) confirmed teaching presence is evident throughout course design, facilitation, and instruction. He suggested that adults will adapt their "social performance based on the design, facilitation, and structure features of online courses" (Ke, 2010, p. 818). Through an analysis of 12 online courses, Loperfido, Dipace, and Scarinci (2018) found that students display distinct emotions for the "shell" of the course (architectural aspects) and also the "pulp" (content). The sentiments about the shell of the course provided feedback about the effectiveness of the course organization, while the sentiments toward the "pulp" of the course fell into three categories: motivational, positive, and negative. Across the 12 courses, emotional experiences were differentiated, with one course that seemed to not elicit the presence of emotions, and three courses that elicited negative emotions (Loperfido, Dipace, & Scarinci, 2018).

Impact of "shell" design on emotions. How the online course shell is constructed impacted students' emotional presence in the course, but this impact was varied based on student skill level. Students who experienced low online efficacy and lacked the skill to navigate the online learning environment had more negative emotions (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007; O'Regan, 2003) and this also negatively impacted a teacher's emotional presence in online learning (Regan et al., 2012). Vrasidas and McIsaac (2000) suggested course structure is very important in the development of social presence. An early analysis of instructor readiness to teach in an online setting and students' online learning efficacies regarding navigation and communication should inform course structure and facilitation. If a tool or user interface is a challenge to use by the teacher or the student, then social presence will be hindered; instructors should improve their ability and their students' ability to use interfaces, thus increasing social presence (Vrasidas & McIsaac, 2000; Wei et al., 2012). Intentionally supporting teacher efficacy as online instructors and designing courses to gauge and grow student efficacy in online learning positively impacts emotional presence in the online learning environment.

Impact of "pulp" design and facilitation on emotions. While research on the architectural aspects of a course informed overall course design, there is also a large body of research focused on design of the content, or "pulp," with a focus on asynchronous online discussions and three distinct aspects of teaching presence related to the content. Before the expansion of synchronous sessions, collaborative spaces, and teacher-developed multi-media, the discussion board or forum served as the primary space for social and emotional presence to be developed. Research in the development of social and emotional presence has focused on discussion boards as a core area to investigate emotions in online learning due to their prevalence

and longevity. Studies focused on online discussion board development and facilitation were prevalent in the literature, with several studies focusing on emotions in online forum discussions (Costley, 2016; Rovai, 2003, 2007; Wei et al., 2012). Additionally, three areas within teaching presence literature found related to emotional presence in course content: teacher feedback (Sarsar & Harmon, 2017), teacher-developed multimedia (Young et al., 2014) and designing the entire course with emotionally-designed curriculum (Astleitner, 2000, 2001; Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018). Discussion forum design, the format of teacher feedback, types of teacher developed multimedia, and curriculum designed with emotions demonstrated how students interact with the content of the course and experience emotional presence through course design.

DeNoyelles, Zydney, and Chen (2014) compiled extensive research on how to increase the engagement with CoI through asynchronous online discussions. By conceptualizing the creation and facilitation of online discussions with the CoI framework in mind, multiple presences are supported in online discussion forums. Strategies suggested to support the development of CoI in discussions include teachers providing prompt/modest feedback, peer facilitation, protocol discussion prompts, and providing audio feedback. Additionally, modeling emotional and social presence cues within the forums enabled teachers to facilitate the CoI. Cues such as encouragement, being personal, addressing a person by name, sharing personal or professional experiences, and encouraging participation all showed to develop social cues and strengthen the CoI (Molseed, 2011; Scherer Bassani, 2011). Wei et al. (2012) through a survey study of three Taiwanese universities, found that an increase in social cues led to positive increases in social presence.

While online discussion board design and facilitation increased presence in a course, there is research that showed they may also negatively contribute to the emotional presence in a

course. Ke (2010) found virtual cliques existed in online discussions and recommended teachers be aware of this dynamic and consider reducing the role of online discussions. Through an analysis of frequency on discussion posts in courses, Rovai (2003, 2007) found no significant difference in the number of posts made when discussion posts accounted for a larger weight in the overall course grade. When discussion boards accounted for 10-20% of the overall course grade, the participation was maximized; raising it beyond that does not increase the frequency of posting (Rovai, 2003, 2007). While both Ke (2010) and Rovai (2003, 2007) suggest limiting discussion forums, neither study focused solely on how discussion forums may support the development of emotional presence. Additional understanding is needed on how students experience online cliques in forums and how the weight of forums on course grades impacts emotional presence for online adult learners.

In addition to promoting emotional presence in online discussion forums by design, emotional presence is also enhanced by intentionality in the format of online instructor's feedback. Keller's (2000) ARCS motivation model focused on providing attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction to students throughout the online learning experience. In a single case study of an online course using ARCS, Sarsar and Harmon (2017) focused on the emotional motivational feedback messages (EMFEM). The EMFEM approach was found to increase student motivation and increase positive student attitudes toward course content, leading to higher student satisfaction. Students also requested more EMFEM feedback and produced more emotional content by the end of the study. The facilitation of the course based on ARCS and EMFEM had a significant impact on students and the teacher involved.

Alongside forum discussion design, intentionality in instructor feedback, teacher-developed multimedia also has potential to positively impact emotions during online learning

(Young et al., 2014). A case study conducted by Young et al. (2014) explored the use of

Professor-Developed Multimedia Content (PDMC) in an online distance education MBA

program, including 184 students, to build a CoI through enhanced social presence and real-time,

student-driven, adaptation of the learning content. PDMC was created throughout the course and

not before the course beginning. After each video, students completed a survey to determine if

the video taught the learning objective well, if students would be able to apply what they learned

to their profession, and asked students to share additional comments. Additional PDMCs were

created after the review and analysis of student feedback. Young et al. (2014) found a positive

correlation between using the PDMC cycle and student satisfaction, knowledge attainment, and

overall success in the online learning environment. The students routinely evidenced emotions in

the open-ended additional comments section of the survey, suggesting the implementation of

PDMC with student survey feedback can increase social presence in online learning.

Teacher feedback based on EMFEM and professor-developed multimedia were

intentional course content facilitation approaches that impacted students' emotional presence at a

particular stage of the online learning experience. Relatedly, Pentaraki & Burkholder (2018)

constructed a list of emotional strategies and activities teachers can use to facilitate students'

emotional engagement across the entire experience of learning online, which is contained in

Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Emotional Strategies and Activities to Promote Online Engagement

Type of Emotional Strategy	
Use of emoticons by:	Using emoticons in the class's discussion and in the private communication with students to establish a bond with them
Use of humor by:	Using appropriate and judicious humor in the introduction, transitions and at the end of units such as photographs, illustrations, and cartoons
	Using short and simple jokes in the introductions and transitions and using longer pieces of humor at the end of the module (Shatz and LoSchiavo, 2006)
Use of audio broadcasting:	One-way or two-way
Use anticipated self-referential feedback by:	Focusing your feedback on students' improvements or non-improvement rather than on grades Emphasizing in your feedback to students the importance of mastery goals
Use a positive tone in your test and non-test communications with students:	Using norms in your communication with students such as proper greetings and closings and encouraging a classroom environment whereas a positive time in communications prevails
	Asking from your students to use a positive tone in their communication with everyone in the classroom

Source: Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018, p.14

Experiences of Hispanic Female Online Learners

Kramarae's (2001) research looked at how women experience online learning. It is

foundational and has informed many studies examining the unique experiences of female online

learners (Müller, 2008; Wilton, 2010; Zembylas, 2008). There is compelling evidence that online

courses are of great value to nontraditional students, particularly female adult learners with

children or family responsibilities (Sullivan, 2001). And especially critical is their engagement in

the learning community which facilitated persistence with the difficult task women face in

pursuing online degrees amidst competing familial and societal obligations (Müller, 2008).

While family and society responsibilities are often viewed as barriers to learning, Moll's research on funds of knowledge provides another perspective. His research highlights how the households of Hispanic women hold valuable knowledge and skills which should be utilized in learning (Moll et al., 1992). Moll describes household funds of knowledge as "thick" and "multi-stranded," indicating that learning occurs across many settings and relationships within the family and larger community. This is contrasted with the "thin" and "single-stranded" learning model that most classroom experiences provide, characterized by a single teacher who has limited knowledge of the students' abilities due to the restrictive classroom context. Moll's original research focused on learning in the K-12 setting but it has been applied to other settings including higher education (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). Using the assets of family and community structure within the CoI model could provide powerful insights into best practices that support Hispanic students in online learning settings.

While engagement in the learning community positively increased persistence, anonymity was also identified as a potentially positive aspect for women in learning online spaces. Sullivan (2002) notes that anonymity was identified by a large number of participates as the most positive aspect of the online learning environment with one participant noting "it's easier to be yourself when you are invisible" (p. 139). Findings such as this offered interesting implications for the design of research studies seeking to examine female learners' experience by asking them to reflect on how they are seen, and how they project who they are in the online learning experience.

While helpful, the CoI frameworks have only limited application in research aimed at understanding female learners' emotional and social presence in online learning environments. A deeper understanding of how Hispanic women experience emotional and social presence as they

engage in online learning has the potential to increase support for a growing and educationally vulnerable student population. Plotts (2018) indicated that while many Latino/a students choose online learning, their experiences with social presence is largely unknown, since minimal research exists regarding the social presence of Latino/a, or Hispanic students. Research that looked at the unique online experience of Hispanic females using the CoI framework is non-existent.

This study aimed to add to the literature, focusing in on how Hispanic females experience emotional and social presence and what sense they make of their experiences. The definition of social presence as the ability for participants in a CoI to project their real selves emotionally and socially informed the research methodology, which is outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to describe how Hispanic women experienced emotional and social presence in a fully online program, with a particular focus on how they described their ability to be their "real self" during online coursework. A multiple case study approach of several learners' experiences was an appropriate means to explore these ideas. I used a series of two personal interviews with three participants to explore how Hispanic female online learners described their experiences with emotional presence within a Community of Inquiry (CoI) and within Relationships of Inquiry (RoI). Three questions guided the study: (a) How do Hispanic women describe their experience with emotional & social presence in online learning? (b) How do Hispanic women describe what affects their ability to be their "real self" during online learning? (c) How does the ability to be their "real self" impact their learning?

Design Approach

This study used a multiple case study approach to focus on a contemporary phenomenon, the emotional and social presence experienced by Hispanic women in a fully online Bachelors of Art program (Yin, 2018). Several features bounded this study: the unit of analysis (the student), the context (students' participation in a fully online undergraduate program), and the sampling criteria (Hispanic female, a nontraditional undergraduate student at an HSI). This research design approach was appropriate for studying complicated questions like the ones at the heart of this study, as indicated by earlier work conducted by Plotts (2018) and (Stenbom et al., 2012), whose designs enabled them to gain insight on concepts like Latino/a's experiences with social presence and how emotional presence emerges in online learning.

Setting

The study occurred within a private four-year institute of higher education that provided face-to-face, blended, and fully online programs. The institution had been designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the western United States since 2008. In 2018, 48.1% of students identified as Hispanic, which far exceeded the minimum of 25% required to qualify to be an HSI. The Hispanic enrollment percentage of 48.1% mirrored the population statistics for the county in which it resided, which had a Hispanic population of 53.5%. Additionally, nontraditional Hispanic students, who are above 25 years in age, outnumbered traditional Hispanic students (aged 18-24 years) by a 3:1 ratio. Given these realities, the institution was awarded nearly 10 million dollars in Federal Title V grants, which helped support programs that advanced Hispanic academic success.

The university offered five fully online Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degrees along with six fully online master's programs and numerous online certificate programs. All five of the fully online B.A. programs were offered in both blended and fully online modalities. All five of the programs were designed for nontraditional students. Three of the programs operated in a fully asynchronous format, while two programs had required once-weekly synchronous meetings using Zoom. This allowed nontraditional students to maintain work and family obligations while completing their degree. The university publicly posted disclosure documents on persistence and graduation rates; return rates and graduation rates relevant to this study were extracted from these documents. The second-year return rate for students from 2008-2018 in all nontraditional undergraduate programs ranged from 69%-85%, with females returning at a slightly higher rate than males. The five-year average graduation rate across all programs for female students was 69%, which was 8% higher than males who had a 61% average. The two-year return rates for

Hispanic students ranged from 69%-85%, with a five-year graduation average of 78%; White students ranged from 77%-87%, with a five-year graduation average of 81%. The five-year graduation rate for all Hispanic students in the nontraditional undergraduate programs ranged from 65%-73% from 2008-2018, with a 69% average, while the graduation rate for White students ranged from 62%-75%, also with a 69% average. While the two-year return rate for Hispanic students was 3% lower than White students, the five-year completion rate data indicated the two groups graduated at the same rate. This suggests the nontraditional undergraduate programs serve Hispanic female students effectively based on five-year graduation rates.

The fully online B.A. program attended by all the participants in this study was the first B.A. program to be offered fully online at the institution and had been in existence for eight years at the time of this writing. Key informants for this study were the program directors for Program Possible, who also taught in the program. They were supportive of the pseudonym Program Possible, and while they supported participant selection by offering consent for me to invite participants from their program, they had no other role in the study.

The program attracted a particularly high percentage of Hispanic females due to its geographic location and the type of bachelor's degree offered. The program was one of only two online B.A. programs that required online synchronous sessions as a part of each course. The majority of students in the program met the requirements of ideal participants for this case study: Hispanic female, a nontraditional undergraduate student at an HSI in a fully-online program. Additionally, I chose students from this program due to Program Possible's pedagogical approach of requiring weekly instructor-facilitated synchronous sessions as a part of each fully

online six-week course. The use of weekly synchronous sessions increased my ability to understand interactions between students and teachers within the didactic triangle.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

Hispanic female students who were completing their final courses in Program Possible comprised the participant pool for this study. I chose participants who were nearing graduation to ensure they had a sufficient weight of experiences in their online program to speak to emotional presence in online learning. Due to the nature of individual interviews with me, participants needed to be comfortable speaking in English and open and able to describe their experiences with emotional and social presence. The nature of participants' emotional and social presence, whether positive or negative, was not a determining factor in choosing participants. All participants self-identified as having experiences where they were able to be their real selves during their online learning experiences.

