



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
VCU Scholars Compass

---

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

---

2012

## A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY COMPARING A COMPUTER-MEDIATED DELIVERY SYSTEM TO A FACE-TO-FACE MEDIATED DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING FICTION WORKSHOPS

Mindy Daniels  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

© The Author

---

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2648>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY COMPARING A COMPUTER-MEDIATED  
DELIVERY SYSTEM TO A FACE-TO-FACE MEDIATED DELIVERY SYSTEM  
FOR TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING FICTION WORKSHOPS

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.  
at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

MINDY A. DANIELS  
M.Ed., Virginia Commonwealth University, 1998  
M.A., Virginia Commonwealth University, 1981

Leila Christenbury, Ed.D.  
Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning  
School of Education

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia  
January, 2012

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the program administrators, creative writing instructors, and all the workshop participants at the three universities without whose generous help and assistance this case study could never have been conducted.

I also especially want to thank my committee members, Dr. Leila Christenbury, Dr. Michael Davis, Dr. Lisa Abrams, and Professor Tom De Haven for their time and invaluable assistance. I especially want to thank Dr. Christenbury, my chair, without whose affection, insight, knowledge, and patience this dissertation would never have been done.

I also want to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved and loving family—my husband, Vernon, Susann, Sheila, Mai Ling, Leona, Gus, and Zoë without whose stalwart support, humor, and endless patience and encouragement in good times and bad I would have given up. And to Maggie Mae and PoPo—we did it guys!

## Table of Contents

List of tables		viii
List of figures		x
Abstract		xii
Chapter		
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Introduction	1
	History of Creative Writing	5
	The Reform Movement in Creative Writing	9
	History of Distance Education	15
	Current Concerns Regarding Computer Distance Education	16
	Statement of Problems	17
	Study's Rationale and Significance	20
	Literature Review	22
	Research Questions	22
	Methodology	24
	Summary	24
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	27
	Introduction	27
	Overview of Computer-mediated Distance Education	27
	Critical Issues Defining and Dividing Contemporary Creative Writing Programs	32
	Can creative writing be taught?	33
	What should creative writing programs and workshops teach?	34
	Who should teach creative prose fiction writing workshops?	37
	How should creative writing workshops be taught?	39
	Social Constructivist Teaching and Learning	40
	Teaching presence	48
	Social Presence	48
	Online communication	49
	Interactivity	51
	Cognitive presence	54
	Learners' educational attitudes	55
	Learner types	55
	Gender, minorities, and SES	56

Supporting Educational and Sociological Theories	57
Activity theory	58
<i>Habitus, capital, and field</i> theory and transactional reading and writing theory	60
Interactive theory	62
Affect control theory	64
Transactional distance theory	64
How Respective Presences and Theories Affect Creative Writing Workshops	65
Computer-mediated Dialogic Communication and Computer-mediated Creative Writing Workshops	68
Problems with social presence and immediacy in computer-mediated teaching and learning communities	70
Addressing critical issues	73
Interpersonal relations	74
Program Structure and Teaching Presence in Computer-mediated Distance Education	77
Summary and Recapitulation of Key Terms	85
Social constructivism	87
Activity theory	88
Interactive theory and transactional reading and writing theory	89
<i>Habitus, capital, and field</i>	89
Transactional distance theory	90
Affect control theory	90
3 METHODOLOGY	91
Introduction	91
Research Purpose and Rationale	91
Research Context	92
Research Questions	93
Methodology	94
Emphasis on participants' affective actions and reactions within program boundaries	95
Situated in a natural setting	95
Dependency on natural data sources	96
Validation of experiential learning	97
Triangulation of data	98
Repeated observations	100
Multiple vantage points: Setting and site locations	100
Alternative theories	101
Participants	103
Procedure	104
Data Analysis	107

4	LOGISTICS	111
	Introduction	111
	Setting and Site Location	111
	Participants: Identification and Recruitment	115
	Comparison of instructors	118
	Criteria for student acceptance	119
	Comparison of students	120
	Comparison of Workshops	122
	Genre focus for the face-to-face mediated workshop	122
	Genre focus for the computer-mediated workshop	123
	Workshops' instructional design and organization	123
	Data Collection: Researcher's Dual Roles	127
	Data Analysis	131
	An examination of teaching presence	133
	An examination of social presence	137
	An examination of cognitive presence	140
	Procedural Summary	143
	Methodology Validity and Rigor	145
5	DATA ANALYSIS	149
	Introduction	149
	The Issues	151
	Creative writing workshop class design and organization	154
	Research Question Number One: Critics' Complaints and Concerns	158
	Creative writing programs' insularity	159
	The need for literary scholarship	160
	Standardized curricula and trained teachers	164
	Workshop practices	167
	Research Question Number Two: Operational Pedagogical Efficiency and Effectiveness of Creative Writing Workshops	169
	Teaching Presence	171
	Effective instructional design and organization	173
	Facilitating discourse	175
	Providing direct instruction	188
	Research Question Number Three: Affective Components Impacting Face-to-Face mediated and Computer-mediated Workshops	192
	Five theories	193
	Social constructivism	194
	Interactive, transactional reading and writing, <i>habitus</i> , <i>capital</i> , and <i>field</i> , and transactional distance theories	195
	Affect control theory	197
	Social presence defined	198

	Social Context	200
	Social context: Task Authenticity and goal-direction	205
	Social context: Self-Revelation	210
	Online Communication	216
	Online communication Privacy	217
	Online Communication: Electronic literacy	221
	Interactivity	222
	Interactivity: Communication styles	224
	Interactivity: Nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues	225
	Interactivity: Immediacy	225
	Interactivity: Reciprocity	226
	Interactivity: Organization and program cultures	227
	EMU's and NSU's Programs	229
	Workshop participants	231
	Communication styles, nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, and reciprocity in the face-to- face mediated workshop	233
	Social presence expressed as interactivity in the face- to-face mediated workshop	236
	Social presence expressed as organization and program culture in the face-to-face mediated workshops	238
	Communication styles in the computer-mediated workshops	241
	Nonverbal behaviors and paralanguage in the computer-mediated workshops	244
	Immediacy in the computer-mediated workshops	244
	Reciprocity in the computer-mediated workshops	245
	Research Question Four: Becoming a Autonomous Writer	250
	Mastery versus appropriation	250
6	CONCLUSIONS	258
	Introduction	258
	Research Question Number One	260
	Program insularity	260
	Standardized curricula	261
	Workshops	262
	Recapitulation of findings regarding Research Question Number One	265
	Research Question Number Two	266
	Teaching presence	267
	Recapitulation of findings with regard to Research Question Number Two	270
	Research Question Number Three	270
	Social presence	271
	Social Context: Task authenticity	271
	Social Context: Goal-direction	272

Social Context: Self-revelation	273
Online Communication: Privacy and electronic literacy	274
Interactivity	275
Interactivity: Communication styles, paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, and reciprocity	275
Interactivity: Immediacy	278
Interactivity: Organization and program cultures	281
Recapitulation of Findings with Regard to Research Question Number Three	283
Research Question Number Four	285
Recapitulation of findings with regard to Research Question Number Four	289
Final Conclusions	290
Limitations	300
Recommendations for Further Study	303
Case Study Conclusions	305
List of References	307
Appendices	329
1 Interview Questions for Program Administrators	330
2 Interview Questions for Workshop Instructors	332
3 Interview Questions for Face-to-Face Mediated Workshop Students	334
4 Interview Questions for Computer-Mediated Workshop Students	337
5 Coding Schemes Templates	339
6 Example of Stake's Description/Judgment Matrix	342
Vita	343



## List of Tables

2-1	Subcomponents and subordinate components for each teaching and learning Community presence (Rourke et al., 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002)	44
3-1	Template of statement of data collected by researcher (Stake, 1976, p. 120)	109
4-1	Comparison Chart of EMU's, NSU's, and SWU's M.F.A. Creative Writing Programs (AWP, 2011a)	115
4-2	Comparison of EMU's and NSU's Basic Application Requirements	120
4-3	Overview of case study participants at beginning of study	122
4-4a	Coded indicators for instructional design and organization for the face-to-face instructor. (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)	134
4-4b	Coded indicators for instructional design and organization for the computer-mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)	134
4-5a	Coded indicators for facilitating discourse for the face-to face instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)	135
4-5b	Coded indicators for facilitating discourse for the computer-mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 8)	135
4-6a	Coded indicators for providing direct instruction for the face-to-face instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., p. 10)	136
4-6b	Coded indicators for providing direct instruction for the computer-mediated (Adapted from Anderson et al., p. 10)	136
4-7a	Coding indicators for social presence for face-to-face mediated workshop (Adapted from Rourke et al., 2001, pp. 12-13)	138
4-7b	Coding indicators for social presence for computer-mediated	

	workshop (Adapted from Rouke et al., 2001, pp. 12-13)	139
4-8	Face-to-face themes and comments from participant interviews regarding cognitive presence (n=8) (Adapted from Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 6)	141
4-9	Computer-mediated themes and comments from participant interviews regarding cognitive presence (n=6). (Adapted from Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 6)	142

## List of Figures

Figure 2-1	Aggregate of <i>How People Learn</i> (Bransford et al., 2000), and <i>Community of Inquiry</i> (Garrison et al., 2001). Adapted from Shea et al. (2003, p. 78)	43
Figure 2-2	Adapted version of schematic that shows an overlay of <i>How People Learn</i> (Bransford, et al., 2000) and <i>Community of Inquiry</i> (Garrison, et al., 2001) and <i>Seven Principles of Good Practice</i> (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Adapted from Shea et al. (2003, p. 78)	45
Figure 2-3	Components and subcomponents for each teaching and learning community presence based on Garrison's et al. 2000 Teaching and Learning Community as explicated by Rouke et al. (2001); Tu (2000); Tu & McIssac (2002)	47
Figure 2-4	Schematic diagram of six supportive theories regarding social constructivist teaching and learning communities' teaching presence, social presence, and learner cognition components	58
Figure 3-1	Prominent Events in a Responsive Evaluation (Stake, 1976, p. 122)	108
Figure 5-1	Correlation of <i>How People Learn</i> (HPL) (Bransford et al., 2000) and <i>Community of Inquiry</i> (Garrison et al., 2001) Adapted from Shea et al., 2003, p. 78)	156
Figure 5-2	Adapted version of schematic that shows an overlay of <i>How People Learn</i> (Bransford et al., 2000) and <i>Community of Inquiry</i> (Garrison et al., 2001) from Shea et al., 2003 (p. 78). In the above diagram <i>How People Learn</i> precepts are in brown; <i>Community of Inquiry</i> are in blue.	171

Figure 5-3	The three subcomponents of teaching presence	172
Figure 5-4	Social presence's three subcomponents and eight subordinate components	200
Figure 5-5	Revised version of social presence showing three subcomponents and nine subordinate components	203
Figure 5-6	Three subordinate components of social context	204
Figure 5-7	Subcomponent online communication with two subordinate components	217
Figure 5-8	Interactivity and four subordinate components	223

## Abstract

### A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY COMPARING A COMPUTER-MEDIATED DELIVERY SYSTEM TO A FACE-TO-FACE MEDIATED DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING FICTION WORKSHOPS

By Mindy A. Daniels

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

The purpose of this case study was to compare the pedagogical and affective efficiency and efficacy of creative prose fiction writing workshops taught via asynchronous computer-mediated online distance education with creative prose fiction writing workshops taught face-to-face in order to better understand their operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to aid administrative decision-makers regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing writing program to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high residency program.

Qualitative data were collected through non-participatory virtual observation of two computer-mediated workshops and in person at a face-to-face mediated workshop. Both workshops used the traditional social constructivist workshop approach which is widely considered to be the gold standard method by the majority of creative writing programs based on its long-standing success as a pedagogical method. In addition to

observing the respective workshops, one-on-one interviews were conducted with three creative writing program administrators and three creative writing instructors, one of whom was also a former program administrator. Creative writing students participating in the three observed workshops were also interviewed one-on-one.

Findings revealed that from a pedagogical perspective both the computer-mediated and the face-to-face mediated workshops are pedagogically efficient and effective using a social constructivist model when workshop teachers demonstrate a strong teaching presence focused on honing novice writers' ability and desire to write. Additionally, the researcher concluded a robust teaching presence is imperative in order to establish and maintain a strong social presence between students and between students and the instructor, as both components are critical for learner autonomy in a social constructivist teaching and learning community. However, teaching presence alone cannot guarantee a strong affective social presence as differences between students' and/or between students' and an instructor's social, cultural, educational, and historical ontogenies can lead to unresolved conflicts that increase psychological distance in the teaching and learning community. Additionally, while pedagogically equivalent, computer-mediated workshops have important time management and potentially affective advantages compared to the face-to-face mediated workshop that help ensure establishment and maintenance of social presence.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

An established postsecondary discipline at the University of Iowa since 1896 (Hamilton, 1994; Wilbers, 1981), creative writing programs have maintained a contentious relationship with their English Department counterparts of literary studies and composition and rhetoric since their widespread acceptance at postsecondary institutions in the mid-twentieth century. Paradoxically, just as analytical English studies evolved from students' demand for a broader range of study beyond narrow philology studies, creative writing programs similarly developed from students' desire and demand to read and critique literature in an expressionistic manner not strictly as literary scholarship. Since their inception creative writing programs have developed an identity of their own. Furthermore, the number of creative writing programs in the United States has grown exponentially going from seventy-nine in 1975 to over eight hundred in 2009 as considerably more private and public postsecondary institutions have added degree-conferring creative writing programs in one or more specialized areas of creative writing (Fenza, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding their popularity with students, a maelstrom of debate over if creative writing can be taught, and if so who, what, and how it should be taught has been an integral aspect of creative writing programs' history. According to creative writing

---

<sup>1</sup> The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) lists programs that offer degree programs in fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry; playwriting; screenwriting; writing for children; criticism and theory; and professional writing (technical writing, etc.).

program administrators and teachers a creative program's purpose is to create art for art's sake not to teach literary scholarship for analytical purposes or to teach practical disquisitional writing. For this reason creative writing administrators and teachers contend prescriptive curricula that focus on theory and composition are not applicable to effective creative writing pedagogy (Garrett, 1994; LaFemina, 2008, 2010). Literary scholarship's professional organization the Modern Language Association (MLA), acting as the gatekeeper for English Departments' standards of scholarship, on the other hand, has decried creative writing programs for their lack of scholarship, their failure to establish a standardized pedagogy for instruction, and for their failure to conduct and publish research (Cain, 1999a, b; Houston et al., 2001; Shelnutt, 1989a, 1994).

Creative writing instructors have responded by stating that publishing novels, short stories, poems, etc., as well as books and articles on writing craft and pedagogy, is the equivalent of research (LaFemina, 2008), and that creative writers cannot be restricted by critical theory for fear of limiting experimental writing (Garrett, 1994; Justice, 1977). Finally, creative writing instructors have maintained that the purpose of creative writing courses is not to advance literary scholarship or to prepare students for careers teaching. Rather, as Garrett (1994) stated in response to an interview question on this topic, "[the goal of a writing course] is to satisfy a need by these people" (p. 114). In this light, creative writing instructors have maintained creative writing is a form of self-expression achieved through self-exploration and self-discovery (Bell, 1994, 1997; Dillard, 1994; Fenza, 2000; Gardner, 1983a; Garrett, 1994; Irving, 1994; LaFemina, 2008). Based on these premises, creative writing programs contend creative writing teachers cannot create writers; they can only hone a person's ability and desire to write (Bell, 1997; Bell, 1977;



Boulter, 2004; Bourjaily, 1977; Dillard, 1994; Kroll, 1999; Myers, 1996). In other words, not even the best creative writing teacher can instill the intellectual and cognitive profundities of “desire, drive, talent, vision, and craft” (McFarland, 1993, p. 34) that underlie and give impetus to the ability to produce literary art. On the other hand, creative writing teachers can teach students who have the “desire, talent, and vision” how to use writing craft techniques effectively. In doing so, creative writing program administrators and instructors insist their purpose is to produce literature and future writers, not future creative writing instructors (Fenza, 2000) as securing a teaching position is not the purpose of an M.F.A. degree. For this reason creative writing administrators and teachers state establishing standardized curricula and strict pedagogical models would be counterproductive.

Paradoxically, critics of creative writing, including some M.F.A. graduates and creative writing teachers, continue to complain that creative writing programs are devoid of critical content, and therefore leave students ill-prepared for literary or teaching careers (Andrews, 2009; Cain, 1999a, b, 2009; Dunning, 2010; Haake, 1994; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Lim, 2003; Keegan, 2006; Mayers, 1999; Radovich, 1999; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005; Shelnut, 1994). In response to such criticisms, AWP’s current executive director, David Fenza (2000) has stated empathetically that creative writing programs have a legitimate position in academe as full-fledged programs of study, not merely as studio art programs. According to Fenza (2000) and other creative writing teachers, no matter how naturally talented students are, they still need guidance to develop their raw ability and drive; the best way to get that guidance is by learning how to master such craft techniques as character development, plot structure, etc. from

successful creative writers not from compositional writers or from literary theorists (Fenza, 2000; LaFemina, 2008).

Such a rift in perspectives has historically distanced creative writing programs from literature, linguistics, and composition, the other three divisional programs, which along with creative writing, typically comprise postsecondary English departments (Bishop, 1992). For in contrast to the more traditional literary scholarship, linguistics, and composition divisions that serve the didactic functions of increasing students' knowledge regarding the formulation of new literary themes and critical theories, language, and discursive writing, creative writing's purpose is to coach the talented and determined but unrefined craftsmanship of novice writers. Therefore creative writing program administrators and teachers do not think of themselves as pedagogues in the traditional academic sense as conveyors of erudite knowledge for intellectual and practical endeavors. Rather they view themselves as artists. Consequently, the stricter educational practices of literary criticism, language, and rhetoric, some creative writing program administrators and teachers continue to contend is the bailiwick of their academic counterparts in literary scholarship, linguistics, and composition (Fenza, 2000, Graff, 2009; Kroll, 1999). Others maintain these diverse literary areas are so intertwined they need to be combined (Bishop, 1992; Cain, 1999a, b; Haake, 1994; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999, 2009; Shelnutt, 1994; Turkle, Bair, Barnett, Pierce, & West, 1994). A third group feels they serve correlative and supportive purposes, but need to be kept distinct without one having to subsume itself to another (Justice, 1977; LaFemina, 2003, McCrory, 2010). Some see creative writing being expanded beyond

English altogether and used in non-English related classes like law studies (Davidson & Fraser, 2009).

Another factor that could potentially affect creative writing programs, in particular creative writing workshops, is the increased likelihood of offering courses, including creative prose fiction writing workshops, electronically as computer-mediated distance education. An option an increasing number of creative writing programs are implementing as evidenced by the fact that twenty-six M.F.A. creative writing programs currently registered with the AWP offer programs using some form of electronic communication. Classified as hybrid, low-residency, or optional-residency programs, they utilize computer-mediated communication for all or most of their classes. Research indicates, however, that computer-mediated distance education requires specific teacher training that could cause creative writing teachers to alter their perspective about needing more specific pedagogical training (Brindley, Walti, & Blaschke, 2009; Hawisher et al., 2004; Hara & Kling, 2000; Salaberry, 2000; Selfe, 1999; Warschauer, 1997).

To understand the impact these different factors could have on creative writing programs' workshop classes it will be helpful to first examine separately the history and background of face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops as two different delivery systems to determine the general operational and affective effectiveness and efficiency of each one. Doing so will lay the foundation for this case study's two purposes: 1) to better understand conventionally taught creative writing programs' operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if creative writing workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order; 2) to aid administrators' decision-making process regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of

expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program.

### **History of Creative Writing**

It has been claimed that creative fiction writing as an educational concept dates back to ancient Greece and Aristotle who advised students to write drama that taught moral, civic, and human behavior through a display of strong emotion (Morley, 2007). Appropriately labeled a “mega-virus” by Morley, Aristotle’s pedagogical lesson has resonated through time, cultures, and geography reappearing essentially unchanged in ancient Arabic and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century European teacher’s Geoffrey de Vinsauf’s *Poetria Nova* or *The New Poetics*. In modern times, writer and teacher John Gardner reiterated Aristotle’s words in his textbook, *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (1983b) when he wrote, “[t]he primary subject of fiction is and always has been human emotion; values; and beliefs” (p. 14). Keegan (2006) referring to Francine du Plessix Gray’s definition of good writing concurs:

Francine du Plessix Gray argued that we must keep our sentences erotic, our sentences euphonic, full of tonality and rhythm and avoiding all those tired phrases we see too often. She wrote how our stories must open in a way that promised to seduce, that intrigued, whispered like a lover. She said we should strive for muscle, for power, to make things throb, and she said we must rebel against the tyranny of the genre (p. 6).

During the 14<sup>th</sup> century Aristotle’s creative writing lessons’ principle was first merged with and then subsumed under the art of public speaking. Renaissance university professors used Aristotle’s message to teach divinity and future political leaders to effectively persuade and control their listeners and readers. Their methodology was to assign students to read and then to imitate the writing style of great writers and rhetoricians. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, writing teachers, including John Milton, had reduced

Aristotle's message to rote compositional exercises containing little to no creative effort (Morley, 2007).

By contrast, creative writing historian Myers (1996) contends creative writing is a relatively modern phenomenon originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a backlash against the then prevailing and entrenched teaching of all literature as philology. English studies therefore started out as a study of language. Only as students clamored to be allowed to read literature analytically and expressively did English as literary scholarship and later as literary criticism evolve as a separate study from linguistics. The road to achieving such an independent status was long and arduous. It was even more difficult for creative writing, which unlike its practical counterparts, composition and rhetoric and journalism, was a true constructivist and aesthetic endeavor. Like literary scholarship, creative writing won recognition as a discrete component of the college English Department curriculum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when postsecondary students demanded courses that taught expressive writing as opposed to the practical disquisitional applications of composition or journalistic reporting.

A prototype of creative writing workshops was introduced at the postsecondary level at Harvard when literature and drama professor George Baker conducted his '47 Workshop. Baker, who taught at Harvard from 1888 to 1925, used his drama class not just to teach drama as a literary discipline but also had his students write and produce their original scripts as performances (Berkeley, 1997; Bordelon, 2006; Kinne, 1954). According to Myers (1996), Baker's '47 Workshop was the first writers' workshop taught at a postsecondary institution.

Baker's hitherto unorthodox approach was to have students write, design, and produce their dramas written specifically for class. Baker contended this departure from the customary lecture enabled students to get first-hand experience in their chosen craft by actively participating in the process as dramatic writers, actors, stage designers, and critics of each others' efforts, not merely passive spectators (Berkeley, 1997; Myers, 1996).

The model that most closely resembles the modern creative writing workshop as a specific writing methodology is not credited to Baker, however, but to Hugh Mearns. An innovative English teacher and later the director of Columbia University's Teachers College's laboratory Lincoln Lab School, Mearns introduced creative writing as an alternative to his standard writing curriculum of penmanship, spelling, and grammar (Myers, 1996). A Progressive educator who strongly believed children learned best when they were interested and took an active hand in their own learning experience, Mearns used creative writing to capitalize on children's natural self-absorption in lieu of the typical lessons in writing mechanics.

Mearns coined the term *creative writing* by having students free write to promote developmental self-discovery. He, however, also realized students' development would stagnate without guidance. For Mearns though guidance was not direction. He insisted that the teacher's responsibility at this beginning stage, which he referred to as a child's "primitive" stage, was to facilitate a child's creative writing by having the child's teacher model what constitutes good writing with his or her own writing in the same way a master craftsman demonstrates his trade to an apprentice-in-training. With the teacher's

mentoring and guidance, Mearns contended, the novice writer evolves into his own genius (Myers, 1996).

Baker's and Mearns's workshop methods were later adapted by Norman Foerster at the University of Iowa. It was Paul Engle, however, Foerster's successor as Iowa's creative writing director, who raised the now famous graduate creative writing program at the University of Iowa to its prominence. In doing so he successfully established what many consider to be the blueprint that has since been deemed the gold standard for creative writing programs' workshops.

#### The reform movement in creative writing

When Norman Foerster was hired by the University of Iowa in 1931 to head the University's literary studies program, School of Letters, he told the *Daily Iowan* he had no intention of creating a "vocational school for authors and critics" (Myers, 1996). Instead, his purpose, as an advocate for New Humanism, was to replace the prevailing philology studies with an emphasis on literary scholarship and criticism. As conceived of by Foerster, creative writing was intended to be an integrated subcomponent that supported this move. For him creative writing was a return to de Vinsauf's and Renaissance rhetoricians' creative writing practices.

Over time, as creative writing programs grew in number, a schism developed between those that viewed creative writing as a tool to improve critical literary analysis and those that took a very literal interpretation of Dewey's constructivism. This latter group perceived creative writing as an expression of personal growth devoid of theoretical scholarly and/or critical analysis. As a result while literary scholars continued to view creative writing as a means to a purposeful end, creative writing teachers saw it

as an end unto itself, pursued strictly as art for art's sake (Bly, 2001; Cain, 2009; Myers, 1996).

Perceiving creative writing as an art, however, raised the issue whether creative writing can even be taught since why attempt to teach the gifted genius? The first question, can creative writing be taught, continues to divide creative writing teachers and program directors; the second question, why does the creative writing genius need instruction, was partially resolved as creative writing programs adapted the position that workshops hone gifted and determined writers' existing skills so untrained but innately capable as well as determined writers can produce quality work. This is the stance many creative writing teachers continue to take (Bell, 1997; Bell, 1977; Bourjaily; 1977; Gardner, 1983a; Justice, 1977; LaFemina, 2008; Lively, 2010; Wilbers, 1981). Those that maintain this latter position have and continue to use Engel's social constructivist paradigm that relies heavily on group collaboration with teachers interjecting direct instruction as needed as the best mode to shape budding ability and desire to write rather than making theory and craft the focus of workshops. Not all instructors, including published writers, however, interpret the workshop model as a form of social constructivist teaching choosing instead to teach using a master-apprentice model (Bly, 2001; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Gardner, 1983a; Guevara, 1998; Haake, 1994; Lish, 1994; Shelnut, 1994).

While these two methods are the most prevalent according to Blythe and Sweet (2008) in actuality creative writing teachers might use any one of six different methods. The first of the six methods they identify is the *atelier approach* that recalls the classic master-apprentice relationship. Essentially a one-to-one educational partnership, the



apprentice benefits from a master's expertise and guidance, but runs the risk of not developing his or her individual style due to being too heavily shaped by his or her "master's" guiding influence. The *great works* approach closely emulates the atelier; the difference is the human master craftsman is replaced by a canon of great literary works. As with the atelier approach the novice writer risks being subsumed by a selected author's style since the instructor typically suggests and guides the young writer to read books the instructor favors and prefers.

The third method is the *inspiration* approach. Closely aligned with Mearns's primitivism, this approach takes the stance that a writer does not need a teacher; his or her imagination provides all that is needed to write creatively. Blythe and Sweet (2008) note that this approach is not widely used independently, but rather integrated with one of the other five.

The *techniques* approach strongly reflects a constructivist paradigm. Using this method the instructor presents a particular literary technique like using a limited omniscient viewpoint, explains it, demonstrates or models the technique, and urges the student writer to produce it on his own. The instructor continues to assist the struggling writer until the student has sufficiently internalized the technique as evidenced by the novice employing it competently in his or her own prose fiction. As with the first two methods, the fledging writer risks never finding a personal writing style due to an unduly powerful influence from his/her teacher.

The most widely publicized method is the *workshop* approach. Made famous at the University of Iowa by Paul Engle, ideally the workshop approach creates a fluid, dynamic, and congenial, but constructively critical community of writers who

individually analyze and critique one member's work at a time. Intended to be professional and constructive, some M.F.A. programs have gained a reputation for workshops that resonate with domineering students' barbed sarcasms and shyer students' pedestrian tributes. Such a range of interpretations are attributed to too much diversity and variance in students' personalities, their learning styles, what they expect from and hope to gain from the workshop, and finally from fear of the responses they will get when they are in turn workshopped (Bly, 2001, Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Greenberg, 2011; Hall, 1983; Keegan, 2006; Shivani, 2010).

The sixth and final widely recognized method Blythe and Sweet (2008) include is the *feminist* approach. A spin-off of the workshop approach, this method uses the same format as the workshop approach, but with greater emphasis on members' equal status supported by an insistence on small group size and a solely democratic process as workshop participants abjure recognizing or designating a group leader. Lack of leadership Blythe and Sweet (2008), however, contend deters instead of promotes progress since without someone capable of determining a manuscript's weaknesses and strengths novice writers are not likely to obtain genuine learner autonomy since they will lack a credible criteria for measuring success. Conversely, Hollis (1992) maintains the feminist workshop approach is useful from a pedagogical as well as from a creative perspective.

In spite of this wide variation, as Blythe and Sweet (2008) point out, the primary method continues to Engle's iconic workshop approach. The preferred choice of social constructivism as a method for teaching creative writing has not quelled critics complaints that creative writing programs lack of a credible teaching pedagogy precludes

them from adequately assessing what is and is not good writing. This has been, and continues to be the basis for many critics' contention that creative writing needs to be more closely integrated with composition and rhetoric (Bishop, 1994; Cain, 1999a, b; Dunning, 2010; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999). Critics argue that aligning creative writing workshops more closely with composition and rhetoric would enhance students' ability to write by giving them the necessary tools to construct literature as well as provide instructors with an assured methodology for appropriately judging what is and is not quality writing. According to Lardner (1999):

Few creative writing classes evince conscious engagement with the philosophical underpinnings upon which foundational notions such as "voice" and "point of view" so thoroughly depend. On this point, creative writing can learn a great deal from composition theory, in the discourse of which may be found ways of talking about and questioning received notions of the author, of creativity or the writing process, or of "good" writing or the goal of writing, all in view of the relationship between discourse and ideology (p. 75).

Conversely, creative writing instructors insist their function is to assist students produce art, not theory. They contend their pedagogy and scholarship focuses on helping students find their creative writing *persona* within what Doyle (1998) refers to as a writer's *fictionworld* (p. 31). They don't discount the critical need for students to receive content instruction to craft their *writingworld* (Doyle, 1998, p. 31), but that craft alone is insufficient to help novice writers identify their writing psyches (LaFemina 2011, 2008; Harper, 2010; Kroll, 1999; Maxwell, 2009; Sarrimo, 2010).

The goal of workshop in the end is to help develop the writer as a *persona*; the rationale for having creative writing be a part of a healthy English department is that some of the issues of criticism come up in later literature classes. Creative writing is not, as some would contend, a type of composition, but a means by which students learn who they are as scholars and writers (LaFemina, 2011, pp. 12-13).

A closely aligned argument against creative writing programs' insularity from other English department branches is that creative writing teachers do not publish any scholarly research. This too is a point creative writing teachers contest pointing out that while they do not publish traditional research papers focused on literary criticism and analysis their published manuscripts are in fact equally viable scholarship in addition to writing reviews on other writers' publications, interviewing writers, and writing pedagogical articles and books (LaFemina, 2008).

Another related complaint critics lodge against creative writing programs is that workshops are ineffective because too many instructors and students view manuscripts as finished works (Barden, 2008; Holtman & Lent, 1995; Larsen, 1998). This they say denies novice writers ownership of their works as work-in-progress as it becomes the property of the workshop. Another argument presented by Lively (2010) is that since ancient times writing instructors have assumed students enrolled in creative writing workshops have innate talent. As a result he contends writing teachers focus only on "those with 'innate talent' [reaching] that one percent of students who have it at the cost of alienating the other ninety-nine percent of students who want to learn the craft of writing" (p. 43). As a result some students view workshops to be little more than "a bunch of little people sitting in an ashtray for two hours and thirty minutes" (Guevara, 1998). These critics' solution is to alter the workshops procedural structure by altering the current model by either focusing on one-to-one mentorships with individuals (Shelnutt, 1994); having peer critiques act more like editors and discuss a peer's manuscript in his/her absence (Holtman & Lent, 1995); or have a mixture of one-to-one meetings with students and group discussions (Guevara, 1998). Still others would retain

the essential workshop model but focus on having a corollary exegesis for assessment purposes (Kroll, 1998).

### The history of distance education

Like creative writing, distance education has a long academic history (Guri-Rosenbilt, 2005). Historically, distance education was defined by an instructor being spatially and temporally separated from those he/she taught (Holmberg, 1989). Additionally until relatively recent times distance education was limited to asynchronous communication via written correspondence. Today distance education classes continue to employ written messages although new computerized and telecommunications technology enable distance education instructors and students to communicate synchronously in real-time while still spatially separated. Due to these advancements, spatial separation alone is currently considered to be the defining component of distance education.

Postsecondary administrators' and students' preference for computer-mediated education underscores the increased number and popularity of computer-mediated distance education classes<sup>2</sup>. Administrators cite the relative low maintenance costs compared to the expense of capital construction and maintenance in terms of building and personnel expenses as prime reasons for implementing online distance education courses (Allen & Seaman, 2005). Additionally, because colleges and universities can and do pass some of these savings on to students in the form of lower tuition, students who might not otherwise have been able to afford college now can. Some students indicate they prefer

---

<sup>2</sup> In its survey National Council of Educational Statistics (NCES) differentiated between computer-mediated and telecommunicated (i.e., video recorded and televised communication). The majority of responding institutions indicated they used computer-mediated distance education, primarily utilizing tools like email and chat rooms. For that reason for the purposes of this report, distance education will be limited to computer-mediated technology.

computer-mediated classes when time and travel due to family, work, or some other outside responsibility impedes or prevents them from attending on-campus classes (Hiltz & Johnson, 1990). Finally, many of today's tech-savvy postsecondary students simply prefer computer-mediated courses compared to traditional face-to-face classes whenever the former are available (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

Data collected by NCES and reported in *Distance Education of Postsecondary Institutions for 2006-2007* clearly indicate computer-mediated distance education is a growing postsecondary educational trend. According to the report, sixty-six percent of the 4,200 two-year and four-year Title IV or public postsecondary institutions offer some kind of distance education including completely computer-mediated, hybrid/blended computer-mediated classes<sup>3</sup> or some other configuration. Sixty percent offer graduate credit computer-mediated, hybrid/blended computer-mediated or some other configuration of electronic courses. Similar statistics available from AWP (2011a) indicate that twenty-six programs that offer M.F.A. degrees in creative prose fiction writing seventeen percent have low-residency programs which are the equivalent of a low-residency course. Two offer totally computer-mediated distance education M.F.A. programs.

#### Current concerns regarding computer-mediated distance education

Notwithstanding its growing acceptance and popularity, instructors (Farber, 1998; Grenier-Winther, 1999; Salaberry, 2000), students who have completed computer-mediated distance education classes (Grenier-Winther, 1999; Hiltz & Johnson, 1990; Lawless & Richardson, 2002) and others, including journalists (Teachout, 2009), the

---

<sup>3</sup> Hybrid or blended classes are defined in the report as those that use online and in-class instruction with decreased face-to-face class time instruction.

National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC), 2004), and researchers (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Farber, 1998; Gance, 2002; Warschauer, 1998) have raised serious concerns about the efficacy of computer-mediated distance education. Concerns they have noted include the quality of instruction, students' ability to comprehend and participate, teachers' ability and willingness to appropriately prepare and manipulate computer-mediated distance education classes, students' concern that they feel socially isolated, and students' concern regarding a lack of teaching presence.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Paradoxically neither universities nor professional organizations like the MLA, AWP, or postsecondary institutions have specified if creative writing programs are an academic discipline or a studio art (Lim, 2003). According to Houston et al. (2001), for an academic program to be considered a discipline its faculty must engage in "scholarly projects that sustain and renew their intellectual lives" (p. 227). According to AWP's executive director, David Fenza (2009) and other creative writing teachers (Justice, 1977; LaFemina, 2008) creating literature is the equivalent of scholarly research for writing teachers. Moreover, many creative writers and writing program directors, including Fenza, dispute creative writers' and creative writing programs' need to perpetuate or to emphasize theory contending instead that creative writing "complement[s] literary scholarship and its purpose is to provide a "balance between theory and practice... literary conservation and innovation" (Fenza, 2000). Tom Grimes, the M.F.A. director at Texas State University, is even more emphatic, "For the writer, literary theory not only is of no use but is detrimental to his progress and well being. Once a writer starts believing that literary theory and not literature can be his guide through the labyrinth, he's doomed"

(1999). As a result, the field of creative writing has yet to identify a cohesive taxonomy (Blythe & Sweet, 2008).

Other professional creative writer-teachers and students disagree (Andrews, 2009; Bly, 2001; Cain, 1999a, b, 2009; Morley, 2007; Shelnutt; 1989a, 1994). They just as adamantly state that creative writing programs in general, and creative writing workshops in particular, need to establish a distinct educational and literary theory and practice that can be researched and used to establish a foundation for instruction. Some researchers (Mayers, 2009; Graff, 2009; Lim, 2003; Radovich, 1999) consider creative writing programs to have reached a defining moment concerning their status in academia. They contend that unless creative writing programs establish theoretical and pedagogical standards for themselves in the same way literary studies and composition have, creative writing programs will not mature into an autonomous study area equivalent to literary studies and composition and rhetoric taught by tenured scholars, but will dwindle to extracurricular academic studio arts programs.

In a similar vein, while there appears to be minimal dispute regarding computer-mediated distance education's efficiency as an instructional medium, it is not without its detriments and critical detractors regarding its efficacy as a replacement for face-to-face mediated classroom courses.

Some of the key detriments researchers have identified include a lack of sufficient teaching presence or direction (Duncan, 2005; Goodyear, Jones, Asenio, Hodgson, & Steeples, 2005; Hara & Kling, 2000; Stodel, Thompson, & MacDonald, 2006; Twigg, 2001), communication issues ranging from abusive language known as *flaming*, and



dishonesty (Duncan, 2005; Keisler, Siegal, & McGuire, 1984; Warschauer, 1997), and information overloads (Duncan, 2005; Hara & Kling, 2000; Warschauer, 1997).

On the other hand there is also evidence that computer-mediated distance education has been demonstrated to be not only efficient, but quite effective as an educational format for teaching using a collaborative or social constructivist paradigm. For example, Warschauer (1997) documents several language teachers in the United States and abroad have had significant success teaching German, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. Warnock (2009) has indicated similar success teaching composition. Additionally in her 2001 study *Innovations in Online Learning: Moving Beyond No Significant Difference*, Carol Twigg and a number of administrators from postsecondary institutions that offer computer-mediated programs and classes purposely took a positivistic stance to address questions of how to make computer-mediated learning more effective by improving the quality of education and increasing student access.

Notwithstanding, an examination of the literature indicates a paucity of research has been conducted that merges computer-mediated distance education and creative writing. Currently, the AWP (2011a) lists two universities that teach creative prose fiction writing as a studio M.F.A. program and several that teach hybrid creative prose fiction writing low-residency programs. Given this gap in the literature, the purpose of this study was to examine conventional creative writing workshops taught face-to-face to better understand their operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to computer-mediated delivery system in order to aid administrative decision-makers regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of

expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program.

### **Study's Rationale and Significance**

A review of available literature indicates considerable research has been devoted to the history, format, and growth of creative writing workshops (Bly, 2001; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Myers, 1996). Information regarding distance education too has grown to constitute a substantial canon that documents its development from mail-order materials to sophisticated electronic synchronous communication and development of new literacies users need to know to take full advantage of what some researchers see as its full potential (Brindley, Walti, & Blaschke, 2009; Garrison, 2007; Hawisher, Selfe, Moraski, & Pearson, 2004; Moore, 1997; Selfe, 1999; Warschauer, 1997). Furthermore, numerous researchers have examined how computer-mediated distance education can be used to effectively teach postsecondary students composition and rhetoric at a basic and advanced level as well as teach other disciplines' classes including those in business, foreign languages, sociology, and psychology (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987; Lawless & Richardson, 2002; Warschauer, 1998; Warnock, 2009).

A review of the literature to date, however, has demonstrated a paucity of research regarding application of computer-mediated distance education regarding postsecondary creative prose fiction writing workshops as even most of AWP's (2011a) listed creative writing programs in prose fiction that are taught through computer-mediated distance education are hybrid courses that require face-to-face workshops as part of their low-residency programs.

Therefore this case study again was intended to fulfill two purposes. First, it examined conventional creative writing workshops taught face-to-face to better understand their operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to; second, aid administrative decision-makers regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program. In this way the study adds to the research canon by examining how computer-mediated distance education might impact creative prose fiction writing workshops from four angles. First, it presents a possible configuration for use in a computer-mediated workshop based on one currently in use. Second, it indicates how such a delivery system could impact decisions regarding who teaches creative fiction workshops in terms of what, if any, pedagogical knowledge and training teachers might need to be effective instructors teaching creative prose fiction writing using a computer-mediated workshop format versus a face-to-face model. Third, it compares and contrasts a face-to-face mediated workshop with a current computer-mediated workshop to determine if students participating in a computer-mediated workshop respond the same or differently socially, cognitively, and affectively when participating in a computer-mediated workshop compared to a face-to-face mediated workshop. Fourth, it assessed if computer-mediated creative writing workshops are a sound pedagogical investment from teachers' and students' perspectives, its primary users.

## **Literature Review**

Literature will be reviewed under several related topics. These will include constructivist learning processes as they pertain to postsecondary students' affective, educational and cognitive needs in terms of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence (Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan, & Pellegino, 2000; Duncan, 2005; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Garrison, 2007; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Goodyear et al., 2005; Hancock, 2002; Moore, 1972; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Rovai, 2001; Salaberry, 2000; Shea, Pickett, & Pelz, 2003; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Specific attention will be paid to postsecondary students' views regarding creative prose fiction writing workshops and computer-mediated distance education also from affective educational, and cognitive perspectives. A third area will cover prevailing educational theories as they relate respectively to creative prose fiction writing and computer-mediated distance education from students' individual and collective standpoints and how critics feel creative writing workshop teachers need pedagogical training to facilitate, not direct, creative writing workshops (Bly, 2001; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Burnett, 2002; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005).