The director and the associate director of Program Possible served as key informants who directed me to potential participants for the study, as they were closely connected with the program. Both directors actively taught courses in the program. I met with them face-to-face to describe the study and requested a list of potential participants; this purposeful sample enabled me to recruit information-rich cases within the topic being studied (Patton, 2002). There were 12 potential participants on the list, but only five of the 12 met the sampling criteria of being enrolled in the fully online cohort. Around this time, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted school closures, and shortly after that, a statewide shutdown. Due to the sensitivity and intensity of the situation, research plans were adjusted to conduct fully online interviews with participants via Zoom.

I initiated contact with the five potential participants via email addresses shared by the key informants (Appendix A). As a part of this communication, I created a short video to introduce myself and the study. I provided my contact information, including email, work phone, and cell phone to allow potential participants to contact me directly with questions regarding the information contained within the informed consent letter (Appendix B). One participant swiftly responded affirmatively and returned her consent form, indicating she would be willing to participate in a focus group and follow up interview if requested. After several follow-up emails to the other potential participants, I received no other positive responses. I reached out to the key informants, and they suggested that I attend a live synchronous class session that the associate director was conducting that week to issue my invitation in person. The associate director prepared students to hear my request, and as I shared my research and extended an invitation to participate, there was only one question: "What percentage Hispanic do you have to be?" I confirmed that if they identified as Hispanic, then they met the criteria. A total of three students shared their emails via the chat box in that session. Two weeks later, I attended one more synchronous class session and two additional students shared their contact information. The direct invitation to the live class session offered by the key informants proved to be the best way to help participants feel comfortable that their participation would be confidential and this study was something they wanted to do.

All three participants had experience with Zoom in their fully online program and were able to enter the interview sessions without technical difficulties. Each participant determined the date and time of each interview, which we set up through email or text message. At the start of each interview session in Zoom they confirmed their consent to be recorded and I also reminded participants that they have the right to discontinue their participation at any time. After the first

interview with each of the participants, I sensed they were all three strong participants who would be able to describe their experiences with emotional and social presence in online learning.

Data Sources and Data Gathering Procedures

I conducted six interviews (two per participant) for this study using a modified version of Seidman's (2006) interview protocol to explore the context and details of participants' experience. The protocol included exploration of the context of the experience, details of the experience, and meaning of the experience to be explored over a series of three interviews. The protocol suggested interviews be spaced a few days apart, which allowed participants to process in between each interview. Seidman (2006) described the goal of the model "is to have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic of study" (p. 15), which resonated with the purposes of this research. The modification for this study allowed for the exploration of the three aspects of the protocol over two interviews.

First interview. Since interpretations of emotional presence in online learning environments varied, I used our first interview to secure informed consent, explain the ideas of emotional and social presence, and generate participants' general experiences and initial insights. This allowed me to determine if participants were able to describe their "real self experiences" in online learning to the depth needed for the study.

I used standardized open-ended questions for the first individual interview to explore the context and details of emotional presence (Appendix A). The open-ended questions in Appendix A are labeled A-C to show the three-stage format (Seidman, 2006). The first interview explored questions A.1-A.4 and B.1-B.2 as time allowed. This initial conversation focused on participants' educational history and helped me build rapport as each woman shared her story. At

the end of the first interview, I requested participants make note of any ideas related to our conversation that arose before our next scheduled interview. I composed research memos immediately following each interview to record observational notes and impressions and begin an initial analysis of what I was learning.

Second interview. I conducted the second interview for each participant three days following the first interview. I opened these second interviews by asking participants if they had any notes to share. Two of the three participants shared some written thoughts to begin the conversation. We then reviewed the idea of emotional and social presence and their initial stories. This opening dialogue served as an initial step in member checking.

The second interview focused primarily on the details of participants' online learning experiences and helping participants reconstruct the experience of being their real selves as a Hispanic female nontraditional undergraduate online learner. Open-ended questions B.3-B.5 helped me gather this data (Appendix C). Participants talked about how they experienced emotional and social presence as it related to curriculum, their interactions with other students in the program, and their instructors. I asked them to reconstruct experiences, share stories, and expand on details (Seidman, 2006). During the final portion, I also asked participants to describe how being their real self impacted their learning (Appendix C, Question C.4). Similar to the first interview, I spent time analyzing data immediately after the second interview by composing research memos.

Interview recordings and transcription. With participants' permission, I recorded interviews using the in-program recording option in Zoom. I used my VidGrid cloud account to facilitate transcription, which I adjusted as I later viewed each video in its entirety. The transcripts included time markers throughout, which allowed for ease of locating sections of the

interviews used in case descriptions and analysis. There were a total of 109 pages of single-spaced transcripts. For the coding phases, I prepared the transcripts by moving all participants' words into bold 14 point font, double spaced, into a single document, with a three-inch right margin for coding purposes.

Ethical Considerations

In order to aid in participant confidentiality, I used pseudonyms in all data collected. I chose Program Possible as the pseudonym for the fully online undergraduate Bachelor of Arts program. Since the key informants were the director and associate director, I asked if I could use Program Possible or if they had a different preferred pseudonym. They both agreed that Program Possible suited the program very well. The three participants chose their pseudonyms; Yolanda, Valerie, and Sandra. Additionally, I replaced any names of teachers shared during the interview process. When participants shared course titles during the interviews, I also omitted them in the explanation of data to protect confidentiality.

All email correspondence occurred on a secure university-provided email account. I routed all correspondence from participants to a single email file. All emails from participants were directed, through the creation of a rule, directly to this single folder, including the signed consent forms. After the study, I converted all emails to data files and password-protected and stored them protected file. Video recordings in Zoom were uploaded for storage in my password-protected VidGrid account.

Data Analysis Procedures

I used a three-phase approach to data analysis. The first phase consisted of the transcript preparation, in which I viewed all interviews and reviewed the machine-generated transcripts for accuracy. During this first review of the transcripts, I made observational and theoretical memos

to record my initial impressions. I categorized these based on how participants described their emotional and social presence related to curriculum content, structure, or format. On the second review of the data, I focused on how their ability to be real related to interactions with their classmates (cohort). In the third pass, I focused on how their social presence pertained to interactions with their instructors within CoI and RoI settings. The final two interview questions focused on how being their real self impacted their learning and what advice they would give to other online teachers in order to promote students being their real selves. Participants' full responses to these questions were included in full in their case descriptions as their summarizing and concluding thoughts.

The second phase of data analysis consisted of a within-case analysis, where I did two rounds of coding on each participant's story to understand the individual cases. Saldana (2010) writes "qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus an analysis of their connections" (p. 8). There are a variety of coding approaches used in seeking meaning (Saldana, 2010), for this study, emotion and in vivo and coding were most appropriate. I used emotion coding as a foundational approach to meaning-making in this study, since "emotion coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for those that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences and actions" (Saldana, 2010, p. 86). Labeling participants' emotions was particularly helpful in exploring emotional and social presence. Lastly, I used in vivo coding to maintain participants' words and their meanings. Throughout this phase, I jotted analytic memos to think about my data and help me reflect on research questions, code choices, and emerging themes.

The third phase of analysis was a cross-case analysis, which revealed themes common across cases. I also compared participants' response data on the two closing questions during this phase. I used informal member checks during data collection and again during this phase of data analysis in order to help me ensure the accuracy of the data and establish trustworthiness. This phase also consisted of member checks, where I shared within-case data and interpretative commentary with each participant and asked them for feedback on the accuracy and credibility of the information. Valerie responded, noting that her case did "a good job" of capturing her experience. Sandra also positively affirmed her case, saying, "It sounds great!" In response to her member check opportunity, Yolanda wrote, "overall, you captured my story in an amazing way, and I really enjoyed reading it." There were a few small updates Yolanda requested in the timeline of her K-12 experience that were unrelated to research conclusions. While minimal, these responses indicated participants had at least read their cases and had no major concerns about the ways I represented their experiences. I maintained a detailed record of the data collection and analysis process throughout the process, enabling me to document an audit trail of the research process for future reference.

The Researcher and Considerations of Potential Bias

Qualitative research invites deep reflection on the researcher's role and identity within a given study; this section explains my background and reference points to this research. I ventured into teaching in a fully online setting for the first time in the fall of 2006. I made this decision because of the flexibility and convenience of online teaching provided for my family. In many ways, my decision to go into fully online teaching mirrored how research indicated that students choose to become fully online students; flexibility and convenience weighed heavier than all other factors (i.e., pay, tenure). As I moved away from the brick and mortar classroom

and into a virtual one, I did not anticipate that I would teach almost exclusively online from 2006-2017.

During this time, I found satisfaction in online teaching, which seemed to go against the early research I read which led me to anticipate that teachers who found success in the face-to-face setting would find the online setting challenging to master and would not be able to mimic the same successes they had in face-to-face classrooms (Cuban, 2001). So, I was perplexed when I had positive experiences in fully online learning settings. I thought I might miss the face-to-face interactions with students, miss the student feedback about their learning, and miss the in-person relationships, but I did not. In fall 2016, as I read course reviews for one of my fully online asynchronous courses, I came across a comment from a student that gave me great pause: "I felt as if Angel Krause really cared about her students & their academics (well that's how I felt). She is an awesome online teacher; I can't imagine in person!" While the comment was affirming, the "(well that's how I felt)" perplexed me. Was this person shocked that this is how they felt? Were they questioning if they could feel cared for by a person they have never met in-person? Or were they perhaps acknowledging that others may not have felt the same way? For the first time, I pondered seriously how feelings and emotions were impacting the online learning experiences for both myself and my students. As I read the remainder of the students' feedback, feelings and emotions began to jump off the page.

- "She was caring."
- "…it felt like I knew who the professor was."
- "I think it also worked that the professor genuinely cares about her students and is so kind and helpful."
- "This was my first fully online course, but I felt as if Angel Krause cared for me as a student."

The evaluation comments that semester indicated that there were students who felt cared for and shared emotions related to care in a course where we never met face-to-face, nor met

synchronously in a virtual space. I began a deep dive into what might be occurring – why were feelings and emotions emerging so strongly in course evaluation comments in a class where all learning was asynchronous text and one-directional video? This deep dive led me to the growing literature on the CoI framework and the concept of emotional and social presence in online learning. This topic became especially pertinent to me as I considered the ways online learning serves (or perhaps does not serve) the Hispanic learners in my classes.

While online learning has been a normal part of my life for nearly 15 years, being in community with Hispanic females has been a part of my life for over four decades. Growing up in the Central Valley of California, I was a part of the white minority in my classrooms, neighborhoods, and city. As a student, I identified more with my Hispanic classmates than my white counterparts. This early identity formation has continued to impact me into adulthood. I feel more confident working with and developing student-teacher relationships with Hispanic students. Through student-teacher relationships, an alarming number of Hispanic females have shared with me about their hesitancy or inability to talk to their professors regarding their coursework. Their statements of being scared, being made to feel dumb, or being intimidated by their professors echoed in my mind as I was designing this study. It was after I decided to focus on Hispanic women in this research that I learned that, while their enrollment rates in online education are increasing, overall, Hispanics have the lowest degree attainment at all educational levels.

Given the positive experiences I had with emotional and social presence as both an online teacher and an online doctoral student, I realized there was potential for bias to exist on numerous levels. I needed to be aware that participants would likely share both positive and negative experiences, and stay open to how it might surprise me. I worked to ameliorate this by

reporting my initial findings to critical friends who offered me alternative explanations, which can reduce the potential for bias during the collection stage (Yin, 2018). I also was careful not to assume that participants could openly discuss the emotional and social presence they had during their online learning experiences. Conceptually, the concepts of these presences were not familiar to participants, and it was a process to help them articulate what it meant for them to be their real selves in online learning environments.

Due to my student-teacher relationships with Hispanic female students, I worked to be careful that I did not project my own students' experiences onto participants. Again, I relied on a critical friend to review interview questions with me and adjust them to reduce leading questions. I also relied on member checking during the interview process and toward the end of the study to confirm participants' experiences, which increased the credibility of the findings.

The research process both encouraged and energized me as an online instructor and lead professor for numerous blended and online courses. Participants were complimentary during the process and thanked me for listening to their experiences in online learning. Each participant indicated that they were excited to be able to share their stories of being their real selves in the hope that their experiences could improve online learning for future students. Perhaps the most empowering and revealing portion of the interviews came at the end of the second interview when I asked participants to advise online instructors on how they could help their students be their real selves, their stories, and their powerful advice is shared in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study examined how Hispanic women experienced emotional and social presence in a fully online program, focusing on how they described their ability to their "real self" during online learning experiences. The findings of this study represent deep study of this idea alongside three Hispanic females, all of who at the time of the interviews were completing their final courses in Program Possible. In this chapter, I offer a brief biography for each participant that describes their journey into higher education, followed by a synthesized explanation of what each participant said when asked about what it means to be your real self. Episodic snapshots offer insight into the specifics, where I used participants' words to illuminate their experiences with emotional and social presence.

As is our human tendency, participants often spoke of times they did not feel empowered to present their real selves. These non-examples shed a different light on the significance of the times where they were able to be real. All descriptions of course instructors were derived from participants' words and perceptions. Following each of the three cases, I offer major themes from a cross-case analysis.