## **Research Questions**

The study will attempt to answer four questions concerning 1) critics' concerns regarding the need for alter M.F.A. content emphasis; 2) how pedagogically operationally efficient and effective computer-mediated workshops are compared to face-to-face mediated workshops; 3) students' affective satisfaction with computer-mediated distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops compared to face-to-face mediated workshops; and 4) whether students participating in computer-mediated workshops

achieve the same level of cognitive presence or learner autonomy as creative writing students in face-to-face mediated workshops achieve regarding an ability to produce publishable creative prose fiction work as literary art.

1. Will transposing a collaborative, interactive face-to-face workshops into a virtual computer-mediated distance education prose fiction writing workshops ameliorate or exacerbate existing issues currently identified with creative writing programs regarding if creative writing can be taught, and if so, who, what, and how should it be taught?
2. How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors utilize collaborative social constructivist, interactive, and activity educational theories, and account for transactional distance education to meet their teaching objectives for creative prose fiction writing workshops when teaching a workshop as a computer-mediated distance education class compared to how effectively and efficiently creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors use social constructivism, interactive learning and activity theory to meet their teaching objectives when teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops face-to-face?
3. How effectively and efficiently do computer online distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops meet students' social, psychological, and educational needs and expectations for social collaboration, psychological support, and educational content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers compared to the spontaneous

- and robust social and psychological interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?
4. How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated workshops enhance students' prose fiction writing development and potential to write prose fiction of sufficient quality to be seriously considered for publication by real world publishing houses compared to participation in face-to-face workshops?

### **Methodology**

The dissertation was a qualitative study using a case study approach that utilized interviews with the respective program directors, instructors, and the eight of eleven graduate students enrolled in creative prose fiction writing M. F.A. program and six of the graduate students participating in two computer-mediated distance education workshops. The interview data were triangulated with physical and virtual year-long (two semesters) observations of the face-to-face mediated and two computer-mediated classrooms, and with readings of all twenty-two face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshop students' manuscripts and the twelve critiques and comments of the computer-mediated participants posted online as part of the computer-mediated writing workshops' activities and course requirements. Participants were asked to verify the accuracy of field notes for credibility purposes (Creswell, 2007). Peers were also asked to check the researcher's data and findings to ensure the case study maintained reliability and validity (Creswell, 2003, 2007, Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994).

### **Summary**

Modern creative writing programs evolved from students' and teachers' desire to write expressively and artistically, not merely proficiently for practical purposes.

Distance education was similarly initiated due to students' need for and subsequent request for a viable educational method and venue that would enable them to have educational opportunities otherwise denied them due to geographical isolation and/or time restrictions.

Today, the advent of sophisticated computer technology has initiated a new student demand for computer-mediated distance education. Private educational reports and government educational statistical data predict an upward growth trend in computer-mediated distance education at postsecondary institutions as numerous postsecondary disciplines including the sciences, social sciences, the humanities, and the arts have implemented either entire computer-mediated distance education programs or hybrid programs that combine computer-mediated distance education classes with face-to-face mediated classes. Both scenarios considerably extend postsecondary educational opportunities available to those who might otherwise not be able to attend college.

Many computer-mediated educational experts like Hawisher and her colleagues (2004) and Selfe (1999) see the opportunities offered by computer-mediated distance education as limitless. Others, including students that have participated in computer-mediated distance education classes, have voiced reservations and concerns over the social isolation and impersonal nature of computer-mediated distance education classes. Research indicates the lack of teaching presence and social presence in such courses have been primary issues of concern. Such concerns are especially important with regard to creative prose fiction writing workshops as they hinge on peer collaboration and teacher facilitation the defining traits of social presence and teaching presence respectively (Bransford et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2001; Rourke et al., 2001; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

To reiterate, the two purposes of the present case study were: 1) to examine conventional creative writing workshops taught face-to-face to better understand their operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to; 2) aid administrative decision-makers regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Introduction**

Literature for a qualitative case study comparing a face-to-face mediated M.F.A. creative prose fiction writing workshop and a computer-mediated M.F.A. distance education creative prose fiction writing workshop as discrete delivery systems is reviewed under several related topics. These include critical issues and areas of concern as identified by users of both delivery systems; students' perceived affective, sociological, and educational needs within the constructs of both delivery systems; educational, sociological, and linguistic theories affecting face-to-face mediated classes and computer-mediated distance education classes; and the ideological purposes and educational functions of computer-mediated distance education and face-to-face mediated creative prose fiction writing workshops.

While neither distance education nor computer-mediated communication are particularly new phenomena to the twenty-first century, a brief overview of distance education, computer-mediated distance education, and how computer-mediated creative writing workshops are taught as distance education classes follows.

### **Overview of Computer-mediated Distance Education**

Historically, creative writing programs were taught totally face-to-face on campus because of the highly dialogic nature of writing workshops. However, in recent years numerous postsecondary schools have taken advantage of advanced computer technology to offer an extensive number and different types of courses as computer-mediated

distance education, including creative writing programs (AWP, 2009; Delaney, 2008, Distance Education Is Coming to the Black Colleges, 2004; May, 2011). Using Internet tools like chat rooms, emails, and listservs as well as virtual learning environments like WebCT, eBulletin, and Blackboard, computer-mediated course work has in fact become virtually synonymous with distance education.

In actuality, however, communication conducted via computer, commonly referred to as computer-mediated communication, and distance education are distinctly different (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). According to Guri-Rosenblit, distance education responds to students distanced from a college campus who study away from the campus under the tutelage of a campus-based instructor. By contrast, instruction using computer-mediated communication can and frequently is used to supplement educational activities in a traditional classroom, as well as being a substitute for face-to-face mediated classes by utilizing Internet access tools like listservs, chat rooms, email, and more elaborate virtual learning environments like Blackboard, eBulletin, and WebCT.

Notwithstanding these critical differences, computer-mediated learning is so prevalent and closely associated with distance education that the two are widely considered synonymous (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). The fact that two reports, one released by the National Council of Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2008 and another by the National Postsecondary Education Corporation (NPEC) in 2004, use computer-mediated communication and distance education interchangeably support the terms' synonymous usage in the literature.

Given this general acceptance and to avoid confusion for the purposes of this case study distance education as an historical practice is referred to simply as distance

education. When computer-mediated communication as applied to distance education is meant it is referred to as computer-mediated distance education or simply as computer-mediated communication. These latter phrases will thus distinguish them from other types of computer-mediated or electronic learning practices also used for distance education including CD-Rom, teleconferencing, etc.

In “Theoretical Challenges to Distance Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Shift from Structured to Transactional Issues,” Garrison (2000) identifies key advances and issues of computer-mediated communication. As he points out and other research supports (Allen & Seaman, 2005; NCES, 2008; NPES, 2004), computer-mediated communication is being increasingly promoted in higher education for fiscal reasons, not improved educational practices and procedures. Additionally, as Garrison says, technology companies, strongly motivated by financial gains, prepare and successfully market computer-mediated virtual learning environment packages that may or may not be based on appropriate pedagogical theories intended to advance students’ academic achievement and retention.

According to AWP (2011a) currently twenty-six postsecondary institutions registered with AWP offer low-residency hybrid or blended face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated distance education M.F.A. creative writing programs, but only two (AWP, 2011a) offer M.F.A. creative writing programs entirely online. Just as in the past the number of creative writing programs increased due to their popularity with higher education students, AWP’s and NCES’s statistical data strongly suggest that in the future more postsecondary institutions are likely to make M.F.A. creative writing programs available to students as computer-mediated distance education. However, due to the

apparent paucity of current literature reviewing creative writing as computer-mediated distance education, the second part of this literature review examines how offering creative prose fiction writing workshops could affect the nature and makeup of what, how, and who teaches creative prose fiction writing workshops as well as how M.F.A. creative prose fiction writing students and their writing teachers might generally be affected by participating in computer-mediated distance education workshop versions compared to participation in the traditional face-to-face mediated workshop by examining the pedagogical, social, affective, and cognitive importance of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in both delivery systems.

According to Garrison (2000), theory communicates and explains “the purpose, methods and goals of a field of practice” (p. 4). He goes on to identify three major theoretical developments in the last fifty years of distance education. In line with the sociological and political temperament of equity and equality prevalent in the 1960s, Wedemeyer advanced what he later published in 1981 as his *desiderata* (Wedemeyer, 1981) wherein he totally shifted the emphasis of distance education away from organizational and administrative handling of correspondence to making the individual learner and his/her pedagogical needs the focus of attention.

The second major theoretical shift in distance education was initiated by Peters. Unlike Wedemeyer, Peters’ (1983) thrust was to make commercial profit, not to ensure learners’ educational advancement. Therefore in an effort to simplify distance education, Peters developed and promoted a model that prescribed mass production of scripted packages that essentially stripped distance education of Wedemeyer’s learner-centered focus.

The third major historical contribution to distance education Garrison identifies is Holmberg's introduction of "guided didactic conversation" (Garrison, 2000, p. 7; Holmberg, 1989). Though still part of Peters' scripted text, Holmberg's recognition of the need for teaching presence as part of distance education was an important step that began to refocus the emphasis in distance education away from commercial profit and back to learners and their educational achievement.

The most recent advance in distance education theory according to Garrison is "transactional distance," a theoretical concept advocated by Moore (1972). A return to Wedemeyer's learner-focused theory, Moore's theory clearly posits that the primary purpose and practice of distance education is pedagogical, not fiscal.

The transaction that we call distance education occurs between teachers and learners in an environment having the special characteristic of separation of teachers from learners. This separation leads to special patterns of learner and teacher behaviors. It is the separation of learners and teachers that profoundly affects both teaching and learning. With separation there is a psychological and communication space to be crossed, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner. It is this psychological and communications space that is the transactional distance (1997, p. 22).

Moore identifies 1) structure of programs; 2) interaction between learners and teachers; and 3) nature and degree of students' self-discipline and motivation as three key factors affecting transactional distance. He then delineates how what he calls "clusters of variables," dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy cover the "psychological and communication space" that is transactional distance.

Moore's theory is decisive because collaborative dialogue, program structure, and learner types pinpoint crucial elements of concern and difficulty learners who have taken computer-mediated courses have reported experiencing. Their evidence supports Garrison's definition of theory (2000) as a way to explain and communicate the purpose,

methods, and goals of a field of practice. Their experiences suggest that teachers will need to change their teaching strategies and methods and teachers and students will have to change their perspective of computer-mediated distance education compared to face-to-face mediated instruction to be better satisfied with computer-mediated distance education. This does not imply that a social constructivist pedagogical method cannot be used in computer-mediated distance education, only that teachers will have to alter how they design their programs and lessons to achieve the same results now derived through constructivist instruction used in face-to-face mediated settings.

Furthermore, although the key features of Moore's transactional distance are used in the following discussion to review salient literature as discrete functions, it is important to recognize and understand that they are so interlaced as not to be appreciably separate in real-time practice and instruction. Moreover, as indicated below, they conform to later computer-mediated researchers' (Garrison et al., 2001; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Rovai, Poston, & Baker, 2008) three-tiered good practices of social constructivist teaching in a computer-mediated teaching and learning community of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence that are discussed below as part of a review of issues affecting creative writing programs and workshops.

### **Critical Issues Defining and Dividing Contemporary Creative Writing Programs**

A review of the literature indicates four pedagogical issues divide the academic creative writing community concerning reform issues. These four issues are: 1) Can creative writing be taught? 2) And if can be taught, how should creative writing be taught? 3) Who should teach creative writing? and 4) What should the content and context of creative writing workshop classes be?

### Can creative writing be taught?

One question still to be resolved is whether any form of creative writing can be taught. Paradoxically, the question's genesis comes from the very educational theory that gave birth to the idea of teaching creative writing in schools. When creative writing was first introduced as an educational activity in lieu of standard penmanship and grammar, Dewey's progressive educational theories dominated.

According to Dewey (1964; Archambault, 1964), for academic educational content to be meaningful and purposeful to learners it has to be of interest and a journey of self-discovery. His position marked a shift in educational philosophy from the belief that knowledge lay outside the child. This latter philosophy held students gained knowledge by direct instruction provided through artificial devices like lectures or skill and drill exercises; the new precept was to assess content by determining what practical use the knowledge was to the learner, and how interested he/she was in learning, or more accurately put, discovering how to avail himself/herself of it and how to apply it. As a result of this shift, creative writing was thought to be best learned by having students actively write creatively as opposed to a teacher instructing them on how to write creatively, or teaching them to write from reading literature, as these practices were considered detrimental to students' innate creativity. Since this implied a teacher was unnecessary, Myers (1996) says the whole question whether creative writing could be taught became "creative writing's stutter of self doubt" (p. 112). Myers goes on to say that eventually teachers circumvented the question by declaring that creative writing teachers hone talent and determination, they do not create it. This in time, Myers indicates, became the standard accepted by creative writing program administrators and

teachers. Among those agreeing are writing teachers and novelists, Madison Smartt Bell (1997), Marvin Bell (1977), Vance Bourjaily (1977), John Gardner (1983a, b), and AWP's executive director, D. W. Fenza (2000), as well as historian, Mark McGurl (2009). Opponents, however, are just as adamant that creative writing can be taught by concentrating on mechanics, not creativity (Bly, 2001; Dunning, 2010; Kalamarus, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Lively, 2010; Mayers, 1999; Roberts, 1993; Shelnut, 1989b, 1994). Their reasons for disagreeing are discussed below.

#### What should creative writing programs and workshops teach?

A major point of division between creative writing program proponents that support the current status quo and program critics concerns program curriculum. While there is widespread and consistent agreement amongst all participants that good writers need to read voraciously and widely in the sciences, arts, and humanities, there is considerable disagreement regarding the purpose of reading. Critics like Andrews (2009), writing as an M.F.A. student, Cain (2009) and Shelnut (1989a) writing as veteran creative writing teachers; and Ritter (2001) and Bizzaro (2004) writing as literature and composition instructors, firmly advocate that creative prose fiction writing students need a solid education in all areas of English studies—literature, literary scholarship, and composition and rhetoric. Grimes (1999), Dillard (1984), Fenza (2000) and Gardner (1983a, b) disagree. They maintain emphasizing a need for training in literary scholarship only sidetracks writers into writing as critics and theorists, not as imaginative artists. According to Gardner (1983a) such writers invert the order of their stories by starting their stories with erudite symbols and themes instead of laying a proper



foundation for their stories' through the standard or conventional development of plot and character. Dillard (1994) is especially empathic regarding this point:

Let the reader study theory. Leave the writers alone. You see writers getting theory-bound and buy into Marxist theory or feminist theory or structuralist theory or poststructuralist theory. They feel an obligation because of poststructuralist canon, say to put things in their work for ideological reasons, and you just watch the work die, die (p. 85).

The core of such disagreement continues to reside in what critics view as creative writing workshops' and programs' anti-intellectual stance and workshop proponents' contention that creative writing is an artistic craft focused on producing art for art's sake (Myers, 1996), not to teach proper grammar or to make graduates employable. So while Fenza (2000) for example, does not preclude ancillary studies in literature and composition within creative writing programs that combine writing workshops and literary studies labeled studio-research programs, he firmly contends that first and foremost the purpose of a creative writing program is to produce "an accomplished writer who makes significant contributions to contemporary literature" (p. 6). Such graduates are the result of studio or workshop programs. He, like Bell (1994), Gardner (1983a) and Dillard (1994), asserts that a focus on literary scholarship causes writing students to undermine their imaginative story telling with an ineffectual effort to tell a story as an exemplification of literary theory.

By contrast, critics (Andrews, 2009; Bly, 2001; Cain, 1999a,b, 2009; Dunning, 2010; Lardner, 1999; Kalamaras, 1999; Mayers, 1999; Moxley, 1989; Radavich, 1999; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005) argue creative writing programs, and workshops in particular, fail both to teach creative writing students to be effective artistic writers or to adequately prepare them to teach creative writing, literature, or composition

and rhetoric classes. With regard to the first point, Cain (1999 a, b; 2009) insists that learning and applying literary theories to academia's recognized literary canon does not stymie writers' imaginations; it enriches them in a way that the popular contemporary, frequently formulaic, prose fiction, she contends M.F.A. students frequently read in order to emulate fails to do. Other critics complain that writing programs and workshops in particular do not do enough to encourage students to integrate multiculturalism (Green, 2001) or social justice awareness (Morley, 2007) into their writing. Both are points creative writing teachers dispute (Bell, 1994; Irving, 1994; T. De Haven, personal communication, December 8, 2011) contending creative writing students read a wide range of contemporary as well as classical literature and frequently focus on moral and social issues in their manuscripts.

Regarding critics' concern that the M.F.A. degree does not ensure employability, M.F.A. students (Andrews, 2009; Turkle et al., 1994) along with teachers (Cain, 2009; Haake, 1994; Radavich, 1999; Ritter, 2001) disagree with Fenza (2000) that M.F.A. programs are not meant to produce teachers. They point out that the number of creative writing programs has increased due to such programs' popularity with students, even though the number of M.F.A. graduates that publish two or more works is considerably lower than the total number of M.F.A. graduates. As a result M.F.A. graduates expecting to get a teaching position in postsecondary institutions as creative writing teachers are disappointed to find colleges and universities usually only hire published writers with at least two novel-length works to their credit to teach creative writing classes (Lim, 2003). Equally discouraging is the fact that their degree fails to make them competitive job seekers for college jobs teaching composition and rhetoric or literature as they lack the

necessary training in either of these fields compared to M.A. and Ph.D. graduates in composition and rhetoric and English studies.

For many critics the answer is to combine the three programs to form what Mayers (2009) calls creative writing studies. Mayers maintains a combination program would prepare students to teach creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and literature. He feels his proposed comprehensive program would ensure graduates receive training in pedagogy, composition, theory, and creative writing thereby making them not just potentially better writers, but far better teachers than someone with no training, no matter how many manuscripts they have had published.

#### Who should teach creative prose fiction writing workshops?

Another major point of contention regarding creative writing programs and workshops is the debate over who should teach creative prose fiction writing workshops. Fenza (2000) contends that published writers are unequivocally the best teachers.

The best teachers of the making of the arts are those experienced in making them; they are not specialists in studying, preserving, or analyzing the arts, although art programs must include these endeavors, too, in their pedagogy and curriculum...If one's art is good, one has earned the privilege to teach others that art. With whom would it be better to study playwriting? With a doctor of literature who has never written a play but has studied many from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on? Or with the teacher with an MFA in theater who has written dozens of plays and seen many of them through to public performances?...In engineering, medicine, or computer science, the degreed professionals who actually build bridges, cure the sick, or write software—the practitioners—are the most respected teachers. Only in the departments of English does there remain this peculiar insistence that only the specialists be allowed to teach it (pp. 6-7).

Critics do not disagree that published writers make excellent teachers; they disagree that all published writers make good creative writing teachers. As proof of her position regarding this issue, Bly (2001) cites Philip Levine's account of his negative experience with Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Lowell when Lowell directed Iowa's poetry

workshops and Levine was one of his students. Levine wrote in his autobiography that when he asked Lowell why he had gotten a B instead of an A, Lowell responded that though Levine had come the furthest, he had “already given out the As” (pp. 16-17). Bly (2001) says Lowell’s comment and attitude exemplify the “horrible literary kind of meanness” workshop writer-teachers are capable of” (p. 17). Bly equally faults the famous writers she calls “wixels” (p. 27). Wixels, Bly says lend universities enormous clout by their presence, but give nothing in return to M.F.A. students because wixels feel their presence in class is sufficient without having to actually teach. Instead they regale students with nostalgic anecdotes of their writing careers or else let students teach themselves through round table workshop discussions either because they do not know how to teach, or else do not want to expend the time and labor to prepare lessons for teaching.

Critics’ response regarding who should teach creative writing workshops directly connects with their other contentions regarding whether creative prose fiction writing can be taught, what should be taught in creative writing workshops, and how such workshops should be taught. Based on their contention that good writing is grounded in a thorough knowledge of literary scholarship along with sound rhetorical and compositional skill, critics feel creative writing teachers should be trained in pedagogical methods as well as in literature, composition and rhetoric. Such diverse training Bly (2001) and Ritter (2001) insist would properly prepare the M.F.A. or Ph.D. creative prose fiction writing student to teach postsecondary students to write.

How should creative writing workshops be taught?

To date Myers (1996) is the only scholar to have written a comprehensive text detailing the history of creative writing. Tracing creative writing programs' roots to Dewey's progressive philosophy Myers says creative writing workshops as an academic course started at Columbia University's Teachers' College School, Lincoln School under the tutelage of Hughes Mearns. In accord with Dewey's educational tenets, Mearns conceived of creative writing as a craft-oriented form of self-expression arrived at through self-exploration and self-discovery. Mearns's colleague, M. B. Potter, also relied on Dewey's concepts that had students collaborate as they read their creative work aloud and let them then comment on each others' efforts with the teacher acting as a facilitator, not the director, of the dialogue. This collaborative, teacher-facilitated format, Myers (1996) indicates was the genesis of the modern creative writing workshop.

When Norman Foerster was hired to direct the University of Iowa's School of Letters in 1936, he adapted Mearns's model and instituted the creative writing workshop method to teach creative writing. It was under Paul Engle's tutelage, however, that Iowa's workshop model became the blueprint and eventually the gold standard for creative writing workshops based on the same social constructivist and interactive pedagogical models started by Mearns based on Dewey's pedagogical theory of self-discovery and self-expression.

Contemporary creative prose fiction writing workshops therefore are deeply rooted in the pedagogical traditions of social constructivist learning and teaching, a pedagogical model creative writing workshops continue to use. Social constructivism as a pedagogical paradigm is based on the concept that learner autonomy is achieved as the result of purposely designed dialogic exchanges. Most closely associated with the

educational philosophies and theories of the American educator John Dewey and the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the driving principle of social constructivist teaching and learning is for all group members, students and their instructor(s), to work in concert as a team to build a “knowledge community” (Oxford, 1997) or a “community of inquiry” (Garrison et al., 2001). The purpose of such a teaching and learning community is to facilitate learning through positive social interaction as group members provide support and instruction to each other as a more expert member helps less knowledgeable members internalize the new information so that they first attain mastery wherein they replicate what they have learned and then, with sufficient practice, appropriate it the way a novice musician first plays mechanically correct, and then, again with sufficient practice, becomes a virtuoso performer (Werstch, 1998).

### **Social Constructivist Teaching and Learning**

According to Vygotsky (1978), whose theory has become a keystone trait of social constructivist teaching and learning, every learner has a *zone of proximal development*, the term he defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Thus Vygotsky asserted a person learns best when an expert first demonstrates how to do a task, then assists the learner until the student internalizes or appropriates (Wertsch, 1998) the lesson so that he/she understands it so well he/she can do it independently. Vygotsky furthermore asserts the primary medium for instruction is through dialogic exchange. As a methodology, social constructivism teaching and learning is relatively non-prescriptive since the instructor

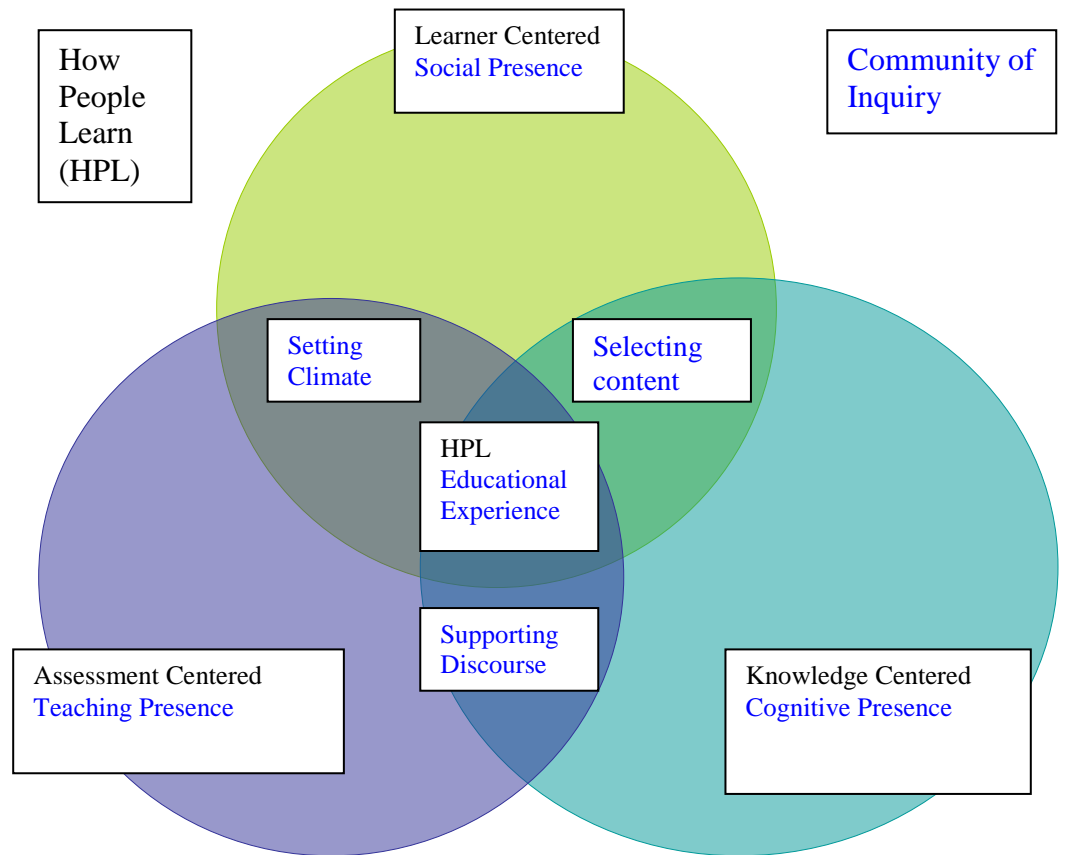
places increasing responsibility on students as they learn first to gain mastery and finally to internalize or appropriate the knowledge as autonomous learners demonstrating thorough comprehension (Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Wertsch, 1998). This is why the teacher is responsible for providing direct instruction as well as facilitating discourse (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Matthew, Cooper, Davidson, & Hawkes, 1995; Rourke et al., 2001; Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube-Hackett, 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Because social constructivist teaching and learning is dialogic, a dynamic key feature of successful interaction is interactive student-to-student and teacher-to-student dialogue that provides students with meaningful and practical applications of a teacher's learning objectives (Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Oxford, 1997). Though often associated with teaching a second language (Oxford, 1997; Warschauer, 1997), interactive communication is also an integral feature of creative writing workshops. According to Bakhtin (1986; Holquist, 1993; Morson, 1983; Oxford, 1997; Warschauer, 1997) interactive communication focuses on the affective meaning underlying both verbal and nonverbal communication between group participants and how such communications are interpreted by participants, members, or students of the class or group. As explained by Bakhtin (1986), people shape or assign individualistic meanings to words and gestures based on their personal communicative experience when interacting with others.

Bourdieu's sociological theory (1993; Hanks, 2005) regarding *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* echoes Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's theories in that, like them, he felt individuals internalize the meaning or context of language based on their social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogeny. Finally, Rosenblatt's (2005) theory of transactional reading and writing further expands this concept by stating individuals interpret or analyze what

they read and write on the basis of their current social, cultural, historical, and educational status that they have developed over time. Since such conditions change with new experiences a person's interpretation is subject to change. Since dialogic exchanges are the mainstay of fiction writing workshops, participant interaction is extremely important as the tone and tenor of such interactions impact how well individual participants, as well as the workshop as a whole, functions. This in turn affects how well the workshop and its individual participants are likely to develop socially and cognitively as writers.

These various theories are conflated in two social constructivist paradigms known as "How People Learn" (Bransford et al., 2000) and "Community of Inquiry" (Garrison et al., 2001). In the former Bransford and his colleagues, focusing on face-to-face mediated instruction, refer to three critical areas of teaching and learning: learner centered, knowledge centered, and assessment centered. Although using a different title and different terms, Garrison and his colleagues, focusing on computer-mediated distance education, refer to their identical three areas of teaching and learning as social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. Figure 2-1 shows schematically how the two models correlate as depicted by Shea et al. (2003).





**Figure 2-1: Aggregate of *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000) and *Community of Inquiry* (Garrison et al., 2001). Adapted from Shea et al. (2003, p. 78).**

In their comparison of the two models, Shea and his colleagues defined the correlative categories thus:

Cognitive presence [knowledge centered] is the extent to which students are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained discourse in a community of inquiry,...it is achieved in concert with effective teaching presence and satisfactory social presence...

Social presence [learner centered] is viewed as the ability of students to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry and is deemed critical in the absence of physical presence and attendant teacher immediacy necessary to sustain learning in the classroom...

Teaching presence [assessment centered] is the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the realization of personally meaningful and

educationally worthwhile outcomes. Teaching presence has three components: Instructional Design and Organization, Facilitating Discourse, and Direct Instruction (p. 65).

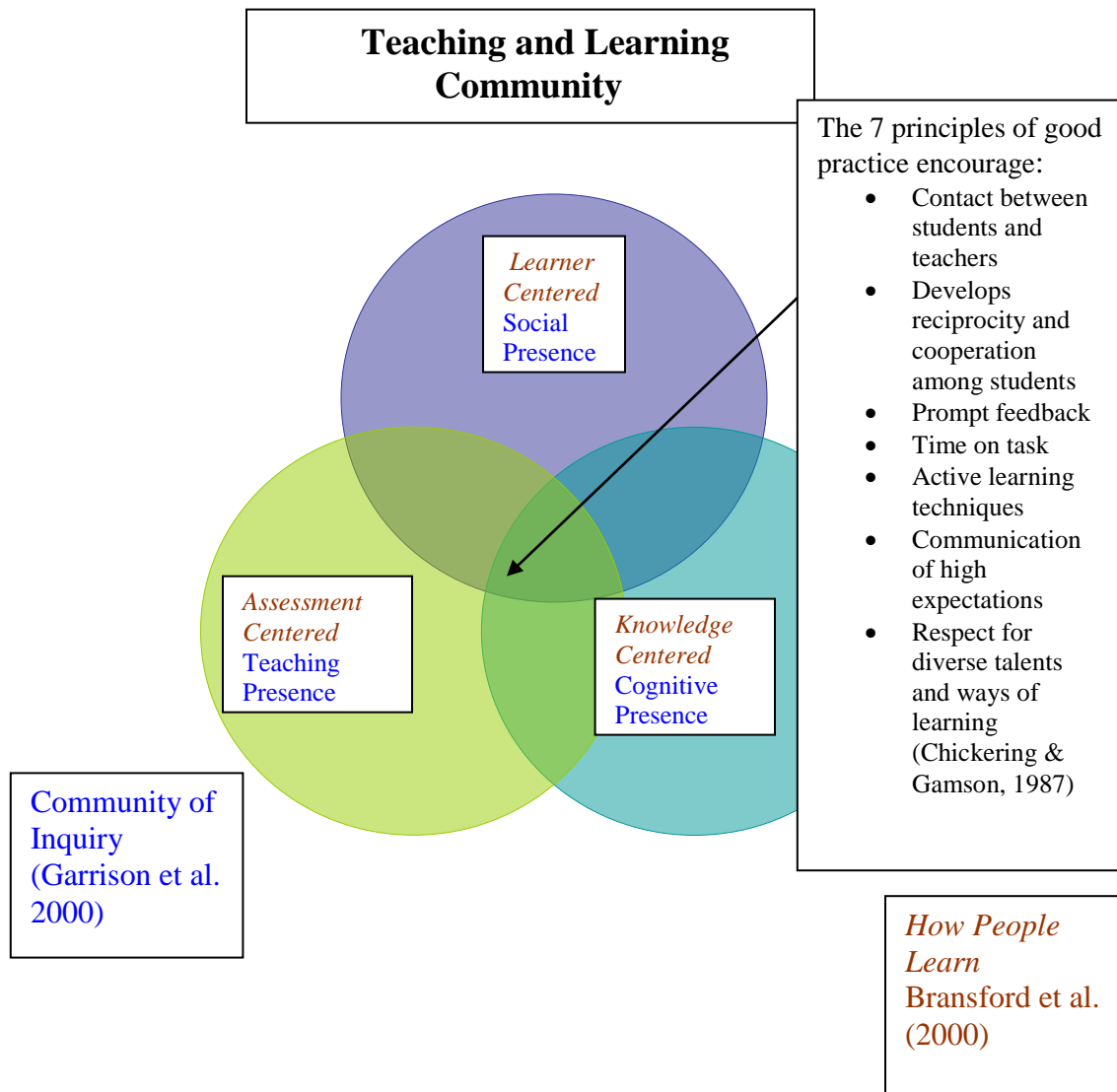
Additional research done by Rourke et al. (2001), Tu (2000), and Tu and McIsaac (2002) identify for each of the presences identified by Garrison et al. (2001) specific subcomponents and in some cases subordinate components. Table 2-1 below identifies the respective components, subcomponents, and subordinate components of each of Garrison and his colleague's primary categories.

**Table 2-1: Subcomponents and subordinate components for each teaching and learning community presence (Rourke et al., 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002)**

Teaching Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional design and organization</li> <li>• Facilitate discourse</li> <li>• Direct instruction</li> </ul>
Social Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social context: task difficulty; goal direction; self-revelation</li> <li>• Online communication: privacy; electronic literary</li> <li>• Interactivity: communication styles, paralanguage and nonverbals; program and community culture; reciprocity; immediacy</li> </ul>
Cognitive Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner autonomy manifested as appropriation of knowledge</li> </ul>

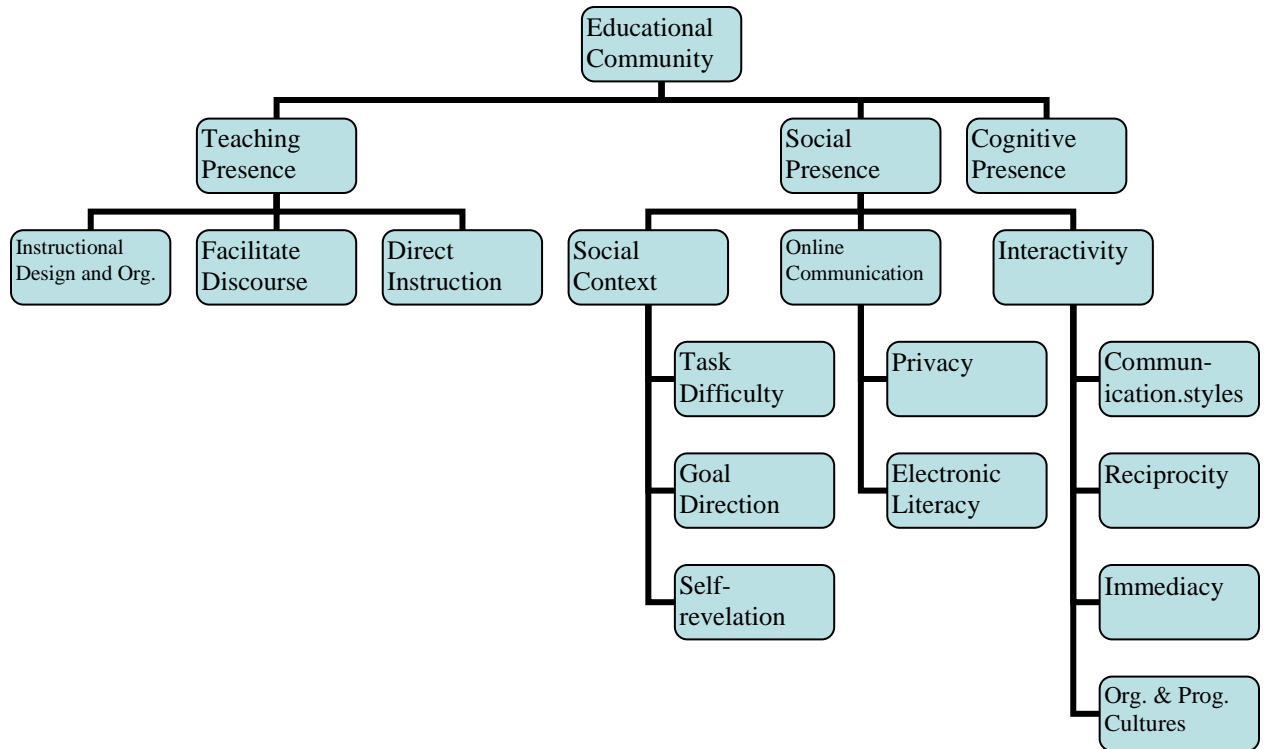
Moreover when a strong teaching presence and social presence are fully operational in a teaching and learning community, Shea et al. (2003) further indicated the seven principles of good practice identified by Chickering and Gamson (1987) are also realized (Figure 2-2). This in turn leads to the optimal cognitive presence or knowledge centered classrooms identified by researchers Bransford et al. (2000) and Garrison et al. (2001) which they respectively agreed when adhered to lead to cognitive presence or learner autonomy. This later quality of learning Wertsch (1998) explains is

maximized when learners not merely master a task, but appropriate the lesson. In other words, as Wertsch (1998) indicates, learners transcend their zone of proximal development from a capacity to replicate information that has been demonstrated for them to internalizing new knowledge to the point they are able to use such knowledge independently to access additional new knowledge not yet within their zone of development.



**Figure 2-2:** Adapted version of schematic that shows an overlay of *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000), *Community of Inquiry* (Garrison et al., 2000) and *Seven Principles of Good Practice* (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Adapted from Shea et al. (2003, p. 78). In the above diagram *How People Learn* precepts are in brown; *Community of Inquiry* precepts are in blue.

Finally, due to the emphasis both general educational and creative writing, institutional, and sociological researchers (Abramson, 2009; “Advice from the Programs,” 2011; Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Bourdieu, 1993; Eddey, 2011; Gardner, 1983a; Gordon, 2004; Hall, 1983; Hanks, 2005; Hargreaves, 1992; Kealey, 2008; May, 2011; Milstein, 2010; Schein, 1984; Shivani, 2010; Wilkins & Ouchi (1983) have placed on academic and non-academic institutional and intra-institutional program cultures, the current researcher has expanded Rourke and his colleagues’ (2001) identification of social presence’s subcomponent interactivity by adding a fourth subordinate component, organizational and program cultures, to reflect the considerable research devoted to this aspect of social presence in and out of learning environments. Figure 2-3 below provides a schematic overview of the three components and their respective subordinate components under the general heading of educational community.



**Figure 2-3: Components and subcomponents for each teaching and learning community presence based on Garrison's et al. (2000) Teaching and Learning Community as explicated by Rourke et al. (2001); Tu (2000); and Tu & McIssac (2002).**

Finally, since each of these constructs is based on a compendium of educational and sociological theories, a detailed explication of each of the three presences and their respective features will be given first, followed by a discussion of the respective theories previously mentioned that support them. Additionally, while as indicated above teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence correlate with Bransford and his colleagues' assessment centered, learner centered, and knowledge centered respectively, the remaining discussion uses the term presences instead of centers as these have been explicated by additional research (Rourke et al., 2001; Shea et al., 2003; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

### Teaching presence

Teaching presence according to researchers (Rourke et al., 2001; Shea et al., 2003; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) requires that instructors clearly state for their students what tasks are to be done, expected work quantity and quality, and specific timelines so students can manage their work efforts. To assist them reach these objectives researchers have identified three subordinate components teachers need to provide. First, instructors need to ensure their instructional design of the class and individual lessons are well organized. Second, they need to establish and maintain individual and group dialogic discourse between students and between students and themselves as instructors to ensure students understand assigned tasks, to correct errors and/or misconceptions on the part of students, and to help students manage their time and efforts as needed. Third, they need to provide sufficient direct instruction to ensure students gain the necessary knowledge to complete assigned tasks.

### Social presence

Social presence, the second major subcomponent, as defined by researchers (Rourke et al., 2000; Shea et al., 2003; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002), primarily concentrates on the affective or socio-emotional aspect of a teaching and learning environment. Like teaching presence it too has several subordinate components. Social context, the first subcomponent of social presence has three subordinate components: task authenticity, goal-direction, and self-revelation. The first of these, task authenticity, indicates whether the assigned lesson or task is facile with an obvious solution or complex with multiple dimensions, omitted information, and potentially as many correct solutions as ways to resolve it. Second is whether students' goal or purpose for

accomplishing a task is self-directed and therefore more closely attuned to increased learner autonomy, or curriculum-imposed and therefore not necessarily relevant to students' personal development from their perspective. The third subordinated component of social context is how willing and/or reticent students and the instructor are to share personal information about themselves and/or empathetic messages. Such socio-emotional messages do not have to be germane to the lesson. Any socio-emotional message that promotes feelings of trust and respect amongst participants increases cognitive presence or learner autonomy as learners who trust and respect their fellow learners and teacher engage in more extended and dynamic discourse and therefore learn more (Harris, 2001; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs, & McEachen, 2002; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

#### Online communication

The second major subcomponent of social presence is online communication. While online communication is not applicable to all teaching and learning communities, given the ever expanding use of computer technology for instruction in and out of the classroom, it is included for both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated teaching and learning communities. The two subordinate components connected to online communication are privacy and electronic literacy. Privacy is relevant to social presence as many users, especially students, depend on public access to computers available in municipal and school libraries to complete lessons. Additionally, older and employed students frequently use computers at their work sites (Clegg, Hudson, & Steel, 2003; McMahan, 1997). Since during a computer-mediated class discussion any personal information students might share could be misconstrued if read out of context by

someone not connected with the teaching and learning community some students may fear a loss of privacy and be more reticent about sharing which would lead to decreased social presence and subsequently a potential loss of cognitive presence.