Introduction to Participants

Yolanda, Valerie, and Sandra's experiences mirrored one another's in many ways. All three women were from smaller rural towns with populations that ranged from 7,500 – 18,700. Each of their heritages connected them to the agricultural industry, which influenced where they grew up and eventually where they chose to live and attend college. Yolanda's hometown was the largest with a diverse population; 37.8% of the population identified as Hispanic or Latino. Her hometown was the only one without a local community college, so she drove 30 minutes to attend community college. Valerie's hometown was just over 9,000, and approximately 36% of

the population identified as Hispanic or Latino. Sandra's hometown was the smallest and had the largest Hispanic or Latino population, 91%. Both Valerie and Sandra were able to take community college courses in their small towns due to community college extension campuses. The three different community colleges they attended had similar 6-year transfer rates, ranging from 32.4 – 39.8%. Out of the three, Yolanda was the only successful 6-year transfer student, as Valerie and Sandra took more than six years to complete their two-year associate degree before enrolling in Program Possible. Table 4.1 offers additional demographic information on each participant.

Table 4. 1

Demographic information for participants

Name	Age BA Completed	Total Years to Complete BA	Household Members	Heritage	Languages
Yolanda	23 years	6 years	Lives with mom & dad	2nd generation Mexico	Spanish - first language, continued daily use in the home (speaking, reading & writing) English – second language, current primary language
Valerie	35 years	12 years	Five daughters	3rd generation Mexico	English – first language, primary language Spanish – second language, acquired as an adult and used for translation
Sandra	30 years	10 years	Husband, two sons	1st generation Mexico	Spanish - first language, current primary language English – second language, used in work and educational settings only

Participant One: Yolanda

Yolanda grew up in a larger city, with a population of 84,000, with many smaller towns surrounding the area. Her mom worked for a school district in one of the smaller communities

about 30 minutes away from their home. Yolanda commuted with her mom to work and attended preschool through 12th grade in the school district. Before her 6th grade year, her family moved to a rural farming town of 330, shortening the commute to 20 minutes. After graduating high school, her whole family moved just one block away from where she attended elementary school. After nearly 20 years of commuting, Yolanda's family now lived in the community where she completed her entire P-12 education.

The newest state university, one of ten across the state, was located in her original hometown, but due to financial concerns, she decided to attend community college, now a 30-minute drive away. Starting community college at the age of 17, she completed her associate degree requirements in four years. During this time, she utilized transportation from friends and family members to attend classes. She began driving herself when she was 21, but astigmatism made it challenging for her to drive in the evenings for night classes. Yolanda successfully completed two fully online courses while at the community college, and this experience gave her confidence that she could complete the remaining courses needed for her bachelor's degree in a fully online setting. Her older sister highly recommended Program Possible after attending a face-to-face version of the program at a university about a 50-minute drive from her home. Given her challenges with transportation, Yolanda decided to apply and was accepted into Program Possible's fully online cohort. This format allowed her to attend the required weekly synchronous class sessions (via Zoom) from her home while balancing her job, church attendance and involvement, and family commitments. Now at the age of 23, she has completed her Bachelor of Arts degree and plans to pursue her teaching credential/license. Yolanda is still strongly connected with her family, living with her mom, and assisting with their in-home

daycare. Yolanda's Catholic faith grounds her spiritually, and her desire to serve others in her family, community and educational settings is evident.

As we started our first interview together, I noticed that Yolanda smiled a lot and, at the same time, was very contemplative, pausing after each question I posed to organize her thoughts. She was very apologetic and quick to mute her microphone anytime there was background noise, the dog barking, or in-home daycare children being loud enough to be heard. For both interviews, Yolanda sat before a white wall with a nearby lamp providing near-perfect side lighting. She sat up tall, always perfectly centering herself on the camera.

When asked to describe what it means to be your real self in an educational setting, Yolanda noted she had put much thought into this concept. She described it as "being able to project my personality openly and freely along with my ethnicity…allowing my voice to be heard, my opinion to be counted, and not being judged for being a minority, or for being a little too outgoing." She later noted it also includes "being able to talk about my religion because that means so much to me; it's such a big impact in my life." When she can be her real self, she notices she is happy: "I feel happy because I'm not being held back, and I feel safe because of the people around me are accepting of who I am." Yolanda also described feeling comfortable and at peace when she can be her real self because she does not have to pretend to be someone who she is not.

Episode 1: Five items in a bag. As Yolanda recalled the different times she was able to be emotionally and socially present in her classes, projecting her full self, she shared the story of how a professor asked her to bring five items in a bag. In a course that focused on diversity, students had to choose five items that represented themselves and put them in a bag, and they shared the items during a live synchronous session. Yolanda immediately recalled the five items

she chose: a family picture from when she was a newborn with her mom, dad and older sister, a

microphone, a pen, her Bible, and a Lego. During the class session, everyone had the opportunity

to talk about what was important in their lives as they shared their five items. Yolanda recalled

that the directions for the assignment required them to express in detail why they picked the

item, then they could share the items via the live camera, or they could create and record a

presentation. Yolanda did both.

> When I was presenting this, we had to express, we had to express in detail and explain in detail why we picked these five items to be in our bag. And I felt then that I was really expressing my true self. I had the opportunity to talk about what was important to me in my life (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

The assignment gave her the freedom to choose anything that was important to her, and she

recognized she felt free to choose. She noted:

> So we were given that freedom to choose anything that was important to us without limiting us to, you can't bring like a screwdriver or something to class, like as ridiculous as it might be, if it was important to us, we could bring it to class. And so that's what I feel really allowed me to express my true self, it might've been a microphone, it might've just been a pen, but the value behind it was so much bigger and I was allowed to express that (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

Yolanda recollected that she never thought that what she shared about herself would be

important to someone else in the cohort as well. Yolanda noted, "that class made a really big

impact" on her learning and perspective, it was the first time she saw how she contributed to the

diversity and value of her cohort as a Hispanic female.

Episode 2: First assignment feedback. While the five items in a bag assignment

provided an opportunity for Yolanda to experience positive social and emotional presence in the

classroom, feedback on a first assignment in another course had the opposite effect for her. The

course was one of the few courses in Program Possible that did not have required synchronous

sessions. Additionally, Yolanda was "out of cohort" so her fellow students were not her familiar

cohort members. The first assignment included finding a picture (image) that represented the assigned topic, and describing why you chose that picture – students were required to post both the picture and rationale in a public discussion forum. Yolanda vividly remembered her picture and was able to share details of her rationale for choosing her image during the interview. Part of the assignment was to read the other forum posts and respond to two classmates. Yolanda proudly noted that her post had the most replies, and many classmates took the time to express their agreement with her choice of picture and her description.

Despite this, when assignment feedback posted, she received an F on the assignment, with the professor's feedback noting that the topic they were studying was not represented in the picture she posted. She questioned her professor's feedback since her post had a lively discussion on the forum, referring to directions indicating that "we had the liberty to pick a picture of what we thought was a representation." Yolanda noted, "and when my professor didn't agree with me, that made me feel sad." She noted her classmates agreed with her in their forum replies, but her professor did not: "It really unmotivated me and I ended up getting a B in that class." This experience was especially poignant for her. Yolanda shared:

> I feel like I kind of lost my motivation to…to try. I felt like at that point, no matter how much I tried, it wasn't going to be good enough. I wasn't going to be in agreement with what my professor thought was good. And so, I felt like I wasn't good enough. It was our personal discernment. And so, to have that… I felt like attacked, like, you're wrong. No, no point-blank, you're wrong. No matter how many people would agree with you. And the one person that I wanted to agree with me was the most important one, the one that I needed to have agree with me (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

Yolanda recounted that since she was out of cohort she was not able to share her feelings or experience with her classmates when this occurred, although she did share her sadness with her mother. Communicating concern over her initial grade with the professor did not seem to be an option for Yolanda. She stated:

> I kind of felt like he wasn't a person that was going to be very compassionate or understanding. And I didn't, and I felt like if I argued, like if I spoke about my feelings to him, it wouldn't be so… he wouldn't take it as a concern. He would take it more as a complaint (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

During the fifth week of the course, there was a required partner assignment, during which she shared this experience with her classmate and found she had a similar experience, she felt better about the situation "because I could relate to her pain too."

Episode 3: A unnamed noncommunicative professor. Yolanda shared about Dr. Authentic (pseudonym), an instructor who made it easy for her to be emotionally and socially present, she began by recounting how understanding the instructor was and how she was comfortable sharing personal issues with them, noting she would "run to" them with questions or concerns. Then she stopped mid-sentence "I just remembered I had an experience where I didn't feel like myself!" She transitioned to describe a situation in which she ran to Dr. Authentic when she had a rocky course start due to misalignment of expectations on due dates during the first week of her fourth course in the program. She could not recollect the course name or the professor's name, explaining, "I don't remember her name. I typically don't remember the names of the professors who were really mean to me or were irresponsible." The courses before this fourth course had flexibility in the due dates for the first week, all of week one and two work could be submitted at the same time, which allowed students to ask questions and clarify directions during live sessions. During the fourth course's first synchronous session, the unnamed professor announced, "…half of you didn't turn in your homework. You guys just don't take things seriously." After this statement, Yolanda ran to Dr. Authentic, texting a message while the synchronous session was still occurring. Through the text conversation, they established that due dates for the first week of the course were up to the professor's discretion, and Yolanda acknowledged her error since the due dates were in fact posted in the syllabus.

After concluding her text conversation with Dr. Authentic, Yolanda used her microphone in the synchronous session to share with the unnamed professor that she was one of the ones who did not submit her homework and that she was working under the expectations of previous courses in Program Possible which allowed you to submit the work for week one during week two. Cohort members confirmed this in the chat conversation and thanked Yolanda for sharing why half the class had not submitted homework. The unnamed professor gave those who had not submitted their work an extension, midnight that evening. Since the synchronous session ended at 8:30 p.m., the extension gave them just over three hours to complete the work. Yolanda scoffed, "So not much of an extension, but, um, I'll take it. I'll take, I'll take the biggest assignment and turn in the one we're the biggest points." This suggested to me that not all the week's assignments were possible to complete in those few hours.

While Yolanda felt she could not "be real" with the professor after this occurrence, the situation caused a bonding experience for their cohort, and a group chat of about 10 cohort members developed. Yolonda recounted the experience:

> From that point on, we were like in it together. If anything popped up that was slightly weird, if we had a professor who was just all over the place with instructions, we would run to that group chat because I think it was after that experience, that professor … that I had a bad experience with. Um, she suggested it because she said, she wanted us to communicate with one another before we communicated with her. If we had any questions, like if there was no need to talk to her don't, try to figure it out between amongst yourself and then if you can't, then you can ask me. So, then I knew at that point she wasn't really a dependable professor (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

Students continued to utilize group chat during the course as due dates for the course were posted for noon instead of the program's standard midnight deadline. When assignment instructions were not clear or were outdated, cohort members would email the professor and often not receive a response. The group chat would be "going like crazy" as the cohort tried to clarify directions and successfully pass the course. Yolanda shared:

I honestly don't even know how we passed it. I don't know how we did it. I mean, I think we all fought really hard in forming that alliance to email her, to force her, to like respond to us because we were really serious about our education and when our sole provider that has to be giving us, teaching us, isn't cooperating. Um, we were really frustrated (Yolanda Interview 1, 6-1-20).

As Yolanda described how challenging this experience was, she remembered that the professor was also "mad" as she had not created the course and so she did not know how to fix the many issues that arose. Yolanda acknowledged that since another person constructed the course, it made it challenging for her professor to facilitate the learning and that "it wasn't her fault that the course was all over the place." Nevertheless, the experience seemed to be a frustrating experience for both the cohort and the professor.

Episode 4: Synchronous sharing. Throughout the interview discussions, Yolanda shared that live synchronous sessions were powerful ways to connect with the professor and cohort members, and they positively impacted her ability to be her real self. There were countless synchronous sessions throughout Program Possible, where students were encouraged to share life experiences related to and intertwined with the course content. Yolanda described one session vividly where she felt she was her real self, emotionally and socially present. During the online session, they were "really given time to express ourselves, we weren't really limited." There was a choice in what they shared, and even if they would share at all, students were given the option just to listen.

During one session, the professor asked students to share stories of what that they feared while they attended elementary school. Yolanda chose to share a childhood memory about a "lollipop test" based on multiplication facts, and if you finished in the given time, you got a lollipop as a reward, she remembered feeling so much anxiety and had a hard time concentrating. During this same synchronous session, she also shared how being an English language learner in

elementary school made her feel different from the rest of her class. It was during these synchronous sessions sharing times that she noted, "I was expressing my true self to my class because I was sharing those, those points in my life where I felt different." Professors moderated the learning activities where students were sharing life experiences, assisting by applying course terminology to the situation, summarizing the experience in terms of the course content, and assisting students in making connections between theory and application. The emotional and social presence Yolanda experienced in synchronous discussions led to friendships within the cohort: "it was through those life experiences that we all shared, that we were able to form a friendship, even from a distance."

After recalling numerous stories of times that it was easy to be her real self by being emotionally and socially present, and recalling times it was hard, Yolanda reflected on how being her real self during her online program impacted her learning. The responses she shared communicated that bringing her full self, openly and freely, to the learning allowed her to express herself completely, to not be held back (see Table 4.2). As she described this, Yolanda indicated that combining who she was and what she was learning had a profound impact on her.

Table 4.2

Yolanda reflecting on how being her real self impacted her learning

Topic	Participant Responses
Impact of being your real self on your learning	"I was able to express myself completely."
	"Life experiences are such a big part of me, as much as my learning… and by combining both of them, I think that is what made me so comfortable."
	"I feel like I wasn't ever held back."
	"By allowing and bringing all these things [music, religion, life experiences] together, I feel like that's just what made me, made me me."

Analysis of Yolanda's Case. Yolanda had a strong sense of when she was able to be her real self, and when she was not, and she recognized that the former times enabled her to perform better academically. Conversely, she felt she got lower grades in courses where she was not able to be her real self. She perceived her short six-week courses as either/or: ones in which she could be emotionally and socially present, or ones in which it was not possible. Her teachers were a major factor in this perception; their actions contributed directly to her feelings. Concerning course content, structure, and format, Yolanda only provided positive examples; it was instructors' actions that served as her rare non-examples. For the most part, all interactions with cohort members helped her be her real self, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) allowed her to be emotionally and socially present.

Yolanda was best able to be her real self when she was invited to bring who she was to the learning and share her experiences. While classmates or cohort members were rarely connected to situations where it was challenging to be her real self, Yolanda described in her negative emotional and social presence experiences how classmates, often cohort members, were a part of the resolution. In the situation where Yolanda recounted getting an F on her first assignment in a course, she only shared her sadness with her mom at the time because she was "out of cohort" taking the class with students she did not know. But it was a classmate who allowed her to process the situation. Her inability to be her real self with the instructor created an experience of being real with a classmate as they shared similar experiences around feedback on the first assignment, and they could relate to each other's pain. Similarly, during the fourth course, when Yolanda felt the instructor was not communicating with students making it challenging to learn in the course, she reached out and allied with cohort members, creating the first back-channel communication for the cohort. Throughout her interviews, Yolanda used the

word "we" in her descriptions; she was not alone in the learning process, and she relied on her community for support when situations with instructors arose where she could not be herself. Additionally, during the non-communicative situation, she also reached out to a previous instructor with whom she could be her real self, Dr. Authentic. Yolanda and Dr. Authentic were in a trusting RoI during a prior course, and this carried into future courses.

When Yolanda could not be her real self, her explanations for why this was always pointed to the interactions and communications she had with her instructors, people she did not remember by name. In these situations, she felt she was put down and disagreed with, experienced lowered self-esteem and feelings of being not good enough, attacked, and frustrated. Throughout Yolanda's interviews, the words to describe the times she was not able to be her real self due to teachers' actions were more potent and targeted than when she described being her real self. For Yolanda, she had not built a RoI with these professors. However, there were other instructors that she "ran to", whom she had numerous courses with and who were "amazing human beings," indicating a clear RoI.

Table 4.3

Summary of Yolanda's "real self" experiences

Didactive Triangle Aspect	Examples of real self within a CoI and/or RoI	Examples of not real self within a CoI and/or RoI
Course Content	Discussions in Zoom Assignments connected to cultural background or previous knowledge	None
Students/ Cohort Members	Five items in a bag Discussions in Zoom Partner assignment Group chats	Group assignment
Teachers/ Instructors	Communication is encouraged Able to share personal issues Able to communicate via text message	Normative feedback approach (Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018) Perceived lack of communication Perceived disagreement

When asked what advice Yolanda might offer online professors, she initially said it was a hard question and stopped to think for a moment before rattling off several ideas. Her advice was reflective of her own experience: she believes online professors need to actively invite student voice and experience into their courses, create assignments that capitalize on and adjust assignments to reflect students' strengths and backgrounds, have standardized due dates to minimize confusion amidst busy lives, and invite open and honest communication from their students about how the course is going.

Participant Two: Valerie

Growing up, Valerie's family moved a lot; she attended numerous elementary schools and three different high schools. Discussions about college, how one prepared and planned ahead, did not occur in her family. It was not until Valerie's junior year of high school, during an Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) course, that she visited college campuses and first learned about the numerous higher education options available to her. At this time, she was pregnant with her first daughter, and while she wanted to attend college, she focused on graduating from high school and caring for her family. At the age of 23, Valerie was a single mom to three daughters and recognized a college pathway would help her better support her family. She took the first step toward obtaining her Bachelor of Arts degree by enrolling in the local community college.

Valerie was a strong student, obtaining high grades in her face-to-face courses at the community college. She developed study skills that allowed her to be successful, including note-taking skills and learning the level of repetition she needed to understand a new concept. Learning was enjoyable, and the coursework was not hard. Valerie tried taking one fully online course while attending community college and found that it was a lot more work for her to be

successful in the online format; this helped her decide to stick with face-to-face classes. She completed her associate degree in two years and continued taking prerequisites into the third year at the local community college.

After completing her prerequisites, Valerie enrolled in a face-to-face version of Program Possible at a university campus about a 40-minute drive from her small hometown. She was able to complete about one-third of the program before circumstances required she focus on her family and career. Shortly after pausing her enrollment in Program Possible, Valerie started working part-time at the local community college where she had completed her associate degree. She moved into a full-time staff role in the distance education office. While serving as the distance education coordinator, Valerie gained confidence in her ability to be an online learner. After a five-year hiatus, during which her family grew with the addition of two more daughters, she returned to Program Possible three years ago. By this time, the face-to-face modality was no longer offered, so she took up her studies in a fully online cohort. Valerie completed four more courses before pausing her schooling once more. After putting her enrollment on hold for another 18 months, she returned to Program Possible, for the third time and final time, as a full-time working mom with five daughters. Valerie recently graduated at the age of 34.

When I met with Valerie for our first interview, she had a Zoom virtual background of a professional office. I noted that I wanted our time together to be comfortable, she sipped on her coffee, confirming that this was a good approach. Her speech pattern was fast-paced, with many examples and dialogue examples interspersed throughout. Toward the end of the first interview, she became distracted a few times as email notifications came up on her computer screen, but she remained attentive to our conversation. For our second interview, she used her cell phone and sat on her couch, more comfortable and focused than our first interview. She scheduled this

second meeting early in the morning when her youngest daughter was still sleeping; as we ended the interview, her daughter slipped in next to her on the couch.

When asked to describe what it means to be your real self in an educational setting, Valerie noted, "it means just kind of being a little bit fearless." It is also when "you are able to really just express yourself in a way where it's genuine and where it's your genuine thoughts without fearing." Valerie named "freedom" as one of the emotions that accompanies the ability to be your genuine self because you do not mind being embarrassed in front of your teachers and classmates. She described it as a calm comfortableness and being in situations when "nobody's going to be judging… you end up with a group of people you can really learn from." Valerie went on to describe that when there is an imbalance in a setting, she is less likely to be her real self. This imbalance may occur when she perceives that those around her view people differently based on their clothing, educational level, use of academic language, or how much they value your work.

Episode 1: Setting the tone. One of Valerie's most memorable experiences of being her real self in an online learning space was with Dr. Genuine (pseudonym):

> I had an instructor that was just really engaging… he set the tone of the class as really comfortable, which invited that, you know, uh, you know, be yourself type of environment and feel free to, um, ask questions. No, question's a dumb question. And so when they set the tone like that, it really is nice to be able to add to the class, um, and be yourself and kind of give your true opinions on what's going on or experiences (Valerie Interview 1, 6-2-20).

Dr. Genuine's introduction in the first synchronous session was very warm and comfortable, giving the students a chance to get to know each other during the live session. In addition, he communicated the importance of asking any and all questions. It is unknown if Dr. Genuine used this exact phrase, but Yolanda interpreted his actions and words to conclude that his stance was "no question is a dumb question." Yolanda felt her questions were valued. Dr. Genuine

facilitated group projects, discussions, and breakout rooms during synchronous sessions with

ease. Valerie explained:

> So you know, at just the introduction of the class, you know, he was very, um, uh, jovial, you know, he seemed just very happy and bubbly, and he's just like, you know, getting to know everybody, 'How are you guys doing?' You know, letting us know about himself. He just seemed very happy. And I just think that initial, like, you know, happiness can be contagious. So, it's just kind of that type of vibe, you know, he just threw up a really happy, you know, nice vibe and it was just kind of engaging, uh, contagious (Valerie Interview 1, 6-2-20).

She contrasted this experience with other instructors who went straight to working on

assignments in synchronous sessions or starting into their PowerPoint presentation, nearly

immediately, which made the setting less warm and inviting.

Valerie's increasing comfort in synchronous sessions allowed her to ask questions and

engage more freely in different learning structures like breakout rooms. She also described how

the welcoming tone carried over into communication with the instructor outside of synchronous

sessions. She felt instructors needed to break down some of the barriers that make her hesitant to

participate fully and be herself. Valerie shared an example of breaking down barriers by using

text messaging with one of her professors:

> The kindness that they lend to their students, um, you know, there are some instructors that just off the onset are very welcoming and very helpful. They're like, "Look, I have my cell phone number, and it's on the syllabus go ahead and just text me…that's what I prefer. I really don't check my email. I really don't check those messages. They're hard to find." So for me, the best way, having that kind of just raw description of how they liked to be reached out to, as an instructor….um, I think that does really kind of just show students, you know, that person is there definitely to support you, they're there to help you out. And they do care about your success in the class. (Valerie Interview 2, 6-5-20).

When an instructor's infectious excitement combines with their availability and willingness to be

there, to just care, Valerie described this as the perfect setting for her to be her true self. When an

instructor sets this type of tone, she sees learning opportunities as, "yeah, let's do this!"

Episode 2: Synchronous sessions. As Valerie described how she was her real self during her online learning, she included numerous examples from synchronous sessions. She noted, "My experience with Program Possible has been synchronously (sic), and I love it because I believe that it is like the missing link for online classes." Valerie's experience with synchronous courses in Program Possible compared to her experience with asynchronous courses is a stark comparison. She noted that when she took asynchronous online courses it felt like the learning was all the student's responsibility, it was almost like there is was no teacher in the course.

Valerie shared many examples of how professors invited her into their community: making her feel free to ask questions, offering respectful discussion strategies which eased anxiety, and the facilitating synchronous session tools with ease. Having synchronous sessions once a week during each of her courses provided Valerie with a critical lifeline to her instructors. In courses where the instructor made it clear they were open to questions and devoted time to connecting with students, Valerie sensed they cared about the students and their success. Dr. Real (pseudonym) was one of these professors, a cornerstone for her comfort in the program:

> "Do you understand this? Do you need to know a little bit more? Are there any questions?" Just making it okay to express yourself and to, you know, take time if there is needed for more time for, um, just going over the details, um, answering more questions about that assignment, if it wasn't a hundred percent clear. Umm, so the way she lent herself to kind of have the patience for all range of students, um, really did help make you feel like, okay, so I'm good here. I can go ahead and ask that question if I need to, I can, um, participate (Valerie Interview 1, 6-2-20).

While Valerie said that asking questions was a critical component of creating an atmosphere for learners' real selves, she also named professors' discussion strategies as something in need of further consideration. She indicated that the way some instructors moderated discussion in synchronous sessions felt contrived to her. For example, some teachers used a checklist approach, and they went down the list to ensure everyone participated. The

checklist approach seemed to cause anxieties, since students had to perform on the spot, and it also caused disconnection in the conversation as there was no natural way to enter the discussion; if a student shared once, they were not invited to share again. Instructors who were more organic in their facilitation of discussions in the live sessions made Valerie feel at ease and allowed her to freely engage in the conversation. The instructors who facilitated comfortable discussions would take time to pause and ask the whole cohort if anyone else had anything to add.

Valerie also explained how the instructor's ability to facilitate synchronous sessions affected her ability to be her genuine self during her learning. Teachers who understood how to set up the view to share full screen, watch and respond to chats, and see students on their webcams supported interactive presentations. Valerie described that when two students begin to talk at the same time, a skilled facilitator could see who started to speak first and help direct the order, making students feel included and valued. Regarding synchronous tools, she noted an instructor should ask themselves, "what do I feel comfortable as an instructor using?" and then, as a next step, they should seek out professional development to increase their online facilitation skills in the tools with which they do not feel comfortable. When asked what elements of an online synchronous session make it easier for you to be your real self, Valerie noted:

> When classes are built, to kind of more engage the students and more, you know, have those activities, and that collaboration, and that shared time of, you know, listening and speaking, I think that really does help kind of just even keep everybody going and awake to where they can really get the most out of their education (Valerie Interview 2, 6-5-20).

Episode 3: Course re-do. Valerie described one situation where she could not be her true self due to a combination of the teacher's actions and her own life circumstances. She started by noting that this was not one of her favorite courses; the topic of the course was not one she liked and it was during this class, "I also just had life, which decided to get crazy for me at

that moment." She requested extensions on assignments she missed, and the teacher did not give

any leeway; she got the message, "Nope, sorry, late, move on." She shared that Program Possible

had such great instructors, and while she could not share with that instructor the life

circumstances that had caused her to get behind in her work, she was able to contact a different

instructor with whom she had previously worked, Dr. Real. That evening they met

synchronously, and Dr. Real was able to "talk her off the ledge," giving her advice on how to

interact with her current teacher. Valerie shared the outcome of the challenging situation:

> Having that instructor a little bit more rigid and a little less like friendly and
> approachable, um, you know, and the combination of me really not having an interest in
> that class, in life being a little bit hard, I went ahead and took the F on that class because I
> was like, okay, well, you know, I'm just going to re-take it before the semester ends
> (Valerie Interview 1, 6-2-20).

When Valerie signed up to re-take the class, she made a conscious decision to take the

course with the same instructor. She had some of the assignments already completed, she knew

the flow of the course and understood that there would be zero leniencies in late submissions, so

she mentally prepared herself to take and pass the course the second time. She noted, "I just need

to adjust myself because I know that, um, you know, in that class typically, I probably won't be

my real self." Valerie described how she adjusted her approach to the instructor and how she

interacted with the other students in the course. She noted that she was "extra communicative

with the instructor," and she prepped a list of questions for each of the synchronous sessions

after reviewing all the instructions and assignments for the upcoming week. She made sure she

was vocal and asked questions, taking advantage of the teacher's invitation to text via cell.

Valerie remembered feeling excited during the first week of class when she texted the teacher

and the teacher replied. Valerie shared her experience with other members of the class. Letting

them know that the first time she took the class she felt the teacher was unapproachable, but this

second time she found that the teacher was willing to communicate, was very nice and willing to help you, but the teacher would not give an extension at all.