The second subordinate component of online communication concerns individuals' basic knowledge of operating a computer from turning it on and keyboarding skills to accessing different electronic programs including an ability to navigate the Internet to access possible teacher provided reference sites and/or virtual learning environments like Blackboard, WebCt, and eBulletin.

Hawisher et al. (2004) refer to facility with computers as *electronic literacy* or the ability to basically operate a computer as well as the ability and knowledge to access and use more sophisticated programs such as virtual learning environments like WebCT, eBulletin, and Blackboard. Since mastering electronic literacy is critical to successful participation in computer-mediated classes and programs, problems participants may experience regarding access and manipulation of a computer's hardware and software constitute substantial areas of concern for students and instructors alike.

Hiltz and Johnson (1990) also reported that a key component of user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with computer-mediated course work pivots on users' familiarity with and ability to access modern computer technology. Comments made by participants in discrete studies conducted by Duncan (2005); Goodyear et al. (2005); Grenier-Winther (1999); and Stodel et al. (2006) bear this out. Nor are operational difficulties limited to students according to Duncan (2005), Grenier-Winther (1999), and Neff (1998). Participating teachers in each of these studies reported they experienced the same kind of problems their students complained of regarding computer-mediated technology.



Additionally, the teachers in these latter studies voiced their frustration attempting to transfer their face-to-face mediated traditional classroom lessons to a computer-mediated delivery system.

According to researchers (Garramone, Harris, & Anderson, 1986; Perse, Burton, Kovner, Lears, & Sen, 1992) a person's electronic literacy reflects his/her level of participation in and use of computer-mediated communication. Consequently researchers determined the more electronic literate a person is the greater the likelihood he/she will increase his/her participation in and use of computer-mediated communication by increasing both the length and duration of those communications. This in turn researchers (Garramone et al., 1986; Perse et al., 1992; Rice & Love, 1987; Swan & Shih, 2005) point out substantially increases the likelihood of greater socio-emotional content messaging. Although, as will be discussed below, individuals' social, cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds as well as their learner types, gender, and possibly their ethnic backgrounds are also responsible for reducing and enhancing their electronic literacy (Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Neuman & Celano, 2006; Rice & Love, 1987) and subsequently their likelihood to share socio-emotional information with others.

#### Interactivity

The third and final subcomponent of social presence is interactivity consisting of the four subordinate components of communication styles, paralanguage or a variation of vocal tone and pitch, dramaturgical cues like clothing choices and eye contact, and any other nonverbal behaviors like body language; reciprocity; immediacy; and organizational and program cultures. According to Norton (1986) there are eleven principal communication styles:

1. *Impression-leaving*: I leave a definite impression on people.
2. *Contentious*: I am very argumentative.
3. *Open*: I openly express my feelings and emotions...readily revealing things about myself.
4. *Dramatic*: Regularly I tell jokes, anecdotes, and stories...I frequently use verbal exaggeration.
5. *Dominant*: I tend to come on strong...I try to take charge of things...I am dominant in social situations.
6. *Precise*: I insist people document or present some kind of proof...I like to be strictly accurate...In arguments I insist upon very precise definitions.
7. *Relaxed*: The rhythm or flow of my speech is not affected by nervousness.
8. *Friendly*: I readily express admiration for others...I tend to be encouraging to others.
9. *Attentive*: I really like to listen very carefully to people.
10. *Animated*: I tend to constantly gesture...[and] use a lot of facial expressions when I communicate.
11. *Communicative image*: I always find it very easy to communicate with strangers...and to maintain a conversation with a member of the opposite sex whom I have just met (pp. 38-39).

Paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, and nonverbal behaviors conform to similar patterns of socio-emotional meaning (Harrigan, Rosenthal & Scherer, 2005; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993) as Norton's verbal communication styles.

Reciprocity, the second subordinate component, which is closely related to self-revelation, refers to community participants' willingness or reticence to be responsive to the community's dialogic exchanges. In other words, if certain participants in a community choose to share personal information of a socio-emotional nature other participants either reciprocate with similar socio-emotional messages or they adhere strictly to task-oriented exchanges when participating in dialogic exchanges.

The third subordinate component is immediacy which refers to the frequency or number of times a participant engages in a community's dialogic exchange as well as the duration of his/her comments. The more frequently a participant chooses to speak and

with greater detail and perception, not prolixity, the more social presence increases which tends to advance intra-community trust and respect and therefore ensures the potential for increased cognitive presence or learner autonomy.

The fourth and final subordinate component for interactivity is organizational and program cultures. Researchers (Barry & Crant; 2000; Gordon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1992; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983) corroborate that every organization, including schools, evinces a particular culture that reflects its administrators' and employees' collective pattern of adaptation to problems that pervades the way members collectively "perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1984). Such patterns researchers indicate are primarily attributable to community members' intra-communal interactivity in terms of how members stylistically communicate with each other, the frequency and duration of group discourse, and the community's collective degree of social presence. Moreover, the smaller, more stable and older an organization is the greater the likelihood an organization's culture is singularly stable so that new employees are inducted or assimilated into the existing culture (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Gordon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1992; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). Writers, M.F.A. students, creative writing instructors and administrators, and researchers (Abramson, 2009; "Advice from the Programs," 2011; Bell, 1994; Bell, 1977; Eddey, 2011; Gardner, 1983a; Hall, 1983; Kealey, 2008; May, 2011; Milstein, 2010; Shelnett, 1989a; Shivani, 2010; Turkle et al., 1994) have further indicated that creative writing programs and workshop communities exhibit similarly distinctive cultures.

Teaching and learning communities overseen by effective instructors that maintain high teaching presence and whose instructional and personal skills engender

positive social presence between themselves and their students whether due to concurrence with or tolerance of others' social, historical, cultural, and educational backgrounds tend to result in intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990; Tudge, 1992; Wertsch, 1998) or intra-community agreement. The likelihood of participants agreeing increases further when participants similarly fit in with and/or appreciate their organization's culture as this makes conflict resolution more probable (Barry & Crant, 2000; Gordon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1992; Schein, 1984; Smagorinsky, 2001).

Creative writing programs tend to follow this general pattern as well insofar as individual programs frequently, although not categorically, hire and retain as tenured faculty writers predisposed to favor a particular style of writing whether that be traditional, experimental, etc. This is especially the case for smaller programs. For this reason M.F.A. program administrators and creative writing teachers exhort M.F.A. applicants to carefully consider if a program's writing faculty and general writing community match their own writing interests and preferences (Abramson, 2009; "Advice from the Programs," 2011; Bell, 1994; Bell, 1977; Gardner, 1983a).

### Cognitive presence

The third and final component of a social constructivist teaching and learning community is cognitive presence which researchers Rourke et al. (2001), Tu (2000), and Tu and McIsaac (2002) indicate is learners' acquisition of the knowledge of a given lesson or learning experience whereby the learner has at a minimum mastered the lesson or optimally appropriated it.

As discussed earlier, research (Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Mehan, 1992; Neuman & Celano, 2006; Perse et al., 1987; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001) indicates numerous

cultural, social, educational, and historical factors influence social presence that in turn affect cognitive presence or learner autonomy. These include learners' attitudes regarding education, learner types, gender, and SES.

#### Learners' educational attitudes

As previously indicated, the ultimate goal of social constructivism is learner autonomy (Bransford et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Accordingly, since adult learners are by virtue of maturity and experience ostensibly capable of self-direction, they are considered to be autonomous learners. However, as Moore (1972) points out, because modern American educational systems rely on traditional classroom behavioral methods that do not promote independent thought processes in school many adults are not autonomous learners. Research conducted by Duncan (2005); Diaz & Cartnal (1999); Grenier-Winther (1999); Hancock (2002); Light (2002); Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Elbedour (2003); Stodel et al. (2006); and Wolfe (2000) regarding adult learners verify these findings.

#### Learner types

Though researchers assign learner types different descriptors, researchers concur learners fall into two general categories. Those designated as field-independent (Wolfe, 2000), abstract (Diaz & Cartnal, 1999), or as high conceptual learners (Hancock, 2002) share the same characteristics. They tend to work alone; are abstract learners and thinkers; require minimal direct instruction; and are highly intrinsically motivated. By contrast, field-dependent (Wolfe, 2000), concrete learners (Diaz & Cartnel, 1999), or low conceptual learners (Hancock, 2002) prefer and work better with other students in

collaborative learning situations; require concrete, specific structured teaching; and are highly intrinsically motivated.

The former learning type tends to do better with computer-mediated distance education due to the increased social isolation inherent with computer-mediated learning and the tendency for instructors to reduce their presence in computer-mediated courses (Diaz & Cartnel, 1999; Hancock, 2002; Wolfe, 2000). Based on Moore's (1972) definition, such students come closest to what he refers to as autonomous learners.

What works for one group of learners tends to work against the other. For example, concrete or field-dependent learners do not tend to be as comfortable with computer-mediated distance education classes due to feeling isolated or separated from peers and their instructor (Diaz & Cartnel, 1999; Hancock, 2002; Wolfe, 2000). As concrete thinkers and doers, they are less comfortable with what many such learners refer to as a lack of sufficient teaching presence. Such users too report considerably lower comfort levels with actual computer equipment and management of virtual learning environments like WebCT, eBulletin, and Blackboard. They also indicate greater discomfort discussing issues through chat rooms, using email and listservs.

#### Gender, minorities, and SES

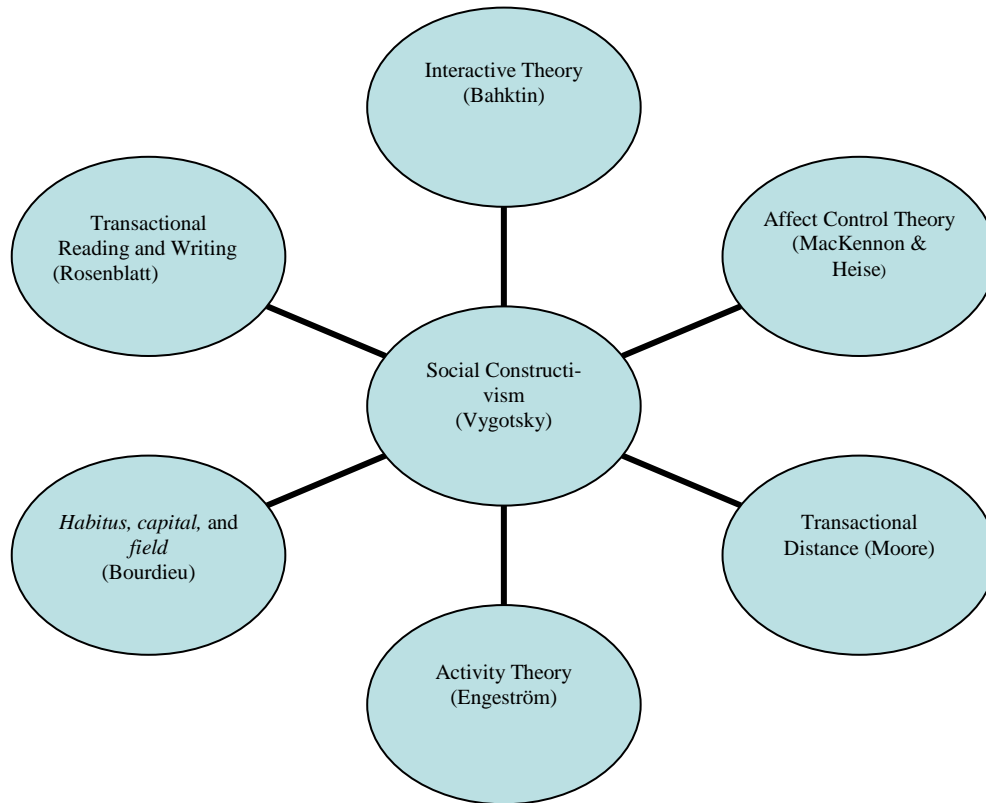
According to the NPEC's 2004 report, *How Do We Really Know*, women indicated they lacked the same level of confidence their male counterparts have regarding operating computers and computer programs. Report preparers attributed this lack of self-confidence to women's self-reports of comparatively infrequent use of the Internet including visiting chat rooms and using emails. The report's findings appear to be verified in Duncan's 2005 case study as her female students expressed emotions ranging

from fear and anxiety to frustration in their attempts to master the virtual learning environment used by their instructor. However, Hiltz and Johnson (1990) found women prefer computer-mediated discussions because they felt they enjoyed more gender equality and equity in online communications than in face-to-face mediated discussions where men tend to dominate. Warschauer (1997) found the same to be true as in his study women were just as apt as men to initiate solutions in a computer-mediated format, whereas, in face-to-face mediated exchanges, men spoke first five times as often as women (p. 473). Finally, Rovai's (2001) study determined women students tended to be more socio-emotionally motivated in their dialogic exchanges thereby promoting greater social presence than their male counterparts whose computer-mediated communication styles were more brusque, aggressive, and task-oriented. Since women are represented in higher numbers than men are in M.F.A. writing programs, this is another factor that could potentially have an important impact on creative prose fiction writing workshops taught as computer-mediated distance education.

Similar concerns have been noted by researchers regarding minorities and those from lower SES brackets, whose access to computers is frequently limited due to impoverishment (Hiltz & Johnson, 1990). Research has shown that even when computer access is available through public resources, minority students are less likely to take advantage of it (Neuman & Celano, 2006).

### **Supporting Educational and Sociological Theories**

As indicated above, the concept of the three relevant presences to a social constructivist teaching and learning community is supported by six educational and sociological theoretical constructs (Figure 2-4).



**Figure 2-4: Schematic diagram of six supportive theories regarding social constructivist teaching and learning communities' teaching presence, social presence, and learner cognition components**

### Activity theory

The first construct is activity theory (Cole, 1999; Engeström, 1999; Tobach, 1999). Evolving from the cultural-historical school of psychology and drawing from German philosophy in addition to the writings of Russian scholars Marx, Engels, Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria (Cole, 1999; Tobach, 1999), activity theory according to Engeström posits that as individuals work toward achieving a desired outcome, they interact with a dynamic pentad consisting of a community or a specific culture, an interim object, rules, division of labor, and one or more mediating tools that can be actual objects or abstract ideas that affect participants' behavior and subsequently impact how participants are able to gain their desired outcome.



Engeström (1999) has identified three mutual relationships that exist between the subject, the object, and the community. These are: 1) tools mediate the relationship between the subject and the object; 2) rules mediate between the subject and the community; 3) division of labor mediates between the object and the community. Additionally, because changes known as *contradictions* can arise at any time, the process and correlative progress toward an outcome remain in flux as necessary adjustments are made (Billet, 2000; Cole, 1999; Engeström, 1999; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993; Issroff & Schanlon, 2002; Kuutti, 1996; Smagorinsky, 2001; Tobach, 1999).

In the context of creative writing workshops, an individual writing student is the subject, workshop members including the teacher constitute the culture or community that is governed by rules established by the teacher's direction and facilitation. Members divide labor by taking turns reading and critiquing the peer's work being workshopped using either face-to-face mediated communication or computer-mediated communication as their mediating tool to achieve the workshopped or critiqued participant's immediate object to hone his/her creative writing ability and/or will to produce the ultimate outcome of a quality piece of prose fiction writing.

In line with the subordinate component of organizational and program cultures, which according to activity theory is the equivalent of community, organizational behavior research identifies three distinct group types (Oxford, 1997) that according to activity theory constitute collective and individual participants or subjects of the community. The first is *authoritarian/bureaucratic*. This group tends to have a controlling authoritarian figure that uses rules and even punishment to reach consensus.

The second possible group culture is *compromise/supportive*. This group is the most collaborative of the three groups as members are most willing to work together to reach consensus. The third group is *performance/innovative*; their goal as a community is to ensure self-actualization and individual progress.

### *Habitus, capital, and field* theory and transactional reading and writing theory

A second major sociological theory that pertains to social constructivism is Bourdieu's concept of *habitus, capital, and field* (1993). Briefly stated, according to Bourdieu *habitus* refers to individuals' cultural, social, educational, and historical ontogenies exemplified by their deportment, language, and appearance. Over time such elements become essentially engrained in a person's overall disposition. Moreover, *habitus* is naturally influenced by *field*, a second critical feature of Bourdieu's sociological concept.

In a simplified definition Hanks (2005) identifies *field* as "(a) configuration of social roles, agent positions, and the structures they fit into and (b) the historical process in which those positions are actually taken up, occupied by actors (individual or collective)" (p. 72). According to Bourdieu (1993) the academy is a specific *field* as is linguistics and artistic production. Because *field* consists of agents or individuals practicing or discoursing on the values of their particular *field* as they accrue more experience and knowledge *field* continues to shape their individual *habitus* in terms of their semantics, syntax, general disposition, and deportment as an agent positioned within that *field*. An example is a writing student's juxtaposition in regard to a writing teacher. Furthermore, the more *capital* one gains within a given *field* the higher he/she rises in terms of power or authority within that *field*.

Bourdieu separated *capital* into three distinct categories: *economic capital*, *cultural capital*, and *social capital*. *Economic capital* refers respectively to the material wealth one possesses; *cultural capital* refers to one's historical background influenced by ethnicity, education, familial upbringing, and a person's comprehensive socio-cultural ontogeny. *Social capital* relates to the social network of acquaintances and friends a person acquires over time. According to Bourdieu the amount and kind of *capital* a person accrues is interdependent on his/her *habitus* and interactions in various *fields* making it an integral feature of both *habitus* and *field* as individuals with more *economic*, *cultural*, and/or *social capital* tend to possess and/or assume higher positions of power within a *field*. Thus students always possess less cultural capital than their instructors. By the same token, a Yale law school graduate with an average 3.77 GPA and a plus 14.2 percent passing rate for the bar compared to the New York State's overall passing rate has more cultural and social capital and therefore the ability to make more economic capital than a law school graduate from Southern State University in Louisiana who has an average 2.52 GPA and whose minus 12.4 percent prospect of passing Louisiana's bar is considerably below the state's average passing rate compared to other law school graduates applying to practice law in Louisiana (Internet Legal Resource Group, 2009).

Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *field*, and *capital* help explain how different group types can emerge in otherwise similar academic social constructivist teaching and learning communities like creative writing workshops as contradictions per activity theory. For while workshop participants share the *field* of creative writing, their disparate *habitus* and therefore levels of accrued cultural capital in particular can lead to considerable division between participants (Boyle, 1994; Delbanco, 1994; Dillard, 1994).

Rosenblatt's (2005) theory of transactional reading and writing similarly helps to explain how otherwise operationally cohesive social constructivist teaching and learning communities can become divisive. Briefly, Rosenblatt states that every individual cognitively and affectively interprets what he/she writes based on his/her personal social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogeny, in other words his or her *habitus*. Moreover, Rosenblatt explains, since a person's social, cultural, historical and educational ontogeny is always expanding with age and additional life experiences, a person's interpretation of what he/she reads and writes undergoes similar cognitive and affective transitions over time. A point creative writers concur with (Garrett, 1994).

#### Interactive theory

Bourdieu's and Rosenblatt's respective theories in turn both support and explain Bakhtin's interactive theory, which states that a person's background, grounded as it is in an individual's social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogeny, determines how a listener interprets and internalizes what he/she hears from others. This in turn substantially influences how he/she responds to the other person in a dialogic exchange. Moreover, since an exchange is ongoing, each participant in the dialogue continuously receives, internalizes, interprets, and responds accordingly. Once more, when there is social, cultural, educational, and historical homology between participants there is a reduced likelihood of misinterpretation. Conversely, the less similarity there is between participants the greater the likelihood for misunderstanding and potential disagreement (Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983; Oxford, 1997; Warschauer, 1997).

Therefore, in addition to defining activity theory's mediating tool as either face-to-face mediated communication or computer-mediated communication, a secondary

mediating tool in addition to the way workshops are conducted either using face-to-face communication or computer-mediated communication, is each participants' transactional reading and/or writing of a submitted manuscript being reviewed. Influenced by his/her personal *habitus* as shaped by *field*, both determine how well and to what extent participants as activity theory subjects are likely to achieve their short- and long-term objectives.

This latter feature is further influenced by participants' perspective of writing and critiquing as these are authentic tasks with missing information and with multiple workable answers. For example, if a single participant in a creative writing workshop sees himself/herself as a more experienced and better writer than his/her peers, this is likely to affect how he/she as a participant in the workshop views division of labor and established rules or course requirements (Barry & Crant, 2000; Bourdieu, 1993; Hanks, 2005). As a result, because workshops are defined by communication-relationships, the type of workshop group likely to emerge if a single participant sees himself/herself as superior, and especially if he/she is also competitive, is authoritarian/bureaucratic. On the other hand, if none of the participants feel they are superior they are likely to maintain a sense of equality in which case the workshop is likely to exhibit a compromise/supportive character. Or because creative writing is naturally competitive (Allen, 2009; Bradley, 2010) it may become performance/innovative (Oxford, 1997). Regardless of type, participants' individual and collective *habitus*, that is their individual and collective social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogenies, have an affective influence that must be considered as much as whether the operational mediating tool is face-to-face mediated communication or computer-mediated communication as the former are

powerful factors that inevitably impact any workshop's efficiency and effectiveness as teaching and learning communities regardless of the delivery system.