As Valerie finished telling me her story of the course re-do, she exclaimed that she earned an A the second time through the course. Within her reflection, she included the concept of imbalance that she used in describing what makes it harder to be your real self. She shared:

> And I think a lot with my interaction with the course does start with the type of teacher I have. So, knowing that and where it's not a class where I will probably be my full self and just kind of expecting, preparing my expectations and my participation to match that imbalance, you know (Valerie Interview 1, 6-2-20).

After recalling numerous situations where it was easy and difficult to be her real self, Valerie shared how this impacted her learning. Her responses centered around how much the instructors set the tone for her to be fearless in her learning, but added that there are many variables (i.e., life circumstances) which affect one's ability to be their real self (see Table 4.4). Valerie indicated that when the setting encouraged her to be her real self, she could perform at her full ability.

Table 4.4

Valerie reflecting on how being her real self impacts her learning

Topic	Participant Responses
Impact of being your real self on your learning	"Yeah, when I'm able to, you know, just be my real self and kind of put what I know I have available into education I think I'm able to perform, you know, at an A+ level."
	"So, all these variables in play to really determine, well, was I at my full self and my full performance for this class."
	Other variables may cause you to say, "I wasn't able to be my real self or perform at my real level."

Analysis of Valerie's Case. Valerie's experience working in a distance education impacted her choice to become a fully online student, and it shaped how she viewed emotional

and social presence in online learning. Her responses indicated a deep knowledge of online learning that included theoretical and practical understandings. With each example of when she was able to be her real self, Valerie included a rich description of all that enabled this using the language of online best practices. Chiefly, she noted the significance of instructors' actions or non-actions, and the quality of synchronous sessions. In her descriptions of Dr. Genuine, she spoke of the intentionality of being welcoming during the first class and communicating exactly how students could be in contact with Dr. Genuine, indicating they built a RoI from the first online session. She said teachers like Dr. Genuine intentionally break down barriers as they work with students, which acknowledges that she is aware of multiple barriers that exist in a student-teacher relationship. Her work in distance education has given her a unique perspective on this as she has heard about these barriers directly from the students and teachers she works to support. She described synchronous sessions as the missing link in online learning, as not all courses utilize synchronous sessions. For Valerie, exclusively asynchronous learning leaves learners lacking.

Valerie's description of her course re-do was insightful, indicating she made the best of a negative experience by choosing to retake it with the same instructor even knowing that she would not be able to be her real self during the class. While her view of the instructor improved her second time through the courses, she primarily attributed this to the instructor' accessibility and not to the level of rigor expected or inflexibility of due dates. Valerie accepted what she perceived as harsh deadlines since she knew what to expect and sensed the instructor was being communicative with her.

She attended courses in the program across nine years, and this impacted how she spoke about other classmates. Valerie did not use the word cohort to describe her classmates. While she

described her experiences with synchronous sessions and classmate interactions positively, she did not feel like she was a part of a community of learners. Her descriptions of the synchronous sessions focused on what the instructor should do in the course to make it easier for students to be their real selves. For Valerie, the ways the instructor interacted with her and their level of intentionality were key factors in whether she could be herself. Her relationships of inquiry with instructors and her unique role working in a distance education office elevated the importance of the teacher in the didactic learning triangle for Valerie (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Summary of Valerie's "real self" experiences

Didactive Triangle Aspect	Examples of real self within a CoI and/or RoI	Examples of not real self within a CoI and/or RoI
Course Content	Forum discussions	None
Students/ Cohort Members	Forum discussions Break out rooms (Zoom)	None
Teachers/ Instructors	Asking questions is encouraged Open to get to know students (i.e. lives, challenges) Able to communicate via text message Organic synchronous session facilitation Strong skills in synchronous tool (i.e. break out rooms)	Perceived lack of communication Rigid synchronous session facilitation, prescriptive participation

Near the end of the interview, I asked Valerie, "If you could advise online instructors on how they could encourage their students to be their real selves during online learning, what would you say?" After a long pause, Valerie indicated that this is a challenging task for online teachers. She started by describing how online instructors need to be intentional and to try to

mimic all that they do automatically when teaching in a face-to-face setting (i.e., saying hello to each student when they enter Zoom, asking how students are doing at the beginning of class). She wanted to let instructors know that "relationships you would have effortlessly with students face-to-face; it has to be more intentional online." She said that this purposeful approach communicates to students that the instructor is truly there for students and that they will be there when the student needs them in the learning process. She thinks online instructors need to make a plan to get to know their students, even to the extent of taking notes on them and making sure they use this information when they interact and support them in their learning. Her role as a director of distance education puts her in a unique position, one who understands firsthand the students' experience and, at the same time, understands the complexities of teaching online.

Participant Three: Sandra

Throughout elementary school, Sandra alternated between spending one to two years in the United States and then four to five years in Mexico as her parents traveled back and forth for employment in the agricultural industry. When she entered high school, she decided to stay in Mexico and complete her secondary educational experience there. After completing high school, Sandra moved back and forth between her family in Mexico and her family in the United States. She made her decision to stay in the United States after marrying her husband, who was also a first-generation immigrant from Mexico. At the age of 20, Sandra decided to enroll and take classes at the local community college, stating that she just started school because she just did not have anything to do. She remembered feeling comfortable in her face-to-face Spanish course since Spanish was her first language, and she described the course as "more comfortable, it kind of reminded me of my background." She acknowledged that she was not confident in her English abilities and had anxiety in her face-to-face classes.

Sandra primarily completed face-to-face courses at the local college until the birth of her first son, about one year into her community college experience. At that time, she started to enroll in fully online courses, which allowed her to be at home with her growing family, work part-time, and make progress toward obtaining her degree. The online courses offered at the community college were all asynchronous, which was challenging, but they provided her with needed flexibility for her family. After slowly and steadily taking courses for seven years, she obtained her associates degree.

At this point, Sandra worked with a counselor to assist in transferring to a university to complete her Bachelor of Arts program. She was encouraged to investigate Program Possible's fully online cohort, and Sandra was excited to have the opportunity to continue in an online format as she raised her two sons and balanced working and supporting her family. Once admitted to Program Possible, she stayed on schedule, taking just one-and-one-half years to complete the necessary courses for her Bachelor of Arts degree.

We scheduled our first interview for a Friday morning, but Sandra forgot to attend, and we were able to promptly reschedule for the next morning. Sandra comfortably sat on her bed during the first interview using her cell phone, at times, lounging sideways. She often looked around the room as she thought about her responses to the questions. Sandra's first and primary language was Spanish; I worked to give her ample wait time after a question to process the language before she replied. She completed the second interview on her cell phone as well, but this time from her couch. She continued to look around the room as she processed questions, and her face would often slide out of view until she looked back again and adjusted her phone. Several times during the interview, her sons quietly and without her knowing, walked behind the couch a few times, making sure not to interrupt their mom.

When asked to describe what it means to be one's real self in an educational setting, Sandra said that for her, it meant she was comfortable and secure. She also said that, as a second language learner, being your real self is "security with the language." Sandra shared that when she was in face-to-face classes, she never wanted to speak; she was concerned that the teacher and other students would judge her language abilities, which made her insecure. Regarding online learning, she indicated,

> If I can say overall my experience online, I feel like I'm, I'm more my true self online, than when I take 'em in person. Oh, I rather take classes online, than take them in person. I feel like I have a little bit more freedom to express myself online than in person (Sandra Interview 2, 6-23-20).

Sandra described that when she is her real self, she feels happy and is able to be friendly. When she is not able to be her real self, Sandra feels stressed, shy, and insecure, situations that make her feel like "I wouldn't even want to go to the class."

Episode 1: Stark differences. Overall, Sandra has completed more fully online college courses than face-to-face courses. She started taking online courses after the birth of her first son eight years ago, and she experienced stark differences between the fully online courses at the community college and her courses in Program Possible, which were characterized by synchronous sessions. When comparing her previous experience to Program Possible, she noted:

> I actually feel like Program Possible is like a breath of air for me….I, I love everything about it. I would do it all over again. And when they asked me, oh, you know, do you like it? Oh, I love it! I love it! I think most of my struggles were back at community college just where I feel like they would, they would think they were all just teaching teenagers, um, that just graduated from high school and they weren't thinking really of us. The parents or the grownups that were still, um, getting our education with them (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

Sandra felt that she was able to be herself throughout her entire experience in Program Possible, and always felt able to be her true self in the courses. The program seemed to be designed to meet students like her where they were, which made her comfortable to be herself.

The program required synchronous sessions with consistent meeting days and times; the due dates were also consistent, which allowed Sandra to plan for both work and family obligations. In addition to Program Possible showing they truly understood the needs of the students who enrolled, Sandra described Program Possible teachers in contrast to the teachers she had previously:

> …in community college where they just don't care about any, if you didn't complete your assignments, then you know, they don't, unless you have a doctor's note or something like that that says otherwise they really don't care of your kid was sick all week, or both your kids were sick, and you couldn't complete certain assignments. They really don't care about that. They, they just want the assignments complete (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

This type of approach made it hard for Sandra to be her real self during her online learning experience for her associates degree, but her Program Possible teachers were different:

> I think it, all of the teachers have said if you ever have any troubles, cause we know that you might run into some personal problems or whatever, and you need a little bit more time to complete the assignment, you can talk to us, and we'll figure something out. I think just knowing that if we ever run into some problems, we can, we're able to talk to them and get to a resolution (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

Learning in a comfortable, secure setting where the teachers were open to hearing about life challenges and treated students like adults with a great deal of responsibilities allowed Sandra to feel emotionally and socially present throughout her entire program.

Episode 2: The cohort family. For Sandra, the cohort significantly supported her ability to be herself during her online learning experience in Program Possible. She had the same classmates for the entire program, which consisted of all women. Sandra attributed the cohort's strong relationship to the weekly live synchronous sessions. Seeing each other's faces every week allowed her to break out of her shell and become comfortable making presentations. She compared this to when she had to give presentations in her face-to-face courses, "sometimes I would make up an excuse because I didn't want to talk in front of the classroom. I was just so

nervous and full of anxiety that I just could get myself through it." With time, presenting in synchronous sessions became more comfortable for her; her cohort gave her confidence.

One of the presentations she recalled occurred early in the program, where Dr. Genuine asked all cohort members to share five items that represented themselves and their culture. Sandra was able to recall the items she added to her bag, including her wedding band, a very colorful shirt from Mexico, and some food items. She was excited to see what others shared and found that there were similarities; others had also added their wedding band and Mexican food items. She laughed as she noted that cohort members who were not Mexican had food from her Mexican culture in their bags. Sandra described how having a cohort allowed her to be her real self:

> I think because I see them, uh, maybe like family, because I've done group projects with them and we're comfortable with talking about each other with, um, with each other. Um, so I think I'm even gonna miss having my classes on Thursdays and all that and listening to them and, and, um, knowing more about them (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

Sandra's relationship with the cohort motivated her to push herself, and get more comfortable giving presentations, growing comfortable in her learning.

Episode 3: Secure with Dr. Authentic. When thinking about which instructors encouraged her to be her true self, Sandra excitedly described her experience of having two courses with Dr. Authentic. When asked why she was able to be her real self in Dr. Authentic's courses, she responded:

> Um, I don't know. Maybe her approach to us, maybe how she speaks to us and, mmm, just her demeanor. I think it makes me feel really comfortable and it makes me feel like I can trust her and just participate, I don't think I'm going to get judged by her. Not that any of the other instructors would, but, um, she just makes me feel more comfortable (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

She went on to describe how Dr. Authentic was open from the beginning to discuss any challenges that arose:

> She's the one that said to us that, um, if we ever encounter a problem or anything, we could just let her know and she would, um, help us figure something out. So, I think that from the beginning made me feel like I could trust her and come to her if I ever had any trouble, um, completing the assignments and stuff like that (Sandra Interview 1, 6-20-20).

Being able to communicate challenges with Dr. Authentic was critical as Sandra continued to work, raise her family, and complete courses. While the six-week structure of the course allowed students to focus on one course at a time, any problem or challenge could significantly effect a student's course experience. Dr. Authentic seemed to understand and accommodate this for students.

Sandra also described how Dr. Authentic gave feedback on assignments when they did not meet the assignment requirements. When a student gave a presentation on an incorrect chapter, Dr. Authentic did not stop the presentation but allowed them to share what they had prepared and then noted that they would come back to the content that they missed. Even when students did an assignment incorrectly, Dr. Authentic "makes it totally okay." Sandra indicated Dr. Authentic's feedback would explain what she was missing, how she could fix it or exactly how it could be improved. This built trust and a nonjudgmental learning relationship for Sandra and her professor.

After reflecting on all her online learning experiences, Sandra was only able to recall situations when she was able to be her real self while completing her fully online bachelors' program. She was not able to recall any time during Program Possible when it was hard to be her real self, which reinforced her positive experience with the program. Sandra felt certain that being comfortable both encouraged her to ask questions and participate more, leading to increased learning opportunities (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Sandra reflecting on how being her real self impacts her learning

Topic	Participant Responses
Impact of being your real self on your learning	"When I am comfortable, oh, I'm able to ask more questions. I am able to, um, participate more. Um, so that as well, helps me complete my assignments better. Um, I miss less assignments."
	"I think participation because it gets my mind, um, going and getting it going makes me think a little bit harder of, of whatever subject we're talking about."
	"If I'm comfortable with the teacher or I've had some issues with the teacher like I usually won't go and ask any more questions if I have questions regarding assignments. I just won't ask because I just don't want to have any interaction with the teacher."

Analysis of Sandra's Case. Out of the three participants, Sandra had the most

experience with online learning before enrolling in Program Possible. Her experiences with

asynchronous courses in her community college experience greatly impacted how she viewed her

time in Program Possible. She compared her experiences in the two settings consistently

throughout; in community college courses, she was not able to be her real self, but when taking

courses in Program Possible, she was always able to be her real self. This dichotomy led to her

being complementary about all aspects of her learning experience in Program Possible. The

program structure and support made her feel seen and respected as an adult learner with adult

responsibilities. The structure of the program allowed her to complete her education as she raised

her family; this was critical to her success.