#### Affect control theory

A corresponding affective contradiction concerns unanticipated changes in participants' behavior. As indicated above, research (Oxford, 1997) has identified three typical group types which indicate individuals behave according to type. A fourth theory, affect control theory, (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Francis, 2006; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; Smith-Lovin & Robinson, 2006) explains how individuals' emotional and therefore dialogic responses to others are governed by participants' social, cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds which as Bakhtin (1986), Bourdieu (1993), Moro (1999), and Rosenblatt (2005) have pointed out are continuously shaped by specific *field* and life experiences.

Therefore, according to affect control theorists when another's behaviors by way of act or word vary from what someone is accustomed to and/or expects, a person adjusts his/her socio-emotional and dialogic responses to align with the other's altered behavior and/or speech. Moreover, such adjustments are either temporary or permanent depending upon whether the other's behavior is considered to be transitory due to short-term illness, bereavement, etc., or permanent due to some major life-change that affects the other's personality or life-style like a criminal conviction, a terminal illness, the birth or disability of a child, etc.

#### Transactional distance theory

Finally, according to Moore (1997), the sixth and final theorist, social constructivist classes conducted via computer-mediated distance education face a

considerable challenge establishing social presence due to the fact that teachers and students are spatially and temporally separated when classes are conducted as asynchronous computer-mediated distance education. He asserts that substantial time gaps in dialogue, accompanied by the lack of face-to-face verbal communication styles, nonverbal behaviors, and paralanguage due to the fact that teachers and students are similarly separated by distance can considerably increase the likelihood there will be decreased social presence. This in turn can have a direct adverse effect on cognitive presence. In other words, according to Moore's transactional distance theory, teachers must compensate for social presence typically established by the affective influence of the various subordinate components of social presence, specifically communication styles, paralanguage, and nonverbal behaviors; reciprocity; and immediacy in other ways to ensure students become autonomous learners that appropriate the knowledge their teachers convey.

### **How Respective Presences and Theories Affect Creative Writing Workshops**

With regard to creative writing workshops, while Bell (1994, 1997); Bly (2001); Blythe and Sweet (2008); Bryant (1988); Dillard (1994); Gardner (1983a); Garrett (1994); Morley (2007); Moxley (1989); and Shelnutt (1989b) agree M.F.A. workshops in general are typically carried out using a similar procedure that exemplifies Vygotsky's social constructivist teaching and learning theory as well as interactive learning, transactional reading and writing, and activity theory, when influenced by *habitus* and *field*, they point out dramatically different outcomes can and do occur in individual workshops due to participants' diversity.

This is one reason why in recent years creative fiction writers and writing teachers (Barden, 2008; Bly, 2001; Guevara, 1998; Hall, 1983; Milstein, 2010; Shelnut, 1989a; Shivani, 2010) as well as literary scholars (Garrett, 1989; Moxley, 1989), literature and composition instructors (Bizzaro, 2004; Ritter, 2001), and M.F.A. graduates (Andrews, 2009; Holtman & Lent, 1995; Keegan, 2006) have faulted the workshop approach for not providing the kind of collaborative guidance and assistance workshops are purported to do. Even those that support the format (Bell, 1994, 1997; Bryant, 1988; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a; Milstein, 2010) admit the form is flawed. Gardner identifies four specific defects that typify “bad” workshops. These include workshop teachers that allow students to make caustic and harsh remarks regarding a peer’s manuscript instead of providing constructive criticism; teachers that demand students imitate the teacher’s prose fiction contextual style and genre; and/or teachers that tell participants what to do to improve their written work instead of allowing them to discover for themselves with help from their workshop peers what specifically needs improving and how to improve their writing in general.

Gardner’s fourth “bad” workshop category concerns workshops that produce what he and others (Barden, 2008; Keegan, 2006; Milstein, 2010) refer to as is “workshop writing.” According to Gardner such workshops fall into two categories. The first produces trite and formulaic writing that employs mundane plots and depicts shallow overworked stereotypical characters in a sophomoric attempt at original art. Bernays (Milstein, 2010) compares such workshop writing to “cookies from a cutter” (p. 94). The second kind is the story that commences with arcane symbolism and allegory because the writer is trying to compose his story from a scholarly point of view, not from his or her



imagination. Neither type of student writing Gardner states meets his standard criteria for “good” workshop writing which is “the creation of a vivid and continuous dream, elegance and efficiency, and strangeness” (p. 84). Noted creative writing teacher Garrett (1994) empathetically agrees with him.

Critics like Bly (2001), Ritter (2001), and Ritter and Vanderslice (2005) attribute Gardner’s examples of bad workshops to poor teaching in light of the fact that most creative writing program administrators make their criterion for choosing the best writing teachers to be writers with at least two novel-length publications in one or more of the recognized areas of poetry, drama, prose fiction, or creative nonfiction (LaFemina, 2011; Myers, 1996; Fenza, 2000; and Lim, 2003), not because they have been trained as teachers. Consequently, they say it makes no difference whether schools with M.F.A. programs invite well-known authors to teach for a semester as visiting writers or depend on tenured full-time faculty that have and continue to publish in addition to teaching as neither type of teacher has been trained to teach. Thus while they agree some professional writers are undeniably good teachers, they maintain too many are not. Nor do Bly, Ritter and Ritter and Vanderslice condone writing program administrators’ position that potential writing teachers learn how to teach from their experience as M.F.A. students (Ritter, 2001). Bly (2001), Moxley (1989), and Shelnut (1989a) are even more critical. Bly (2001), like Gardner (1983a), faults poor writing instruction; she, however, characterizes bad instructors using much stronger terms labeling them as being “slothful” (p. 22), capricious, and/or arrogant. According to Bly this caliber of writing teacher does not know how to teach, and therefore falls back on ineffectual, potentially detrimental strategies to cloak their inability or reticence to spend the time needed to prepare lessons.

Bly (2001), Garrett (1989), Moxley (1989), and Shelnut (1989a, 1994) also question the entire concept of peer review. Concerns they share about peers reviewing and commenting on peers' work fall into two categories. First, as inexperienced writers critics contend students lack the ability to accurately judge another's work because they lack sufficient background gained from reading a wide range of literature and have not been trained in critical theory. Consequently, writing students may attempt to intimidate their workshop peers either out of ignorance or out of ineptitude. A second possibility goes to the opposite extreme when peers' comments degenerate to impersonal, hackneyed, and insipid comments devoid of instructional substance, but ensured to be inoffensive.

A number of writers, teachers, and editors (Andrews, 2009; Bly, 2001; Cain, 2009; Gass, 1987; Graff, 2009; Hall, 1983; Keegan, 2006; Morley, 2007; Moxley, 1989; Shelnut, 1989a; Solaroff, 1987; Radavich, 1999) blame both kinds of peer responses on what they perceive to be anti-intellectualism. They contend in an effort to maintain their autonomous distance from English studies, linguistics, and composition and rhetoric, creative writing programs ensure their programs do not become so academically challenging that students will lose interest in creative writing. Such arguments, which date from the 1980s (Moxley, 1989), continue unabated and unresolved today.

### **Computer-mediated Dialogic Communication and Computer-mediated Creative Writing Workshops**

As theorized by Vygotsky, successful social constructivist teaching and learning depend on constructive dialogue and interaction between teachers and learners and between learners. As a dialogic learning experience, robust and spontaneous verbal-aural-response dialogue and visual-response interaction have long been considered

hallmarks of face-to-face mediated creative prose fiction writing workshops. In a computer-mediated distance education teaching and learning community dialogue shifts from its typical verbal-aural-response form to a written-response form. While synchronous communication is available for computer-mediated distance education classes, a review of the literature indicates the majority of users depend on asynchronous computer-mediated communication using emails, chat rooms, listservs, and/or more comprehensive virtual learning environments like Blackboard, WebCT, and eBulletin.

Due to the considerable increase in computer-mediated distance education course offerings in higher education, a number of quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted since the 1980s focused on examining participants' perceptions and attitudes about asynchronous computer-mediated communications between learners and between learners and instructors. A review of the literature indicates five main themes have emerged from the research that correlate with Moore's (1997) transactional distance theory and what other computer-mediated researchers have identified as educational features germane to transactional distance education, structure of computer-mediated programs, interaction between learners and teachers, and students' motivation and self-discipline when participating in a computer-mediated teaching and learning community. These themes are: 1) difficulty establishing social presence; 2) a lack of spontaneous dialogue through timely responses (immediacy); 3) failure of community participants to address critical issues in computer-mediated classes; 4) concern regarding participants' lack of honesty, and on occasion use of abusive language; and 5) participants' lack of electronic literacy.

Since these educational features are applicable to diverse disciplines, based on a review of the literature the five identified themes were considered to be applicable to creative prose fiction writing workshops conducted as computer-mediated distance education courses and were therefore used to hypothesize possible implications for creative prose fiction writing workshops.

Problems with social presence and immediacy in computer-mediated teaching and learning communities

According to Vygotsky's theoretical pedagogical models including activity theory (Moro, 1999; Tobach, 1999) a strong correlation exists between social presence and cognitive development or learner autonomy. Contemporary researchers likewise have determined that students must be affectively and sociologically comfortable with each other to engage in the spontaneous and robust communication required for successful social constructivist educational teaching and learning. Paradoxically, like the old puzzle as to whether the chicken or the egg comes first, researchers have yet to determine if critical learning can take place until a minimum of social presence is established, or if social presence occurs concomitantly with academic learning (Duncan, 2005; Keisler et al., 1984; Stodel et al., 2006). Consequently, that students complain they feel socially isolated from their peers and teachers, and teachers object because they feel disconnected from students through computer-mediated distance education constitutes a critical issue of concern that has been the subject of numerous quantitative and qualitative studies regarding computer-mediated distance education. Given creative fiction writing workshops' dependence on spontaneous, robust, and critical dialogic and interactive exchanges, the results of such studies could have a direct impact on the potential success

of conducting creative fiction writing workshops as computer-mediated distance education classes.

Studies focused on social interaction and computer-mediated communication tend to examine computer-mediated distance education from either a task-oriented theory (Keisler et al., 1984) or from a socio-emotional-oriented theory (Hiltz & Johnson, 1990). Later studies have considered computer-mediated communication from both theoretical perspectives (Eldred & Hawisher, 1995; Liu, 2002). When these studies are considered individually the results are noteworthy for their outstanding differences. However, when the studies are compared recognizing dichotomous theories were used to examine computer-mediated communication and social presence the studies' contradictory findings can be reconciled (Eldred & Hawisher, 1995; Liu, 2002).

For example, in an early study, Keisler et al. (1984) examined social interaction in a task-oriented computer-mediated environment and found participants became antagonistic and abrasive without socio-emotional messages to orient and guide group members. In contrast Burnett (2002) and Lawless (1998) found that when computer-mediated communication is used and presented to participants from a social-oriented theory that stresses social presence, participants responded positively. In a meta-analysis Eldred and Hawisher (1995) conducted looking at both task-oriented and socio-emotional driven studies they concluded the underlying theory or purpose of using computer-mediated communication determined outcome since "people will both shape and be shaped by electronic communication" (p. 346). Duncan's case study (2005) supports Eldred and Hawisher's (1995) contention as the participants in her study indicated they subordinated their personal desire for social bonding in order to prioritize learning.

Independent assessment of numerous field studies conducted by Gunawardena (1995), Gunawardena and Zittle (1997), and Walther (1992, 1995) further support this contention.

The shift in attitude Eldred and Hawisher (1995), Rovai (2001), and Rovai et al. (2008) indicated is needed, however, is neither easily nor readily attained as demonstrated by participants in studies conducted by Hiltz and Johnson (1990) and Stodel et al. (2005). For example, in Stodel's et al. study some participants indicated they felt computer-mediated participation deprived them of social relationships. Even when project members met face-to-face outside of class time, participants commented the group was entirely task-oriented. Some members indicated they felt this made project completion much more difficult. Grenier-Winther (1999), who teaches English as a second language, reported her students had considerable problems forming cohesive computer-mediated learning communities compared to her past face-to-face mediated experiences working with students in a social constructivist classroom where social bonding occurred concomitantly with project work. Each of these studies attributed feelings of isolation and difficulty communicating effectively with each other and with their teachers to what they perceived to be the limited nature of electronic communication tools like emails, listservs, and chat rooms. In short, the general consensus amongst participants in these particular studies was that emails, chat rooms, and listservs were, from the students' points of view, insufficient means of communicating student-to-student and student-to-teacher.

Such reticence on participants' part could explain their complaints that computer-mediated dialogue lacked the spontaneity, improvisation, and robustness they were

accustomed to experiencing in face-to-face discussions. Only one participant in Duncan's study (2005) stated she preferred the reflective nature of asynchronous communication indicating "learning online with the ability to edit, think deeply before posting a comment has allowed me to push myself and stretch myself out of my comfort zone in a way I never did in f2f [sic] learning" (Duncan, 2005, p. 882). By far, however, more participants expressed considerable frustration and impatience because others consistently failed to answer in a timely manner, their responses were frequently facile and shallow. Participants blamed such responses on the absence of face-to-face social bonding. Another participant in Duncan's case study (2005) for example commented, "[T]he assignment seemed individual. It felt disrespectful of me to critique—seemed too personal" (p. 888). Since participants in creative fiction writing face-to-face mediated workshops have also been cited for reacting to each others' writing with similar non-committal and inoffensive comments, it is unclear if the problem was due to the mediating tool or to individual and community dynamics (Bly, 2001; Mehan, 1992; Oxford, 1997; Smagorinsky, 2001).

#### Addressing critical issues

A related, more critical concern identified by Duncan's (2005) and Stodel's et al. (2006) participants was the failure of computer-mediated discussions to get "to a critical thinking level" (Stodel et al., 2006, p. 9). As a result, Stodel, her colleagues and Duncan concur, critical issues that should have been discussed and resolved were never raised or else were glossed over. Duncan and Stodel et al. attributed computer-mediated groups' seeming inability to either resolve or introduce critical and/or controversial issues to the time required to write out detailed messages compared to spontaneously discussing them

face-to-face; delayed responses that resulted in lagging interest or concern; and/or reticence on the part of participants to offend due to a lack of any nonverbal, dramaturgical, and/or paralanguage social cues that would ordinarily depict respondents' underlying emotional responses to sensitive issues. Consequently, they consistently failed to make critical comments.

### Interpersonal relations

Keisler et al. (1984), using a different construct, documented a completely different response scenario in their study. Without nonverbal visual behaviors like body language and facial expressions and paralanguage cues of voice pitch and tone, as well as dramaturgical cues like clothing and where one chooses to sit that designate power or other such cues charismatic leaders tend to use to manipulate group discussions, the researchers found group participants communicating through computer-mediated formats resorted to pejorative language directed at each other. Keisler et al. (1984) and Hiltz and Johnson (1990) refer to this as "flaming." Along with abusive language, participants in the study conducted by Stodel et al. (2006) questioned participants' honesty. Jazwinski (2000) indicated it was not uncommon for participants in computer-mediated groups to engage in gender deception, and Morahan-Martin (2000) studied Internet abuses similar to the ones Neff (1998) experienced when she found that students taking her class purposefully deceived her by faking the identity of a non-existent student and lying about actual students' attendance during scheduled computer-mediated meeting times. Hiltz and Johnson (1990) similarly found that effective computer-mediated communication between group members hinged on such affective and sociological factors as trust, cultural tolerances or intolerances, whether group members liked or disliked each other,



and whether members were interested or disinterested in the assigned task. Such findings have been supported by Barry and Crant (2000), Billett (2002), Chickering and Gamson (1987), Harris, (2001), Rex et al. (2002), Rovai (2001), Rovai et al. (2008), and Rourke et al. (2001) whose respective studies have all indicated that effective social presence and teaching presence lead to increased cognitive presence or learner autonomy.

Based on participants' responses and comments other researchers (Duncan, 2005; Keisler et al., 1984) concluded that participants' emotional reactions of distrust, suspicion, and/or abuse were due in large part to the absence of nonverbal behaviors like facial expressions, dramaturgical cues like dress, and paralanguage cues of voice and pitch that individuals tend to rely on to gauge a person's status, gender, and class. The pseudo-anonymity of computer-mediated communication that enables a person to conceal or to subvert basic identifying qualities that are readily visual and readable in face-to-face mediated encounters slow decision making processes and can potentially lead to issues of deception, distrust, and verbal abuse.

Organizational behavioral specialists and communication-relationship researchers present a different possibility that could explain both response extremes whether given face-to-face mediated or computer-mediated communication. As indicated earlier organizational behavioral specialists categorize groups into three discrete cultures characterized by distinct traits (Oxford, 1997). The first, *authoritarian/bureaucratic* is highly regulated and structured. Task-oriented, this group's culture observes rigid compliance to rules and an authority in charge to achieve results. The second group culture, *compromise/supportive* seeks to reach agreement through collaborative and equitable discussion. A third group, *performance/innovative*, is more fractured than the

other two as members are more independent and therefore unwilling either to bend to an authoritarian leader or to compromise as their primary goal is individualized self-achievement. As indicated previously, nonverbal behaviors, dramaturgical cues, and paralanguage also influence group relations regarding status. Another factor is participants' individual communication styles that further tend to define participants' status within a group by conveying interest, apathy, respect, trust, etc. (Billett, 2002).

Which group culture is likely to develop in creative prose fiction writing workshops, research indicates is based on how a group interacts which largely depends on individual members' social, cultural, educational, and historical background at the time the group forms rather than whether the communication medium is face-to-face mediated or computer-mediated (Eldred & Hawisher, 1995; Hawisher et al., 2004; Moore, 1997).

Activity theory, when conflated with Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* and Bakhtin's interactive theory supports this possibility (Cole, 1999; Moro, 1999; Tobach, 1999). Inclusion of affective control theory further explains the role affective responses play whenever there is a change in one of the components, including introducing a new mediating tool as the community experiences a disruption due to a lack of familiarity with the tool and knowledge of what the rules are for using it. This in turn creates a new set of problems for all participants that must be resolved before progress towards an outcome can be resumed (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Frederickson, Reed, & Clifford, 2005; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993).

## **Program Structure and Teaching Presence in Computer-mediated Distance Education**

According to Moore (1997) “structure expresses the rigidity or flexibility of the programme’s educational objectives, teaching strategies, and evaluation methods...[S]tructure is determined largely by the nature of the communications media being employed, but also by the philosophy and emotional characteristics of learners, and the constraints imposed by educational institutions” (p. 24). Moore’s definition of program structure is especially relevant for creative prose fiction writing workshops given critics’ objections to current creative writing M.F.A. programs and their recommendations concerning who should teach such workshops, how they should be taught, and what should be taught to make them a venue for robust and critical dialogic learning experiences using computer-mediated distance education.

Historically, the standard teacher-student dynamic employed a monologue as the primary communication medium with a patriarchal, omniscient teacher providing a passive student with information he/she would later repeat back verbatim by way of evaluation (Bizzell, 1991; Freire, 1970; Lish, 1994). Adoption of Dewey’s collaborative model shifted this dynamic and mandated that students not only take a more active role, but be more responsible for their learning as well. Moreover, when teachers employ social constructivist methods that engage learners in peer-interactive authentic problem-based learning instead of lecturing, research indicates students achieve and retain more (Bernard et al., 2004; Bizzell, 1991; Bransford et al., 2000; Bransford et al., 2005; Garrison, 2007; Garrison et al., 2001; Wilhelm et al., 2001) especially when students see how such problems are personally relevant to them and to their achievement goals. The resulting social-cognitive or constructivist model that depends heavily on social

constructivist learning and teaching as envisioned by Vygotsky has for this reason long been used for creative prose fiction writing workshops as described by Bell (1997, 1994); Bell (1977); Bly (2001); Blythe and Sweet (2008); Dillard (1994); Garrett (1994); McGurl (2009); Morley (2007); and Myers (1996).

Even with social constructivist teaching and learning writing instructors have long struggled to ensure students achieve what Light (2002) refers to as a “deeper understanding” of writing versus a “surface reproduction of knowledge” (p. 27). Bly (2001), Shelnut (1989a, 1994), and Smiley (1994) feel students can be taught to write with the proper type of instruction. Researchers specializing in computer-mediated education as a generalized area of study (Garrison, 2007; Hawisher & Selfe, 1991; Kilmurry, 2003; Stodel et al., 2006; Twigg, 2001) would agree although with the caveat that teachers and students need to recognize that computer-mediated education is not identical to face-to-face mediated classes. It thus requires students and instructors to assume a different mindset because a face-to-face mediated traditional pedagogical model cannot be directly transferred verbatim into a computer-mediated format covering the same subject. Notwithstanding, as Salaberry (2000) and Bernard et al. (2004) found in their respective studies, “[a] medium should be selected in the service of instructional practices, not the other way around” (Bernard et al., 2004, p. 411) for as Bernard et al. (2004) go on to point out, there is no substitute, including sophisticated technological media, for good pedagogical practice and implementation.

Other researchers go further to voice their conviction that computer-mediated courses cannot be as effectively structured to meet teacher or student needs compared to face-to-face mediated interactions regardless of the subject or the discipline. Farber

(1998) contends teachers cannot establish sufficient teaching or social presence through computer-mediated classes to connect with students emotionally, socially, or pedagogically. Warschauer (1998) warned teachers' pedagogical style and attitude can be strongly influenced by the political and social governance of the teaching institution based on observations he made conducting an ethnographic study at a racially repressive private school notwithstanding his documentation a year earlier of the success foreign language teachers had experienced employing a social-constructivist paradigm in their computer-mediated distance education classes. Salaberry (2000) found computer-mediated classes to be efficient, but not as effective for meeting teachers' objectives. Hawisher and Selfe (1991) found in their study that though teachers reported their satisfaction with computer-mediated instruction, students reacted negatively to their teachers' ability to monitor or police their comments. This in turn they found did not result in a constructivist free discourse of self-discovery and self-expression, but in the repressive patriarchal teacher-centered paradigm described by Bizzell (1991) and Freire (1970).

Gance (2002) too faults computer-mediated classes citing their behaviorist-based design as his reason. According to Gance, computer-mediated communication is restricted to a behavior-based model (Bizzell, 1991) due to its structural design limitations. This in turn impedes instructors from implementing the four dynamics of constructivist pedagogy: active, not passive learners; active task engagement; lessons presented in real-time, real-life contexts; and dynamic, not static interactions amongst group members and instructors.

The connection between teacher and learner varies widely from one pedagogical model to another. Behavioral models, generally regarded as the most rigid, tend to adhere to a strict patriarchal teacher-passive student model with teachers providing direction instruction that students explicitly follow. By comparison, teachers who choose to use a social constructivist model endow their students with considerable responsibility and latitude for self-discovery and self-expression as already presented.

Conducting a face-to-face mediated social constructivist teaching and learning class, the teacher's role is to facilitate as well as to provide direct instruction to students. As Garrison (2007) indicates, instructors that facilitate students' dialogue guide their students' dialogic exchange without shaping or determining their final direction. By contrast, instructors who dominate discourse, lead the inquiry to ensure students are directed to a predetermined end. Garrison (2007) hypothesizes that students may not be able to distinguish the difference between the two. His hypothesis is in keeping with other educators' perspective that America's traditional and current educational system tends to deter students from independent thinking. The result is because students never develop the motivation and desire to be independent learners and problem-solvers in the lower and secondary grades, they continue to be dependent in their post-secondary classes on their instructors, expecting to be told what to do instead of thinking problems through for themselves as independent learners (Diaz & Carnal, 1999; Hancock, 2002; Knowles, 1970; Lawless & Richardson, 2002; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2003). Such a hypothesis could possibly explain the complaints some students expressed regarding a lack of teaching presence and specific direction in computer-mediated distance education

classes (Duncan, 2005; Goodyear et al., 2005; and Stodel et al., 2006) as they misconstrued a lack of teacher direction for an absence of teaching presence.

This supposition is supported by quantitative research (Bernard et al., 2004; Lawless & Richardson, 2002) that found that sound pedagogical practice, not the medium has the most significant impact on learner attitude and retention. Specifically several researchers (Bernard et al., 2004; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Harris, 2001; Moore, 1997; Rex et al., 2002; Rice & Love, 1987; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Rourke et al., 2001; Shea et al., 2003; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) contend that successful learning is most likely to take place with plentiful student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactive discourse in conjunction with students engaging in authentic, self-goal directed, real-life problem-based learning activities. Attention to and scrupulous inclusion of these factors along with clear expressive teacher feedback, researchers have concluded result in thoughtful discourse, increased processing, and longer retention of material presented. It is the teacher's ability to teach, however, they emphasize, not the medium that is of paramount importance and subsequently ultimately determines the quality of instruction and student achievement leading to learner autonomy.

Historically creative prose fiction writing workshops have been modeled on Vygotsky's social constructivist learning and teaching paradigm. Researchers (Bernard et al., 2004; Garrison et al., 2001; Rice & Love, 1987; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Twigg, 2001) have determined that social constructivist teaching and learning can be successfully achieved through computer-mediated distance education. Hawisher et al. (2004) and several other researchers (Garrison et al., 2001; Moore, 1997; Twigg, 2001) indicate this can only be accomplished if students and teachers recognize face-to-face

mediated formatted lessons cannot be transferred unchanged to a computer-mediated format reiterating the significance and priority of teaching presence and social presence regardless of what medium is utilized.

This necessary shift in perspective, practice, and attitude has important implications for any course's instructional design and organization and the teacher's role. In light of critics' suggestions regarding creative prose fiction writing workshops, such changes in the teaching medium have the potential to have a direct impact reflecting critics' issues concerning how creative prose fiction writing workshops are taught, what is taught in such workshops, and who teaches them.

For example, researchers studying learner types (Diaz & Cartnal, 1999; Hancock, 2002; Stodel et al., 2006; Wolfe, 2000) and student motivation (Hancock, 2002; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2003) found high-achieving, abstract thinking students are intrinsically motivated and tend to need minimal teaching presence. By contrast, concrete (Diaz & Cartnal, 1999), field dependent (Wolfe, 2000), or low-conceptual (Hancock, 2002) learners are intrinsically motivated and need specific structure and require maximum teaching presence. Since both learner types are likely to participate in creative prose fiction writing workshops, an instructor conducting such a workshop through a computer-mediated delivery system needs to be aware of both types of students' needs. In a similar vein, the same instructor needs to be aware of shifting group dynamics from one group of workshop participants to another.

Consideration of these factors raised several questions. For example, are well known visiting writers or even tenured authors able or willing to meet students' diverse learner needs away from a face-to-face mediated setting that requires them to take an



extremely active role in designing computer-mediated classes using a social constructivist learning and teaching paradigm for creative prose fiction writing workshops that promotes strong social presence in addition to teaching presence without specific teacher training on how to do so? Are such writing-teachers sufficiently electronically literate to conduct computer-mediated workshops?

Andrews' (2009), Holtman's and Lent's (1995), and Keegan's (2008) dissatisfaction with current creative writing programs' curriculum and/or procedure raised another set of questions regarding potential student satisfaction with possible delivery system changes in writing workshops. Students choose to take distance education classes for diverse reasons, but primarily for convenience or because given their particular life styles with jobs, family, and travel restrictions, and due to unavailability of particular programs in their community, they may have no choice. Another possibility is they want to take a higher quality program offered at a distant institution or one more amenable to their preferred writing styles and genres. An M.F.A. student may be prompted to take a computer-mediated workshop for any one of these reasons. Whatever the reason, students' desire for quality instruction does not diminish because they choose or have to take computer-mediated classes (Lawless & Richardson, 2002).

Additionally the ever increasing number of creative writing programs has created a very competitive market for potential M.F.A. students amongst postsecondary institutions. Consequently, institutions offering creative writing programs will need to be attuned to student needs and wants to be viably competitive. They will need to be more aware than ever before of learners' needs and wants including recognizing that different

learner types need and want different things in terms of teaching presence and social presence in order to be academically successful. This strongly suggests that institutions would need to hire writing instructors that recognize different students have different needs that will affect instructional designs and organization and teachers' roles regarding the need for more or less instructional structure, teaching presence, and social presence in terms of guiding and mentoring to ensure the majority of students that have an increased need for teaching presence and want and need greater social presence with peers to be academically successful taking computer-mediated classes are satisfied. Addressing these issues reverts back to teaching presence's and social presence's subcomponents and how creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors are likely to need to redesign any computer-mediated course to accommodate the same students using a non-face-to-face mediated format in order to retain their workshops' desirability from students' perspective in an increasingly competitive market for talented and determined students.

This in turn leads to students' correlative question: will taking a creative writing workshop through computer-mediated distance education notably improve my writing ability and increase the likelihood I will be published and ultimately employable as a creative prose fiction writing instructor?

The purpose of this study was to investigate these issues by conducting a series of interviews with M.F.A. students participating in actual face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated creative prose fiction workshops; the workshop instructors teaching the workshops; and creative writing program administrators in charge of both kinds of classes in addition to actually attending face-to-face mediated and a computer-mediated workshops in order 1) to better understand conventionally taught face-to-face mediated

workshops operational pedagogy and correlative affective factors to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order 2) to aid administrators' decision-making process regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program. The process as to how the study was conducted is described in Chapters Three and Four.

### **Summary and Recapitulation of Key Terms**

Like most specialized programs and educational models, creative writing programs and computer-mediated communication use terms distinct to them. For the purposes of this paper the use of such terms have been kept to a minimum. There are some, however, though alluded to earlier, to avoid confusion are reiterated here.

AWP (2011b) recognizes both low-residency and high-residency M.F.A. programs. According to the Board of Directors an effective low-residency program can be taught online using computed mediated technology, but also usually requires students to attend a minimum of 48 semester hours in residence overall as a graduation requirement during which time students attend face-to-face mediated workshops and meet one-on-one with their writing instructors to plan writing projects for the upcoming term.

Creative writing workshops, as described in Chapter 1, typically employ social constructivist and interactive paradigms wherein peers and the instructor critique in-depth individual M.F.A. students' creative prose fiction. However, as Blythe and Sweet (2008) point out, prose fiction writing instructors can and often do integrate variations into the classic workshop model. Notwithstanding these modifications, what is generally referred

to as the workshop method is considered to be the standard and therefore the most widely used paradigm for teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops (Blythe & Sweet, 2008).

Computer-mediated communication or electronic learning is an increasingly popular educational mode used by numerous universities and colleges for a diversity of subjects that include, but are not limited to psychology, foreign languages, mathematics, statistics, composition and rhetoric, and creative writing. However, as Guri-Rosenbilit (2005) has indicated, distance education and computer-mediated communication are by definition distinctly different. Distance education is defined as “various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors [teachers] present with their students at lecture rooms or on the same premises” (Holmberg, 1989). By contrast, computer-mediated communication is defined as “the use of electronic media for a variety of learning purposes that range from add-on functions in conventional classrooms to full substitution for the face-to-face meetings by online encounters...‘distance’ is not a defining characteristic of e-learning” (Guri-Rosenbilit, 2005, p. 470).

Frequent linkage, as exemplified by NCES’s and NPEC’s reference to computer-mediated communication and distance education as a single medium, has so promoted their interchangeableness that for the purposes of this study the two are considered as one, and the term computer-mediated education or computer-mediated workshop is used consistently to indicate full-time computer-mediated distance education.

Seven specific pedagogical, sociological, and linguistic theories are referred to. These are social constructivism; interactive learning; activity theory; transactional

distance; transactional reading and writing; affect control theory, and *habitus, capital,* and *field*.

### Social constructivism

The first of these, social constructivism posits that each learner is capable of learning from a more expert teacher with appropriate guidance and modeling. This learning space according to Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist most generally associated with social constructivism, is a student's *zone of proximal development*. When a task is appropriately modeled and explained for the student, the student in turn makes the lesson his own and in time so internalizes the task it can be said he/she has appropriated it. Moreover, recent research educators have defined social constructivism as consisting of three presences or centers: teaching presence or assessment centered; social presence or learner centered; and cognitive presence or knowledge centered. Teaching presence refers to instructional design and organization; facilitation of discourse; and provision of direct instruction. Social presence refers to social context consisting of task authenticity, goal-direction, and self-revelation; online communication refers to online privacy concerns and electronic literacy; and interactivity covers communication styles, nonverbal behaviors, dramaturgical cues, and paralanguage; program and workshop community culture; immediacy, meaning frequency, length and duration of participants' responses; and reciprocity or the willingness of participants to engage in dialogic exchanges. Cognitive presence is the same as learner autonomy. Moreover, while the terms knowledge centered, learner centered, and assessment centered convey the same attributes as cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching

presence respectively (Shea et al., 2003) for simplicity's sake the latter terms teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence or learner autonomy are used.

### Activity theory

A second pedagogical-sociological theory drawn from several German philosophers including Kant and Hegel and Russian scholars Marx, Engels, Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Luria is activity theory. Recently associated in the literature with Human-Computer Intervention, activity theory is defined as “a philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for studying different forms of human practices as development processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time” (Kuutti, 1996, p. 25). The social levels Kuutti refers to are the cultural, conscious, and behavioral. These in turn affect the subject whose goal is to achieve an explicit outcome.

These three social factors come into play as the subject, in attempting to achieve his/her object or goal, uses a tool to mediate interactions with his/her community, his/her community's rules, and to perform his/her work as part of the community. For this study the subjects were M.F.A. students participating in either a face-to-face mediated workshop or in one of two computer-mediated workshops, workshop instructors for both types of workshops, and creative writing program administrators responsible for directing their respective programs. The primary operational tools were the respective delivery systems; the primary affective tool was each individual's cultural, social, historical, and educational ontology; the community was the workshop setting; the rules were established by the writing teachers. Finally the division of labor consisted of individual participants' manuscripts, their written critiques; and their verbal and written dialogic exchanges when critiquing individual members' manuscripts. Additionally, anyone of the

operative components, rules, community, mediating tool(s), and/or the object was subject to change. While change is temporarily disruptive, it is also beneficial as it prompts readjustment that once in place allows progress to resume (Engeström, 1999).

#### Interactive theory and transactional reading and writing theory

A clearly related socio-linguistic theory generated by a colleague of Vygotsky's, Bakhtin (1986), elaborated on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory by indicating a person assigns meaning to others' verbal speech, nonverbal behaviors, dramaturgical cues, and paralanguage based on the individual's personal interaction with another speaker and his or her past experience with others in general. Aligned with Bakhtin's linguistic theory is Rosenblatt's (2005) theory of transactional reading and writing. According to Rosenblatt, individuals' perception and interpretation of what they read and write alters based on their current cultural, social, educational, and historical ontogenetic development. Such changes and disparities correlate with activity theory's concept of contradictions.

#### Habitus, capital, and field

Closely related to Bakhtin's and Rosenblatt's respective theories is Bourdieu's sociological theory of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* that similarly states a person's cultural, social, economic, and educational ontogeny or *habitus* is defined by *field*: "a social agency with two main aspects: (a) a configuration of social roles, agent positions, and the structures they fit into and (b) the historical process in which those positions are actually taken up, occupied by actors (individual and collective)" (Hanks, 2005, p. 72). *Economic*, *social*, and *cultural capital* in turn reflect a person's accrual of tangible wealth

manifested by material possessions; advantageous social contacts; and advanced and diverse educational training.

#### Transactional distance theory

Another major pedagogical theory is Moore's 1997 theory of transactional distance that redefines the focus of computer-mediated distance education as a social presence pedagogical paradigm. He indicates that the spatial divide between learners and teachers necessitated by distance creates the potential for both affective and communication gaps that are detrimental to learning. This divide, a transactional distance, needs to be navigated successfully for learning to take place.

#### Affect control theory

The final theory is the sociological theory of affect control theory that states individuals affectively respond to others so as to maintain an emotional balance. Consequently, when another person acts in an untoward or unexpected manner by word or action from what is considered the norm for that person, the individual observing and/or interacting with the altered other adjusts his/her affective, verbal, and nonverbal responses to fit the change in the other person. If the change in the other person is considered to be temporary, the readjustment is similarly short-lived; if change is deemed to be permanent, the observer or person interacting similarly permanently readjusts his/her attitude and actions accordingly.

Finally, references to published writings, whether written by a well-established and recognized author or by a novice M.F.A. creative prose fiction writing student, are deemed to be quality artistic works of literature as judged by literary experts, not what is commonly referred to as popular or even pulp fiction written for mass, commercial sales.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Introduction**

Chapter 3 identifies the established qualitative methodologies used to conduct the current case study. Chapter 4 explains how these same methodological standards were applied to identify the case study's purpose, context, data identification, collection, processing, and analysis in the researcher's investigation of how two discrete mediating tools, a face-to-face communication delivery system and a computer-mediated communication delivery system, were used to teach social constructivist organized prose fiction writing workshops at two different universities under the auspices of two different creative writing programs.

### **Research Purpose and Rationale**

Computer-mediated distance education is no longer a novel phenomenon; it is a standard educational option offered at a growing number of post-secondary institutions (NCES, 2008). Currently colleges and universities offer computer-mediated distance classes in topics ranging from science (Olsen, 2002) to creative writing (AWP, 2011a; May, 2011). In spite of its growing popularity amongst students (NCES, 2008), there are many that question the pedagogical usefulness of computer-mediated distance education (Teachout, 2009).

Stake (1976) specifies educational evaluations are conducted with the intent to accomplish one or more of the following objectives: a) to document events; b) to record student change; c) to aid decision making; d) to seek understanding; e) to facilitate

remediation. The current case study was conducted to fulfill two of these objectives: 1) to examine conventional creative writing workshops taught face-to-face to better understand their operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to, 2) aid administrative decision-makers regarding the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program.

### **Research Context**

Continuing to follow Stake's (1976) guidelines regarding program evaluation studies, the current case study is a *responsive evaluation*. A specialized form of naturalistic qualitative research that Stake defines as:

an old alternative, based on what people do naturally to evaluate things: they observe and react...An educational evaluation is *responsive evaluation* if it orients more directly to program activities than to program intents; if it responds to audience requirements for information; and if the different perspectives present are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program.

To do a responsive evaluation, the evaluator conceives of a plan of observations and negotiations...He finds out what is of value to his audiences, and gathers expressions of worth from various individuals whose points of view differ. Of course, he checks the quality of his records: he gets program personnel to react to the accuracy of his portrayals, authority figures to react to the relevance of his findings, and audience members to react to the relevance of his findings. He does much of this informally—iterating and keeping a record of action and reaction. He chooses media accessible to his audiences to increase the likelihood of communication (p. 116).

Specifically, while the current case study was concerned with learner autonomy, the intent of a creative writing workshop, the primary focus was on the pedagogical design and affective impact each discrete delivery system had on its respective participants in terms of workshop activities. Therefore, in accord with Stake's second criteria for a responsive evaluation, input received through interviews and observations

from the primary users, the students and teachers in each workshop, regarding program activities were assessed to provide valuable information creative writing administrators can use to determine the value and possible advantages expanding their high-residency programs to include an optional-residency program might have for current and/or for prospective students.

### **Research Questions**

According to Stake (1994), “To do good case studies, one needs a strong conceptual structure” (p. 36). Based on this axiom, and with the two above purposes in mind, the researcher developed the following four research questions to frame her examination.

1. Will transposing a collaborative, interactive face-to-face workshop into a virtual computer-mediated distance education prose fiction writing workshop ameliorate or exacerbate existing issues currently identified with creative writing programs regarding if creative writing can be taught, and if so who, what, and how should it be taught?
2. How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors utilize social constructivist, interactive, and activity educational theories, and account for transactional distance education to meet their teaching objectives for creative prose fiction writing workshops when teaching computer-mediated distance education classes compared to how effectively and efficiently creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors use social constructivism, interactive learning, and activity theory to meet

their teaching objectives when teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops face-to-face?

3. How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshops taught as computer online distance education meet students' social, psychological, and educational needs and expectations for social constructivist collaboration, psychological support, and instructional content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers as compared to the spontaneous and robust social, psychological, and instructional interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?
4. How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated workshops enhance students' prose fiction writing development and potential to write prose fiction of sufficient quality to be seriously considered for publication by real world publishing houses compared to participation in face-to-face mediated workshops?

### **Methodology**

Guba and Lincoln (1988) identify naturalistic qualitative study as having four methodological components. 1) The investigation emphasizes participants' affective actions and reactions within the context of the program. 2) The investigation needs to be conducted in a natural setting. 3) Researchers need to depend on naturally generated data sources. 4) Researchers cannot undertake an investigation with presumed assumptions.

Emphasis on participants' affective actions and reactions within program boundaries

Stake (1995) indicates qualitative case studies' salient points of interest are focused on

people and programs. Each one is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality...[as] a specific, complex, functioning thing (pp. 1-2).

According to Stake (1994), a responsive evaluation also constitutes an *instrumental case study* rather than an *intrinsic case study* because “the case is primary, the issues are secondary, examined only as they serve the effort to understand the case” (p. 35).

Situated in a natural setting

Stake (1967) clearly states, “To be fully understood, the educational program must be fully described and fully judged” (p. 3). This accords with Guba and Lincoln's (1988) position regarding use of a natural setting on the basis that “[i]f multiple realities exist, and they are time- and context-dependent, it is essential the study be carried out in the same time/context complex that the inquirer seeks to understand” (p. 103).

Accordingly, the only way researchers can conduct naturalistic case studies that enable them to appreciate and explore realistically, not artificially, the phenomenon being investigated is for them to be immersed in the actual teaching and learning communities they are investigating for sufficient time to ensure they are able to accomplish their indicated purposes to understand the complexities of the program and thus be in a position to aid decision-makers.