Sandra shared many examples of participating in a CoI with her cohort. The weekly

meetings facilitated getting-to-know-each-other opportunities so that students could feel at ease

with presenting and asking questions. The cohort was a critical aspect of Sandra's emotional and

social presence, providing support and connections each Thursday night; she described them as a

family that supported one another through the program. Through her description of Dr.

Authentic, she also described one of the strong RoIs which developed during the program.

Sandra was the only participant who noted that her language abilities made it harder for her to be

her real self, but this was only the case in community college and not in Program Possible. The

respect created by the program design, cohort, and instructors allowed her to be her real self and

participate fully, leading to learning.

Table 4.7

Summary of Sandra's "real self" experiences

Didactive Triangle Aspect	Examples of real self within a CoI and/or RoI	Examples of not real self within a CoI and/or RoI
Course Content	Five items in a bag	None
Students/ Cohort Members	Five items in a bag Presentations in Zoom Group projects	None
Teachers/ Instructors	Treated with respect and understanding of other roles Communication is encouraged Self-referential feedback (Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018)	None*

*Sandra provided examples of not being able to be her real self with community college instructors only, the above information only includes fully online examples

Toward the end of our second interview, Sandra did not have trouble offering advice for

other online professors about how to help students be their real selves. She felt strongly that

online teachers should communicate and approach their students in a way that shows interest in

them, in who they are. For her, they could do this by creating assignments that allow students'

experiences to connect to course content. Sandra also noted the importance of teachers

facilitating synchronous sessions. She described how she used the first synchronous session to

"figure out" an instructor, how they speak, their demeanor, which she then transferred to how she

read emails from the instructor. While she noted that the synchronous session provided a frame to read emails/text from the instructor, she also warned instructors on how not to begin synchronous sessions. If the teacher goes straight into teaching, and they do not interact with the students, this makes students uncomfortable, and it will impact students' ability to be their real selves in the online course.

Cross Case Analysis - Thematic Overview

All three participants noted that when they were able to be their real selves, they were able to perform at their highest academic level, without being held back by intimidation, fear, or the need to mask their realities. While the experiences and stories varied, there were clear themes that emerged across the three cases, indicating there were certain programmatic elements and instructor actions that supported students in being their real selves. The themes included: a) the ways professors honored students' assets, b) open access to other students/cohort and the instructor, and c) consistency in course design and facilitation.

Theme One: Honoring Students' Assets

Each participant felt strongly that when an instructor made efforts to get to know them and utilize that information to support their learning, it increased their involvement in the CoI or RoI and significantly enhanced their learning. For Yolanda and Sandra, the honoring of students' heritage was evident in the way the five items in a bag assignment set the tone for their courses, programs, and cohort all at the same time. This course, described as occurring early in the program, allowed the cohort to explore their rich heritage, and it laid foundational building blocks for the cohorts' CoI formation. This foundation allowed meaningful educational experiences between teachers and students across the cognitive, social, and teaching presence to develop.

While Valerie did not describe the five items in a bag assignment as significant for her, she did describe Dr. Genuine, who truly made an effort to get to know students. Through another review of the transcripts, I found that Dr. Genuine was the teacher who facilitated the five items in a bag assignment. All three participants found that being their real selves and learning to their fullest potential was easy in Dr. Genuine's class. They attributed this to their professor's use of cultural background, prior knowledge, and a thoughtful approach to students' values and knowledge.

All three participants yearned for their instructors to get to know them, their authentic genuine real selves. The importance of being known went beyond a simple desire; they wanted others to see and value what they brought to the learning experiences because they knew it maximized learning. The concept of maximizing learning was evident in all participants' responses to the interview question, "How does your ability to be your real self impact your learning?" When participants were their full selves, they brought their lived experiences to their learning, making it real and applicable. All students benefited when students were their real selves; it increased student-to-student support and cohort persistence. Maximizing learning for one student seemed to positively influence all online learners in that community. Participants sensed that the instructors who did not draw on student assets reduced students' learning capacity to connect, contribute, and build upon funds of knowledge.

In order to use students' assets in curriculum design and course facilitation, the instructor needed to acknowledge that all students' voices are essential. This happened most often via synchronous sessions; participants did not share any examples of being able to be their real selves within written assignments, despite it being a very common tool for instructors to elicit student voice. It was the use of open discussion time during instructor-facilitated synchronous

sessions that allowed for student voice to be present, allowing students to feel valued and project their full selves.

All three participants provided advice to online instructors about how to include and honor students' assets (Appendix D). They emphasized the importance of assignments based on students' funds of knowledge, getting to know your students on a personal level, communicating value for students' experiences, and having an understanding of their current life situations.

Theme Two: Access to Other Students/Cohort and the Instructor Through Pedagogical Choices

There is considerable concern about student access to online learning, including adequate computer equipment and high-speed internet access. Yet what was evident across all three cases is that access to online learning included much more than a student's ability to log onto a learning management system or access a live, synchronous session. It meant the ability to openly communicate with classmates and, perhaps most critical, have easy access to the instructor. Although two of the three participants lived in small rural towns, they were not hampered by internet speed but by unresponsive instructors. This closed-off communication had the most significant influence on their ability to be themselves and learn to their fullest potential.

Access to Classmates/Cohort. Access to classmates, or the cohort, was built into the structure of Program Possible, via weekly synchronous sessions. Each Thursday from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m., students knew they would be in community with their classmates, seeing each other's faces and hearing each other's voices. All three participants noted this weekly interaction as positively impacting their ability to be their real selves. The live Zoom sessions gave them direct access to communicate with classmates regularly, and this became essential to the learning

experience. For Yolanda and Sandra, they completed all of their courses in cohort; each Thursday for 18 months, they met virtually with their cohort.

Even with a tight-knit cohort, there were clear indicators that the cohort could support non-cohort students who joined the cohort for a class or two. Yolanda met a music producer from Nashville who was out of his comfort zone as he took two elective classes in a Program Possible. She shared her phone number with him and reassured him that she would help get him through the courses. Sandra remembered mentally assessing the language abilities of her Spanish-speaking classmates, both cohort and non-cohort members, and reaching out to help them if she felt her language abilities in English were higher than what they displayed in the Zoom sessions. Valerie's educational pathway meant she did not have a dedicated cohort, yet she felt welcomed and a part of the community each time she returned to Program Possible. When Valerie had to retake a course, she reached out and supported others in the class with what she had learned the first time through. She encouraged them in a live session chat to reach out to the instructor when you needed help or had questions, encouraging them to be more communicative. Yolanda and Sandra shared the perspective of being in cohort and giving others access to the cohort community while Valerie shared how students who were out of cohort also contributed significantly to the community.

Access to the Instructor. Across cases, there was also a strong indication that the weekly synchronous sessions gave students real access to the instructor. Two distinct aspects of the instructor-led online sessions were especially impactful on proving genuine access to the instructor, the tone set by the instructor during the first synchronous meeting, and the scheduled student question/answer time during each meeting. The courses in Program Possible were six weeks in length and ran almost back to back throughout the program. Students had a very short

time to adjust from one instructor to the next. The first synchronous session in Zoom during week one of the course set the tone for the student-teacher relationship and the RoI that subsequently developed, or not. The way that instructors introduced themselves, the excitement or zest they brought to the session, and the degree to which they started to get to know their students in that first session was critical to whether or not students were able to project their real selves. This initial online session gave participants an idea of who the instructor was, and helped them decide whether they would, in turn, allow the teacher to know who they truly were.

The scheduled time for students to ask questions during each synchronous session was the second critical aspect of participants having real access to the instructor. Each participant included examples of how important it was for intentional time to be set aside during the live session for questions. This enabled students to move forward in assignments, not be hesitant, and meet the instructor's expectations. Valerie noted that she would look at all the assignments for the upcoming week and take notes on what she did not understand in order to prepare for the student question time in that week's synchronous session. Sandra would watch the recording of the synchronous session, not to review the content presented/shared that evening, but for the student question time. She said that if the recording was available, she watched it to make sure she reviewed the instructor's responses to the questions. Sandra also disclosed that there were numerous times she had a question about an assignment, or course, and would not email her instructor, since viewing the recorded synchronous session provided access to the instructor regardless of the time of day.

In situations where the instructor was not intentional in how they set up their first Zoom session, both in terms of how they introduced themselves and in providing open time for student questions, participants indicated these were times and classes where they were not able to be

their real selves. If the tone set in the first Zoom session was low energy or uninterested in the students/cohort, they pulled away from being their real selves. When instructors focused on getting to the presentation right after starting the synchronous session, participants perceived this as instructors being closed to students and denying access. Participants described access denial on two levels; the personal level allowing students to get to know the instructor and on an academic level allowing students to pose questions about the course content.

This theme seems to indicate that when instructors did not project their full selves, sharing their personal and/or professional experiences, students felt they were not allowed to access their instructor. Additionally, when teachers did not provide ample opportunities for students to ask questions in synchronous sessions, participants indicated this reduced their ability to complete course assignments to the level required to meet the instructor's expectations.

Access to instructors via the synchronous sessions was one medium of access; communication with the instructor outside of the synchronous session was the second medium of access common across cases. Each participant seemed keenly aware when the instructor gave real access or pseudo access. Through the instructor's interactions in Zoom and the language they used via email and on the syllabus, students made judgments about whether the instructor was truly accessible via communication outside of the live sessions. Instructors who were seen as accessible repeatedly told students to reach out or to contact them. Additionally, they gave multiple options for students to contact them (i.e., email, text, phone, Zoom), and they did not limit contact hours to the traditional "office hours" found in the syllabus. Accessible online instructors made it clear through actions and words that they expected to be contacted, and that is was these interactions that would support positive learning experiences.

While instructor-led synchronous sessions and written words may suggest an instructor is accessible, it was an instructor's communication patterns that indicated the truth of this. All participants recounted times when an instructor in an online course would not respond to email communications at all, or the delay in response prevented them from being able to perform at the academic level they desired. Participants felt ignored and that their teachers did not care when there were difficulties in communication, and the RoI suffered. When teachers were responsive to email communication, this built an RoI that supported learning and cultivated relationships that students relied upon throughout their program. Additionally, instructors who utilized text messaging built substantial RoIs. Appendix E provides participants' advice to online teachers specifically related to open access to classmates/cohort and the instructor.

Theme Three: Consistency in Course Design and Facilitation

The concept of consistency in course design and facilitation arose before the data collection process formally began. I first encountered it when I met with the key informants, Program Possible's director and associate director. They were excited for me to focus on participants from their program for this study. Since their entire student population was nontraditional learners and predominately female, the directors sensed the importance of the concept I was studying, learners' ability to be their real selves, and went so far as to wonder aloud whether their synchronous sessions, high levels of instructor support, and consistency between course "shells" might be intentional design features that could contribute to this. Indeed, participants confirmed all of these aspects of Program Possible in their conversations with me. Although consistent course design was an early idea, the idea that it would become a theme across cases did not reveal itself until late in the analysis.

All participants discussed consistency across courses in Program Possible as they described the high level of predictability needed for their personal schedules. The predictability allowed for them to move from one six-week course to the next with ease; transitions were smooth, allowing them to continue the CoI already developed and work on a new RoI with new instructors. While the predictability of course design may not seem directly related to students being able to be their real selves, their anecdotes proved otherwise. These women found the cognitive load of learning while juggling career and family obligations lessened by the consistency, allowing them to focus time on their learning. Aspects of course design that provided regularity, subsequently encouraging students to be emotionally and socially present, included the weekly Thursday night synchronous session, standardized due dates for each module, and similarly-designed course shells.

The weekly live sessions were scheduled for the entire 18-month program on Thursday evenings from 6:30-9:00 p.m. This allowed participants to balance family and work responsibilities knowing their class day and times from the earliest point of enrollment. Perhaps more importantly, the weekly sessions became the place where students and instructors collaboratively developed the CoI and RoI to sustain learning. The synchronous sessions grounded the cohort, and even during times when they encountered a difficult instructor, these sessions facilitated student-to-student interactions where they could be emotionally and socially present.

Participants described the overall course shell structure and module due dates as similar across courses. The general standardization included the location of course documents (i.e., syllabus), question and answer forums, and location of assignment directions. Two of the participants noted that courses in Moodle looked the same, so they knew where everything was;

there was no hunting or guessing when beginning a new course. Weekly due dates were standard across nearly the entire program, and a midnight deadline allowed for schedules of working adults participating in their third shift to submit work on-time. Sandra compared this intentionality in course design to her community college experience with online courses that had multiple due dates in a week, and if there was one challenge in her work or family life that week (i.e., sick children), then she missed assignments and had no recourse with an instructor who did not know her.

I gained greater insight into the consistency across courses as participants described frustrations with situations where the course instructor was not the course author/designer. All three participants indicated had this experience of taking a course created by one author/designer and taught by another instructor. When the instructor was not the author/designer, there was often a delay in answering students' questions regarding course assignments because the instructor was seeking clarity from someone else before responding to a student's question. These rare situations proved frustrating and illustrated the importance of instructors in depth knowledge of the course design and facilitation.

Summary of Findings

Given my own experience teaching online for the last 14 years, I approached this study with a bit of trepidation that participants may not be able to discuss the concept of being their real selves during their online learning experiences. However, across two relatively short interviews (70-90 minutes in length), they were able to thoroughly describe what it meant to be their real selves and provide vivid examples and non-examples of it. Through recounting these stories, participants named that this freedom enabled them to ask questions and participate fully in synchronous sessions. It allowed for academic performance at the highest level; no one held

them back. I was encouraged to learn of the crucial role their online instructors played as this has

been my role for many students. As a practitioner, it is powerful to listen to students and learn

from their experience. It is a practice we as teachers need to do more often, listen to, and honor

our students' experiences. The following chapter addresses the significance of these findings

from my teacher-researcher perspective.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore how Hispanic women experience emotional and social presence during fully online learning, with a focus on how they describe what it was like to be their real selves. I used a multiple-case study approach and collected data through a series of interviews, coding, and analysis of the data to identify themes. Each case opened insight into the freedom and learning potential available to each participant when they felt their professor invited their real selves into the learning process. Analysis across cases revealed that instructors accomplished this by honoring students' assets, facilitating open access to other students and to themselves, and providing consistency in course design and facilitation. This final chapter offers implications of these findings, along with recommendations for practice and future research.

The concept of projecting one's real self during online learning seemed nebulous as I started this research study. Social presence within the CoI framework was introduced 20 years ago and had been the focus of much of the CoI research (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020; Garrison et al., 2010). Numerous studies confirmed the concept of social presence while a few expanded on the unique emotional aspect within this presence (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2014; Stenbom et al., 2012). Research seemed to affirm that instructor actions influenced the levels of social presence experienced by students in the CoI (Kennedy & Gray, 2016; Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018) and that positive emotional presence impacted students task motivation and completion (Artino & Jones, 2012; K. A. Meyer & Jones, 2012; Pekrun, 2005)

Yet the field has more to understand about how these relationships of inquiry are built in ways that enable students to be their real selves. This study seems to indicate that if a student is not able to project their full self, their full personality in relationships is reduced, and learning is

adversely affected. A whole learning community can miss out when students put up a façade, or retract from projecting their full selves during online learning experiences.

Discussion of Findings

Participants in this study affirmed that there were cultural norms which impacted communication expectations and how participants viewed building student-teacher relationship. Similar to the Hispanic female participants in Plotts's (2018) case study, cultural norms shaped social presence. The three participants clearly discerned when their contributions and communication were welcomed, and were offended when teachers did not take these into account with the simple act of "checking in" during synchronous sessions. Similar to Müller's (2008) findings for female online learners, social presence encouraged persistence and completion of the program for the participants in this study. What is unique to this study is how participants described the significance of the content, other students, and the instructors. Participants did not indicate that their program's curriculum was a significant element in their ability to be their real selves. Fellow students had a more impact on social presence than did the curriculum, but overwhelmingly, they pointed to the instructor as the most influential mediator in the development of emotional and social presence. If, as this study suggests, the instructor is the most significant determining factor on if a student can be their real self in online learning settings, this points to particular implications and recommendations for future studies.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

While findings from a multiple-case study are not generalizable across settings, there is a level of analytic transferability for readers of this research. Yin (2018) describes analytic generalizations as "the logic whereby case study findings can apply to situations beyond the original case, based on the relevance of similar theoretical concepts or principles" (p. 286). It

seems clear that the Community of Inquiry framework fits online learning settings, pointing to the ways that cognitive, teaching and social presences are simultaneously present. The social presence aspect was the focus of this study, which enabled a close examination of how students projected their real selves, within the CoI frameworks constructed by their instructors. In her recent article acknowledging 20 years of the CoI, Castellanos-Reyes (2020) noted, "it is time for us to move from making sense of what an efficient online experience is to designing such experiences" (p. 559). When designing learning experiences for fully online, blended, or face-to-face settings, this study's findings can effectively inform instructors' design and facilitation processes. This study indicates that the ways instructors honor students' assets, intentionally facilitate open access to other students and to themselves and provide consistency in course design and facilitation can effectively transfer across student populations and settings. While the following sections focus on online learning, CoI has proven itself a useful framework to think about enhancing instruction in both blended (Hilliard & Stewart, 2019; Law et al., 2019) and face-to-face settings (Warner, 2016). The following section offers implications and recommendations for practice from this case study that is aimed at two groups: online instructors and universities offering online courses/programs.

Recommendations to instructors to honor Hispanic females in online learning.
Instructors working to develop emotional and social presence can focus on intentionally honoring students' assets through thoughtful course design/facilitation and making themselves available to students. Instructors who encourage students to be their real selves use student assets and funds of knowledge to design and facilitate learning. Course content should reflect student assets and their funds of knowledge (i.e., culture, linguistic, life experiences) to make students comfortable to be their real selves. This approach toward curriculum design is evident in K-12

settings with performance assessments for teacher licensure that require teachers to build lessons from students' assets and funds of knowledge instead of using deficit approaches. One key aspect of developing this approach is getting to know one's students and what they bring to their learning. While a general cross-cultural understanding of students is needed, Pentaraki and Burkholder (2018) suggest an additional need for instructors to increase their understanding of cross-cultural emotions. The impact of culture also significantly influences the communication between students and the teacher; instructors who are unaware of this cultural interpretation can inadvertently facilitate negative emotions (Pentaraki & Burkholder, 2018). For example, in cultures where there is a perceived power distance, students consider instructors' status as significantly higher than their own and may subsequently avoid direct communication with the instructor. Instructors can perceive this avoidance as disregard; students can subsequently feel anxiety or nervousness.

This study indicates a continuous design process may help instructors create programs and courses that not only honor students' assets and funds of knowledge but become culturally responsive education. This moves toward improving the learning capacity of diverse students (Hammond, 2014). For degree programs like Program Possible, which enroll nearly all women, the weight of their marginalization is ever-present. While enrollment for women is higher than men at the college level, the system itself marginalizes women who have chosen motherhood before, or during, their education (Kramarae, 2001). With the growth of online learning, women can access higher education at higher level than ever before, but culturally responsive programming take an asset-based approach to meeting their needs. The synchronous sessions, intentional design, and authentic care offered by some of the instructors in Program Possible

suggest these moves enable students to bring their real and fullest selves to the learning experience.

In this study, two assets were prominent: the vital role of family and participants' linguistic heritage. These women felt their secure link to family was honored by synchronous sessions, which allowed them to transfer their strengths in building relationships to their cohort. Instructors effectively used funds of knowledge to enrich students' learning experience (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). In collectivist cultures, individuals identify themselves with a family, community, or other organizations. While the use of synchronous sessions has shown to be beneficial (Ke, 2010; Regan et al., 2012), it provides significant support for students from collectivist cultures: it appeared to provide critical emotional and social connections. Having students take courses in a cohort and providing ongoing and frequent synchronous sessions created a structure for these Hispanic female online learners to build a strong CoI.

This study suggests that students' linguistic heritage is another asset deserving consideration for instructors seeking to meet learners' needs. This could take the form of allowing students to submit select assignments (i.e., journals, processing reflections) in their primary language, which would honor their heritage and give them another way to express themselves. With ever-increasing translation tools, instructors could translate assignments to English with a click of a button. Another option is to offer required course reading or additional research in a student's first language. These actions honor students' linguistic abilities and reduces the language barrier while encouraging students to see their language abilities as an asset and enable them to be their real selves. It would capitalize on the language assets which are often underutilized (Gonzalez et al., 2005).

This study also indicates that intentionality and consistency at the course design level were helpful to participants. While they needed and appreciated flexibility, they relied on the predictability of module design, assignment due dates, and synchronous session meeting days and times. These predictable elements allowed them to be successful at learning as nontraditional students balancing family and work responsibilities. Putting students' desire for predictability above a teacher's schedule preferences is a critical step in intentional course design; it respects the fact that there are many demands in students' lives.

Lastly, instructors need to make themselves accessible to students, both in sharing who they are as a person and professional via various communication modalities (i.e., email, text, synchronous sessions). Perhaps more so than thinking they are accessible, instructors need to analyze if students actually perceive they have open access to the instructor. To assist in this process, instructors need to be clear on communication style preference (i.e., email, text) and removing perceived barriers to communication (i.e., office hours). Stating communication preferences clearly in the syllabus, and in-person in the synchronous sessions can promote students reaching out to instructors and developing an RoI. The communication description provided by the instructor should also include expected response times to which an instructor adheres. Instructors might set different response rate expectations for weekdays and weekends, all while keeping in mind that these response rates must account for module deadlines. To assist with communication timeliness and responsiveness, instructors can set up rules to divert student emails to a single folder, so they do not get lost in a flood of email communication.

Recommendations for universities to support Hispanic females in online learning. Acknowledging how university policies, practices, and norms create barriers for Hispanic females in online learning is crucial to making changes that support all students in learning. In

this study, participants noted challenges such as attending to their family's health, instructor office hours, and little support on the weekends as barriers to their learning. During short-term courses there was very little margin. If the student or a family member became ill, it significantly impacted students' grades and persistence to complete. Short-term courses make it challenging to bounce back after "life" occurs. University drop and extension policies should be evaluated to create structures for students to succeed instead of maintaining no-extension policies.

While some studies indicate virtual office hours could encourage communication during online learning (Cox-Davenport, 2014; Horspool & Lange, 2012; Lee, 2014), these studies included participants across broad student populations, and even then, only 10-13% of students utilized office hours. Additionally, the demographic data for participants in these studies did not take into account the cultural background of participants. For the participants in this study, they desired to only communicate in a way the instructor clearly indicated as acceptable, and the concept of office hours restrained communication more than encouraged it. This age-old practice of having office hours is a potential barrier that needs to be acknowledged. If a student's work or family schedule does not allow them to contact an instructor during office hours, universities send the message that instructors' work schedules are more important than students' needs.

Universities with fully online courses and programs need to support research and professional development that promotes a deeper understanding and practice of CoI. This could include professional development funds for faculty pursuing research in this area, or action research embedded in the process of course and program creation and evaluation. Professional development opportunities need to be offered consistently, and perhaps incentivized, to encourage faculty participation. Similar to how students' learning is enhanced when their funds of knowledge are utilized, professional development should also utilize faculty's funds of

knowledge. PD should intentionally help instructors identify how their beliefs about students, learning, and their course content informs their pedagogical practices/strategies in online settings. The chart below highlights how instructors' beliefs about their students and learning can be translated into effective, asset-based pedagogical practices.

Table 5.1

Transferring Instructor Values into Practice

Instructor Beliefs	Online Pedagogical Practices/Strategies
Values students individually	- Create a spreadsheet that records information about students. This may include family structure, hobbies, past and current careers, and other assets they bring to the learning. Continue to update as you learn more about your students. - Greet students by name when they enter a live synchronous session. - View email communication as a conversation, include a greeting, convey openness for follow up communication, and a salutation in each email. - Incorporate what is known about the students' current life circumstances (i.e. family, career, hobbies) into your synchronous and asynchronous communications. - Use the first portion of class to connect individually with students, - Design and incorporate assignments which invite the students to share about themselves, their experiences, and their areas of expertise as related to the content of the course. - Formally student information using a funds of knowledge inventory matrix. - Allow assignments, as appropriate, to be submitted in the students first, or primary, language.

Values student inquiry	- During each synchronous session, have a specific time for student questions. All questions are a form of inquiry, but they may fall into facilitative/procedural or substantive categories; instructors can help students know when to offer which kind.
	   o Facilitative/procedural questions may include questions about due dates, format, or assignments expectations. These types of questions may need to be addressed prior to substantive questions being asked.
	   o If students are primarily, or only, asking facilitative/procedural questions, view this as an asset and

Values student inquiry continued	build into substantive questions. Students may need guidance and support to pose substantive questions.
	   o Encourage both types of questions by modeling questions types and structuring question time to include both formats.
	- In written and synchronous communication, encourage additional inquiry by always leaving your "door open" to more questions. If they are told to ask another student, or look at the syllabus, this may close the door to them posing questions (facilitate/ procedural or substantive) in the future.
	- Use responsive language that keeps the "door open."
	   o That is a good question….
	   o I am sure many other students are wondering the same thing…
	   o If you have any other questions please let me know.
	   o Thank you for that question, it will help me adjust my directions/instruction/support…
	- Communicate that you desire and expect questions to arise, as that is how we learn.
	   o When students apologize for contacting you with a question, affirm that all questions are a part of the learning and as a teacher you want them to learn.

Values course content	- Communicate your passion for your subject matter. This includes why/how you were first interested in it. What continues to fascinate you about it? What benefit might others receive from learning it? - Communicate your passion early and often, both during synchronous sessions and via email when you come across a new reading/study/article/current event that sparks your passion. - Acknowledge how course content is enriched through diversity of thought and perspective.

This study's findings suggest the importance of utilizing instructor assets and values to develop pedagogical practices/strategies for the facilitation of online courses, and also to the potential underutilization of instructor assets in the development of online courses. Universities should take caution in using courses developed by authors/designers and taught by other individuals. The use of a single author/designer for a master course which is then duplicated into many sections for faculty and adjunct to teach has become an economical common practice for

universities. Yet participants in this study were aware when an instructor was not the author/designer of a course and this negatively impacted their learning experience, inhibiting the degree they could be their real self. This indicates a need to review how author/designer taught courses compare to those which are taught by a non-author/designer. Evaluating how universities support faculty and adjuncts teaching courses they did not author/design is a further area of investigation.

Additionally, a culture of continuous improvement should be encouraged regarding online teaching practices. One barrier to this exists in the evaluation requirements for faculty. Most faculty evaluation systems include aspects of scholarship, teaching, and service; the ways these three priorities are weighted influences where faculty spend their time. Boyer's (1997) scholarship of teaching and learning is a line of research that helps instructors improve their teaching practices and student learning through the systematic study of the teaching and learning process. Faculty performance reviews need to include formative and summative evaluation practices. Formative assessment opportunities should be encouraged and supported throughout the faculty's employment to inform next steps and encourage growth towards professional goals in scholarship, teaching, and service. It is through formative assessments that instructors can identify areas of strength and areas of improvement in a low-stakes environment. Summative evaluations are high-stakes assessment processes which occur infrequently, often determining future employment and tenure. Due to the high-stakes summative evaluation process there is a desire to only focus on the strengths of performance reducing the growth opportunity that lies in continuous improvement approaches.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research could focus on the cognitive presence aspect of CoI, alongside social presence, particularly for professors like Dr. Genuine who honor student assets effectively. A study that interviewed instructors for their perspectives on how they facilitate social presence in online courses could also be useful. Insight into where they feel they were successful and where they fell short of these aspirations could provide key insights into the instructors' ability to effectively cultivate emotional and social presence. An in-depth study of their values, attitudes, and beliefs could also inform future professional development approaches and even hiring practices.

As Yolanda processed how being her real self impacted her learning, she linked this to course grades, indicating she obtained lower grades in courses where she was not able to be her real self and performed higher academically in courses where her true self was present. Quantitative research could be conducted using an instrument measuring students' ability to project their real selves and course grades, as an indicator of meeting learning objectives. While Yolanda expressed a relationship between being her real self and grades during her online learning experience, there would also be value in exploring this in face-to-face courses. Researchers have applied CoI in face-to-face settings exploring how the framework supports inquiry across learning modalities (Richardson & Swan, 2003; Warner, 2016).

Future research around course and program design should explore the intentional use of primary language use while learning in a second language during online learning experiences. Language and the concept of self are inextricably tied together. When I asked Yolanda and Sandra if they ever used Spanish in their program, they were taken aback, as if they had never thought about it before, or that it might even be an option. When I inquired if the e-textbooks the

program supplied were available in Spanish, they confirmed that they did not know if they were. Yolanda noted that she preferred to read the course material in English but liked the idea of being able to submit selected assignments in English or Spanish. Sandra noted that she never asked about textbooks in Spanish, but she "wasn't given the option either." Students who complete courses in English but have first or primary languages other than English are constantly translating. Studying how online courses could support the use of first/primary languages within a CoI could provide powerful insights into future practices that honor students' language assets (Gonzalez et al., 2005) and positively contribute to emotional and social presence in online learning.

Conclusion

As I write the conclusion for this study, the vast majority of K-12 school districts in my state were mandated to start the next school year online due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of K-12 students will be learning fully online for the upcoming semester and potentially longer. I cannot help but wonder, *will a kindergartner be able to be their real self when they start their first year of school entirely online next month?* Will they feel encouraged to be their real self, fully projecting who they are during their learning, uninhibited, fearless, and comfortable? Or will they feel intimidated, scared, or be made to feel dumb? Our K-12 teachers may not know the concept of CoI or RoI, but they are keenly aware of the critical role of social and emotional learning and how to leverage students' funds of knowledge. They know that they, as teachers, are the determining factor in their students' learning experience. I hope that this research brings awareness to the fact that our university instructors are the decisive factor in their students' learning as well. May Ginott's words below not only resonate with teachers who work with children, but to all of us who call ourselves instructor or professor:

I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's [an adult's] life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child [and adult] humanized or dehumanized.
Haim Ginott

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Appendix A

Hello!

My name is Angel Krause and I am currently a student at George Fox University in their online Doctorate in Education program. I would like to invite you to participate in a study as a part of my doctoral research. I started teaching online courses nearly 14 years ago and I always wondered why online learning worked well for so many students and teachers, but for others, it was not a good experience at all! This has led me to want to gain an understanding of what it means for students to be their "real self" or their "true self" during their online learning experiences.

A bit ago, I met with program directors to discuss my research and to see if they have recent graduates of their program who might help me with research on this very important topic. **They identified that you would be a strong participant in this study!** I would like to extend an invitation for you to participate in my study looking at how Hispanic women experience being their "real self" or "true self" in online learning. Please view the short 3-minute video **found here** to learn more about who I am and about this opportunity!

If you choose to participate here are your next steps:

1. Due to the unique situation of "sheltering in place," all of my research will be conducted via Zoom meetings. Can you let me know if you would be open to Option A or Option B, or either?

   Option A: I would be willing to participate in a focus group with about 3-5 other participants via Zoom. Then as a follow up to the focus group, I would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview with Zoom with you. Scheduled on days/times when I am available.

   Option B: I would be willing to participate in two one-on-one interviews with you via Zoom. Scheduled on days/times when I am available.

   Option A or B: I am comfortable with Option A or B.

2. Read the attached Informed Consent document, sign, date, and return to it me via email. Scanning the document or a picture of the signature page are both acceptable ways to complete the informed consent. I will confirm I have received it by replying to your email.

Please contact me directly at angel.krause@fresno.edu or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions – text messages are also a way to communicate with me. I hope to be able to work with you and learn more about your experiences of being your "real/true self" during your online learning experiences! Thank you for your consideration, I would love to hear a reply by April 23rd or earlier as you are able!

Angel Krause
Doctoral Student & Online Educator
angel.krause@fresno.edu, xxx-xxx-xxxx

Hello!

It was so good to meet you briefly in the Zoom session this evening! Thank you for showing an interest in participating in my doctoral research. I started teaching online courses nearly 14 years ago and I always wondered why online learning worked well for so many students and teachers, but for others, it was not a good experience at all! This has led me to want to gain an understanding of what it means for students to be their "real self" or their "true self" during their online learning experiences.

I would like to extend an invitation for you to participate in my study looking at how Hispanic women experience being their "real self" or "true self" in online learning.

If you choose to participate here are your next steps:

1. Due to the unique situation of "sheltering in place," all of my research will be conducted via Zoom meetings. Can you let me know if you would be open to Option A or Option B, or either?

    Option A: I would be willing to participate in a focus group with about 3-5 other participants via Zoom. Then as a follow up to the focus group, I would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview with Zoom with you. Scheduled on days/times when I am available.

    Option B: I would be willing to participate in two one-on-one interviews with you via Zoom. Scheduled on days/times when I am available.

    Option A or B: I am comfortable with Option A or B.

2. Read the attached Informed Consent document, sign, date, and return to it me via email. Scanning the document or a picture of the signature page are both acceptable ways to complete the informed consent. I will confirm I have received it by replying to your email.

Please contact me directly at angel.krause@fresno.edu or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions – text messages are also a way to communicate with me. I hope to be able to work with you and learn more about your experiences of being your "real/true self" during your online learning experiences! Thank you for your consideration, I would love to obtain your signed consent form by May 12th, or earlier as you are able!

Angel Krause
Doctoral Student & Online Educator
angel.krause@fresno.edu
xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix B

Understanding Hispanic Women's Emotional and Social Presence Experiences During Their Online Undergraduate Program – Being Your "Real Self" or Your "True Self"

Hello!

My name is Angel Krause and I am a student in the Doctor of Education program at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I am also a Professor of Education at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in California's diverse Central Valley. As a requirement of my program, I will be conducting research and I have chosen to examine how Hispanic women experienced being their "real self" or "true self" in their fully online undergraduate programs. You are invited to share your story with me in a focus group and potentially a follow-up face-to-face interview, sharing your experiences as a Hispanic female in a fully online program.

Details of the Study
This study consists of two interviews. The first will be a focus group interview with about 6-10 women meeting together for about an hour and a half online via Zoom (a tool similar to Adobe Connect or Skype). If you choose to participate in the focus group, your commitment would be approximately 90 minutes.

At the conclusion of the focus group, I will analyze the information collected and reach out to about three women to participate in a follow-up face-to-face interview. This follow-up would be an individual interview, which would be about one hour to an hour and a half in length. If you choose to participate in the individual interview your additional commitment would be approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will take place at a public location, of your choosing, that works well for interviews.

Both the focus group and the interview will consist of open-ended questions designed to help me understand your experiences. The questions are related to how you experienced emotional and social presence in your online undergraduate degree completion program – how you were able to be, or not be, your "real self" or "true self".

Below are some possible questions I will ask during the focus group or interview:
- How would you describe what it means to be your "real/true self"?
- What emotions do you feel when you are able to be your "real/true self"?
- Tell me a story of about a time in your fully online learning experience where you felt you were able to be your "real/true self"
- During all your online learning experiences, were there any actions by instructors that impacted your ability to be your "real/true self"?

Benefits
I hope the findings of my interviews will help me understand Hispanic women's emotional and social presence experiences in online learning. Participants will remain anonymous in this study. While the personal identities of the participating women will be concealed, their personal

experiences of being their "real self" or "true self" will be shared as a way for educators to gain an understanding of the unique experiences of Hispanic women. These experiences can enrich and guide online learning practices to support Hispanic female students through informing online program development, course instructional design, course facilitation, and potentially give direction to online faculty professional development.

Compensation
You will not receive any compensation (pay) in my study.

Confidentiality
Your identity will be protected in the study. I will use pseudonyms (fake names) to maintain confidentiality in all the results of this study. You will be given the opportunity to choose your own pseudonym. Additionally, any names of teachers or fellow students you share will also be changed to pseudonyms. I will make a digital recording of the focus group and interviews, that I will later transcribe (type up) so I can better understand what was said in the interviews. I will be the only one who knows your identity, which will be stored in a secure location that I only have access to. The signed confidentiality forms, all recordings, and the meeting records will be destroyed within three years of the end of the study.

Risks
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable. The risks associated with this research are minimal as the interview questions are to help me as the researcher better understand the experience of Hispanic women being their "real self" or "true self" during their fully online program. If at any time in the interview you do not feel comfortable to respond, you are not required to do so. You can decide to end your participation in the study at any time.

Use of Study
The results of this study will be used for my research and dissertation as part of my program at George Fox University. If you would like a copy of the final study, I would be happy to share it with you upon its completion.

Other Information
The questions relating to this study can be directed to Angel Krause at angel.krause@fresno.edu or my faculty advisor, Susanna Thornhill at sthornhill@georgefox.edu

Assent/Consent
If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign your name next to the following items:

I agree to participate in the focus group (online via Zoom):

Name:_____

Signature:_____ Date:_____

I agree to participate in a follow-up face-to-face interview at a location of my choice after the focus group:

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date:_____

Appendix C

Guide Questions for Interviews

Part A – History of the Interviewee

Driving Purpose - What are the interviewee's educational experiences leading up to their fully online program? How do they define being their real self?

A1. Can you share a bit about your high school experience and how you transitioned to your post-high school (college, undergraduate) learning?

A2. How would you describe what is means to be your real self, to project your fullest personality, in educational settings? What emotions do you feel when you are able to be your real self?

A3. How would you describe what is means when you are not able to be your real self in educational settings? What emotions do you feel when you are not able to be your real self?

A4. Tell me a story about a time when you felt you were able to be your real self during a learning experience in an educational setting.

Part B – The Details of the Experience - Strive to reconstruct our participant's experience in the area we are studying (Seidman 2006, p. 18) without opinions creeping in.

Driving Purpose - How does the interviewee describe their ability to be their real self in online learning experiences?

B1. Tell me a story of about a time in your fully online learning experience where you felt you were able to be your real self, to project your full personality.

B2. Tell me a story of about a time in your fully online learning experience where you felt you were not able to be your real self, to project your full personality.

B3. Can you identify elements in your online courses (content, structure, format) that made it harder or easier for you to be your real self, show your full personality?

B4. During all your online learning experiences, were there any actions by other students that made it harder or easier to be your real self, show your full personality?

B5. During your online learning experiences, were there any actions by instructors that made it harder or easier for you to be your real self, show your full personality?

Part C – Reflection on the Meaning of the Experience

Driving Purpose – How does the interviewee describe the connection, or relationship, of being their real self to their learning?

> C1. Given what you have reconstructed in your interviews, how would you describe how fully online course content/curriculum affected your ability to be your real self during online learning?
>
> C2. Given what you have reconstructed in your interviews, how would you describe how other students affected your ability to be your real self during online learning?
>
> C3. Given what you have reconstructed in your interview, how would you describe how your instructors affected your ability to be your real self during online learning?
>
> C4. Given what you have said about your online learning experiences, how does your ability to be your real self impact your learning?
>
> C5. If you could give advice to online instructors on how they could encourage their students to be their real selves during online learning, what would you say?

Probing Questions Stems

- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- Please tell me more about…
- What you are sharing (or have said) is important. Can you say more?
- Tell me more about that experience (or that time)…

Closing Questions

- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Have we missed something you think is important?
- What else should we talk about regarding this issue/topic?

Appendix D

Compiled advice reflecting the use of honoring students' assets

Theme Focus	Participants' Advice
Using student assets	Allow students to get to know each other
	Ask students to share their life experiences so you can get a feel for the students you have
	Base your assignments around who your students are
	Early in the class, get to know your students (learning type, strengths, circumstances) to support their education. Use non-graded assignments that communicate, "we're going to both get to know each other."
	Make notes on your students and be mindful of these things when you communicate with them (i.e., had four children and also takes care of her grandmother).
	Use language that acknowledges you know their situation. "How are your kids? I know you have a lot going on. I noticed that the last two assignments were a couple of days late. Is there anything you need?"
	Communicate that you are interested in the students, this helps make them be more comfortable in participating and in asking questions.
	Have students share experiences related to the subject being talked about. Sharing about experiences makes students more comfortable.

Appendix E

Compiled advice reflecting open access

Theme Focus	Participants' Advice
Access to Classmates/ Cohort	Allow students to get to know each other Provide time for student discussion in synchronous sessions
Access to Instructor	Tell us "you guys are allowed to communicate with me" - Remove office hours from the syllabus, as this makes us think you are only available during this time - Don't tell us to talk to other students before we talk with you, this makes us feel like a burden - If comfortable, provide your cell phone number for text communication Communicate presence "I want to be here for you. I want to be able to communicate with you. I want to be able to be here when you need me." Share how you want students to communicate with you, "This is what I like… This is what I don't like." Communicate that you are "truly open" to receiving your students' communication and supporting their learning along the way. Synchronous sessions allow students to get an idea of how the professors communicate "because I already know their way of speaking talking." If synchronous sessions are not used it is hard to figure out to read an email. "It is hard for me to know how they're addressing me, if it's like a bad way or if they're trying to be nice."