### Dependency on natural data sources

Again, in accord with Guba and Lincoln's (1988) dicta regarding qualitative research, data collected from participants in the form of interviews, correspondence, observations, written documents, and any other artifacts participants generate and share with researchers comprise the most suitable data because such data were created as program artifacts as products of program operations. Conversely, "[i]f some other complex is used, for example, a laboratory, the resulting findings (understandings) will not be relevant" (1988, pp. 104-105). This again accords with Stake (1976), who points out data preordinate researchers report on are participants' responses to stimuli researchers themselves provide, which Stake contends may or may not correlate with the program being evaluated.

This difference is important because case studies emphasize program participants' affective reactions and relationships. Such an objective is distinctly different from quantitative researchers' objective to test pre-positing theories or hypotheses. For unlike quantitative researchers who might seek to design an intervention or in some way measure, test, or experiment, qualitative researchers' intent is to understand the phenomena being investigated (Merriam, 1998).

These dicta are applicable to the current case study as the "natural communication" Stake (1976) and Guba and Lincoln (1988) refer to cannot be mined from pre-course information surveys given to participants when either they are likely to feel confident because as experienced computer users they are comfortable navigating complex web designs, or as overly anxious participants may feel they are technologically unprepared (lack electronic literacy) to deal with computer-related issues (Duncan, 2005;

Hawisher et al., 2004). By the same token, post-course surveys may reflect participants' relief over completing a course and/or their reticence to criticize an instructor rather than express their true feelings (Hara & Kling, 2000). For this reason, Guba and Lincoln (1988) contend "[h]umans collect information best and most easily, through extensions of their senses: talking to people, observing their activities, reading their documents, assessing the unobtrusive signs they leave behind, and the like" (p. 105). Hence, attitudinal and emotional laden information can best be garnered from personal interviews, reading pertinent documents generated for the class in addition to whatever information participants are willing to share through emails, critiques, journals, possibly even non-course related electronic documents published on social networking sites like My Space and Facebook (Creswell, 2007) in addition to careful observation of participants' nonverbal behaviors, their communication styles, their paralinguistic cues, and their dramaturgical cues. Consequently, while according to Stake (1976), a responsive evaluation "trades off some measurement precision in order to increase the usefulness of the findings to persons in and around the program" (p. 116).

#### Validation of experiential learning

While qualitative researchers commence case studies without "prior propositional formulations in mind;...[as] it is a premise that the naturalist will initially have very little idea of what is salient and therefore what ought to be examined" (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 106), it is also understood their "tacit understanding of a situation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 106) enables naturalistic researchers to conceptualize their study.

Stake (1994) concurs going on to state that experiential learning is the beginning, not the end, for the naturalistic researcher.

Rummaging through experience provides the best intellectual system we have for interpreting many things. It gives us ground for examining extremely complex phenomena. But experience alone closes our minds to some data, some potential interpretations. We need a disciplined handling of experience. Rather than abandon experiential knowledge, we should put our talent for experiential learning to the best use we can. The naturalist case study researcher engages in efforts to validate experiential learning (pp. 33-34).

Benbasat, Goldstein, and Mead (1987) concur indicating qualitative case studies are “well-suited to capturing the knowledge of practitioners and developing theories from it” (p. 370). Merriam (1998) agrees pointing out that qualitative case studies are useful for achieving three kinds of research objectives: 1) they enable a researcher to explore a system holistically in its natural venue, not in an artificial setting like a lab; 2) qualitative case studies enable a researcher to understand the complexity of a program by asking “how” and “why” questions that explain “the meaning people have constructed” (p. 6); and 3) qualitative case studies are especially appropriate where there is a paucity of evaluation research.

#### Triangulation of data

The current case study was undertaken with two considerations. First, it was purposely set in two natural social constructivist teaching and learning community settings, each bounded by discrete communication delivery systems to better understand conventionally taught creative writing workshops operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to aid administrators’ decision-making process regarding the pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program. Two, the researcher approached the case study with the foreknowledge that



participants' perceptions of the different delivery systems were likely to be influenced by their personal cultural, historical, educational and social backgrounds as adult learners (Bourdieu, 1993; Cole, 1999) as well as her own tacit educational experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1988).

To ensure confidence in the accuracy of her evaluation and trustworthiness of her interpretation of the data collected (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1994) three sources for triangulation in the form of multiple and different data sources and approaches (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) in addition to more than one theory were chosen to ensure as much reliability as possible was achieved as a result of her data analysis. Both different data sources and theories were used to ensure more than one source was used for triangulation. Specifically, in accord with established qualitative research practices (Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1970; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009) the researcher used *data triangulation* or *repeated observations* by using different the sampling strategies of interviews and observations to obtain data from different times that took place in different social situations from multiple vantage points by interviewing administrators, instructors, and students and observing two computer-mediated and one face-to-face mediated workshops. She also utilized *methodological triangulation* or *multiple vantage points* by employing multiple methods for obtaining data in the form of repeated interviews in addition to observing three separate workshops once a week for a full academic year and performing an extensive literature search. She also used *theoretical triangulation* or *alternative theories* by referring to seven discrete theories.

### Repeated observations

Researchers (Gunawardena, 1995; Walther, 1992) determined through their independent examinations of various field studies of computer-mediated users that it takes computer-mediated community participants longer to coalesce as a group in a teaching and learning community than it does face-to-face communication mediated participants in a similar setting. For this reason it was critical for the researcher to observe physically and virtually the three workshops for an extended period of time. Since both the face-to-face mediated workshop and the computer-mediated workshops were conducted over two semesters as continuous courses, the researcher gained permission from the instructors, the students, and the Internal Review Board (IRB) to observe for a full academic year. For the face-to-face mediated workshop the time frame was September 2010 to May 2011. For the computer-mediated workshop the time frame was August 2010 to April 2011. Both time ranges were in accord with each university's regularly scheduled semester time frames.

### Multiple vantage points: Setting and site locations

Maximum variation sampling (Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Yin, 2009) was used to obtain an optimal range of diverse perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Merriam, 1998) from participants enrolled in one M.F.A. high-residency face-to-face mediated creative prose fiction writing workshop and two optional-residency computer-mediated distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops. According to Guba and Lincoln (1988), maximum variation sampling helps provide rich or intense research data that detail as fully as possible the complexities of the phenomenon being studied.

The researcher used the following criteria to choose which universities' programs she contacted.

- Accredited post-secondary institutions that offer an M.F.A. degree in creative writing;
- Selected creative writing programs that had prose fiction workshops scheduled for a sufficient length of time (at a minimum a semester) to ensure sufficient time was allotted for the researcher to build rapport with participants, and participants with each other;
- A well-established post-secondary institution known for its M.F.A. graduates that conducts face-to-face mediated workshops for baseline comparison purposes;
- A second post-secondary institution with an established, but relatively new M.F.A. program that conducts face-to-face mediated workshops;
- A third post-secondary institution with an M.F.A. program that conducts all workshops via asynchronous computer-mediated communication and does not require a summer residency program making it an unqualified optional-residency as opposed to a hybrid-program or a low-residency program;
- Face-to-face mediated workshops had to be reasonably accessible to the researcher by car to meet her time and budget restrictions;
- The computer-mediated workshop had to be an asynchronous workshop as opposed to a synchronous workshop to accommodate the researcher's job as a full-time teacher and the fact that she lives in an Eastern Standard Time (EST) zone;
- The computer-mediated workshop also had to be totally asynchronous because as a personally funded project, the researcher lacked the financial resources to pay for expensive audio-visual equipment and recording equipment to record an asynchronous computer-mediated workshop. She also lacked the skill set to operate high-tech audio-visual equipment;
- All creative writing programs had to be conducted in English as the researcher is not bilingual.

Once three appropriate universities were identified, the researcher contacted each one to obtain permission from the respective program administrators to conduct her study.

For confidentiality purposes, pseudonyms are used for each of the respective universities.

### Alternative theories

As discussed in Chapter 2, seven theories were used as a foundation for the current case study. These were: social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978); activity theory (Engeström, 1999); interactive learning theory (Bakhtin, 1986); transactional reading and

writing theory (Rosenblatt, 2005); *habitus, capital, and field* (Bourdieu, 1993); affect control theory (Heise, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993); and transactional distance theory (Moore, 1997).

Social constructivism served as the focal pedagogical theory as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Grimes, 1999; McGurl, 2009; Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996; Wilbers, 1981) indicates the prevailing workshop instructional design and organization conforms to a social constructivist model. According to contemporary educational researchers (Bransford et al., 2000; Bransford et al., 2005; Garrison et al., 2001) a successful social constructivist paradigm manifests effective and efficient teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. These three components are in turn shaped by Rosenblatt's (2005) transactional reading and writing; Bakhtin's (1986) interactive learning; Bourdieu's (1993) *habitus, capital, and field*, MacKinnon's and Heise's (1993) affect control theory; and Moore's (1997) transactional distance theory.

Operationally, a social constructivist workshop reflects activity theory visualized by Engeström (1999). Using Engeström's (1999) model, the creative writing student is the *subject*, his/her *object* is to improve his/her writing ability with the ultimate goal (*outcome*) to write publishable fiction of a higher literary caliber. Workshop participants typically numbering from ten to eleven in a workshop (Bell, 1997) constitute the *teaching and learning community*. Their respective manuscripts and critiques define *division of labor*. In accord with Engel's workshop model (Grimes, 1999; Myers, 1986; Wilbers, 1981) *workshop rules* require students to conform to certain literary conventions such as having a narrative arc, a distinctive point of view, etc. They also require that one or more workshop students submit a manuscript a week in advance to be constructively criticized

by the other workshop participants. As preparation for such critical discussions, instructors require the remaining participants to write detailed critiques to ensure they have carefully read their peers' manuscripts in order to identify craft-related strengths and weaknesses for workshop discussion purposes. Additionally, the peer(s) being critiqued or "workshopped" are not allowed to comment on their peers' remarks with the intent to disagree, challenge, and/or explain their purpose in their narratives while peers discuss their manuscripts. Instructors typically allow authors to ask questions after their manuscripts have been discussed (Bell, 1994; Bryant, 1988; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a).

### **Participants**

As indicated earlier, one of the purposes of this case study was to aid administrators by informing them of the possible pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer a low- and/or optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency creative writing program. In order to fulfill this purpose the researcher sought to understand from the primary users, the instructors and students, as those most closely connected to and therefore those most likely to be affected by such an option, their perspectives regarding the pedagogical usefulness of both delivery systems' pedagogical and affective effectiveness and efficiency. In order to accomplish this, as indicated above, the researcher sought input through three venues. She physically observed thirty-two face-to-face workshop classes and she virtually attended thirty-two computer-mediated workshop classes. She read every workshop manuscript for all three workshops in addition to supplemental readings. She also read all class discussions and analyses computer-mediated participants posted.

She additionally interviewed two program administrators, three workshop instructors (one of whom was a former program administrator), eight students in the face-to-face mediated workshop and six students in the computer-mediated workshops. While there were other students enrolled in each workshop, whose manuscripts, etc. the researcher read, only these fourteen students from the combined three workshops were interviewed. Appendices 1 through 4 contain the specific questions each group was asked. Program administrators and instructors were interviewed once. Students were interviewed twice, once at the beginning of first semester, and then towards the end of the second semester in order to get their initial perspective and then their potentially altered perspectives. All questions were phrased with the intent of gaining their individual perspectives regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of a creative writing workshop taught as a face-to-face mediated delivery system or as a computer-mediated delivery system in order to better understand each delivery system's strengths and weaknesses so as to provide administrators input from key users' perspectives regarding the usefulness of computer-mediated distance education for creative writing programs based on these prime users' perspectives.

### **Procedure**

Creswell (2007) identifies seven procedural steps qualitative researchers should follow. In accord with his criteria the following steps for data collection were followed.

First, because this was a case study bounded by two communication delivery systems, the researcher explored and selected sites that met these boundary criteria to ensure substantial data were obtained.

Second, because the study focused on people working and studying in post-secondary institutions, once sites were identified, the researcher sought and obtained IRB approval (#HM13076).

Third, potential participants were contacted. The researcher explained to them their participation would be anonymous. In addition, the researcher clarified possible though improbable risks involved along with possible benefits they and/or their university could garner from participating. Participants were also asked to sign written consent forms documenting they agreed to take part in the case study with the understanding they could withdraw at any time without adverse repercussions. Participants were also assured that pseudonyms, not their real names, would be used.

The researcher built rapport with participants the first time she attended the face-to-face mediated workshop and in her initial emails to the participants in the computer-mediated workshops she virtually attended by reiterating she was comparing two communication delivery systems' operational and affective pedagogical effects. She continued to build rapport with all participants in her one-on-one interviews with participants by expressing appreciation for their help. Additionally, while she was a non-participatory participant of both workshops, the researcher congratulated any participant's success he/she shared. For example, if participants had a manuscript published she asked how she could get a copy. If publication was pending, she asked when it was likely to be available. During her virtual observation of the computer-mediated workshops, a participant in both classes indicated they either had and/or were about to have their writing commercially published. Additionally, the instructor for the

face-to-face workshop announced one of the students in the workshop had had a short story accepted by an Australian literary journal.

Fourth, data collection commenced as soon as possible to maximize the amount of data collected over the span of the two semesters. The researcher attended the first face-to-face mediated workshop in September; she virtually began her attendance in the computer-mediated workshops retroactively in October retrieving previously posted announcements, topic discussions, manuscripts, and peer critiques dating from late August when the classes started.

Fifth, throughout her data collection written records were maintained of verbal interviews, emails<sup>4</sup>, manuscripts submitted for critiquing, and computer-mediated posted critiques and comments. Additionally, while participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop chose not to share their written critiques with the researcher, she was present for all face-to-face mediated workshop discussions with the exception of the first class when her attendance was discussed. On the other hand, due to the computer-mediated communication format of the computer-mediated workshops, the researcher received and read all participants' manuscripts and critiques as these were posted on eBulletin, Northern Sycamore University's (NSU) virtual learning environment used to conduct its optional-residency workshops. These postings included all students' and the instructors' communication and input posted from the start of the workshop. Consequently, in spite of

---

<sup>4</sup> Since email was the primary source of communication between NSU and the researcher, it needs to be noted here that all email correspondence was conducted using the researcher's and participants' college accounts. For the researcher this included her EMU account and the guest account she was granted as a non-participatory member of NSU's computer-mediated workshop on eBulletin, NSU's virtual learning environment. Emails with EMU participants were similarly conducted via the researcher's EMU email account.



a delay in gaining access, the researcher had retroactive access to everyone's manuscripts, critiques, and remarks.

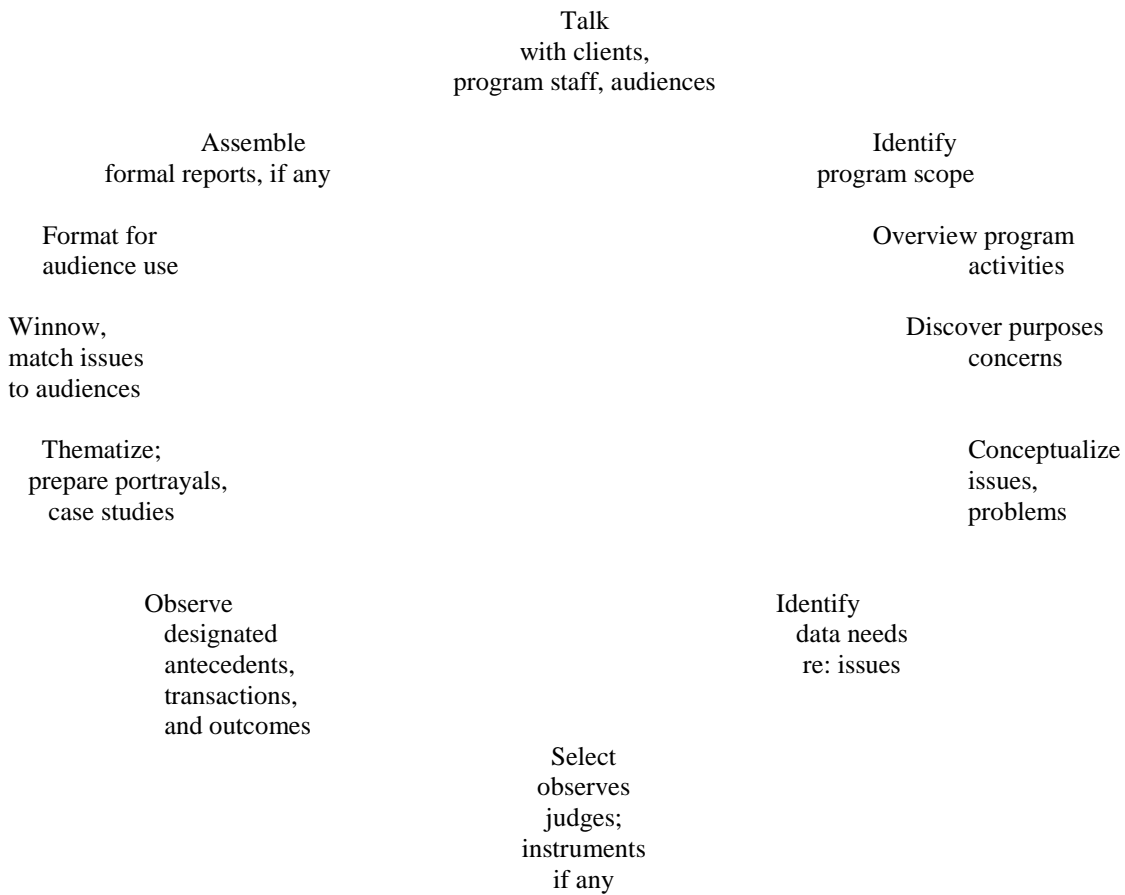
Sixth, field notes were discussed with participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop. This step was not necessary with computer-mediated participants as they responded to interview questions via personal email accounts maintained by eBulletin or through the class's eBulletin announcement postings.

Seventh, the researcher coded and stored the data in order to have it available for writing the final report initially using a coding system developed by Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer (2001) (Figures 4-4a,b; 4-5a,b; 4-6a,b) for teaching presence; a coding system developed by Rourke et al. (2001) for social presence (Figures 4-7a, b); and a coding system developed by Vaughn and Garrison (2005) for cognitive presence (Figure 4-8; 4-9). Data from each of these coding systems was then used as a basis to complete Stake's (1976) description and judgment matrices.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Stake (1976) there is a distinct difference between which data are collected and how those data are evaluated for analysis. Stake indicates that the responsive evaluator conducting a naturalistic investigation does not provide stimuli and then observe subsequent responses. Rather he/she is responsible for reporting on patterns that emerge from his/her observation of important events as they occur naturally in the environment on the part of participants being observed. Moreover, Stake indicates: "Through repeated observation and use of numerous observers, data reliability increases. Observations remain objective, but by replication they are purged of random error" (1976, p. 123).

Stake outlines twelve steps the researcher takes to collect data. He graphically represented his twelve steps as an arrowless circle to emphasize the interconnectivity and lack of chronological order the researcher follows as he/she applies the twelve steps for as Stake (1976) observes: “any event can follow any event, many events occur simultaneously, and the evaluator returns to each event many times before the evaluation is finished” (p. 121). Figure 3-1 shows Stake’s twelve steps as he schematically envisions the researcher applying them.



**Figure 3-1: Prominent Events in a Responsive Evaluation (Stake, 1976, p. 122)**

Once data are collected, Stake (1976) instructs the evaluative researcher to code the data into discrete matrices of six categories each. The description matrix identifies what subjects intended and what the researcher observed. The judgment matrix codes what standards or criteria were used to measure participants' intents and what observations and what judgments or conclusions the researcher drew from the cumulative data recorded in the description matrix. Stake (1976) also breaks each category into *antecedents* to indicate what action was desired; *transactions* to indicate what actually occurred; and *outcomes* to indicate both what was intended to occur and what did occur. Table 3-1 shows a layout of Stake's coding scheme of collected data. Appendix 6 shows an example of a complete coded statement of data for a feature of interactivity.

**Table 3-1: Template of statement of data collected by researcher (Stake, 1976, p. 120)**

Intents	Observations		Standards	Judgments
		Antecedents		
		Transactions		
		Outcomes		

**Description Matrix**

**Judgment Matrix**

As illustrated in Appendix 6 the coded data indicates both workshop instructors' *observed intent* was for workshopped authors to get any residual questions they had following the group's discussion answered by allowing workshopped authors to ask questions directly following group discussion. Their *standardized intent* for doing so was to ensure authors got clarification regarding any points discussed to help them be better writers. What the researcher observed as actual *transactions* were that face-to-face mediated workshopped authors typically indicated they did not have questions. Conversely, following computer-mediated participants' initial critiques, workshopped authors took part in lively discussions that included multiple questions and comments on

everyone's part. Based on these *intended observations* and *observed transactions* the researcher concluded as *a description outcome* that while the face-to-face mediated instructor intended and allowed students to ask questions in reality students did not. According to the students they were too overwhelmed to ask questions. Notwithstanding, this led the researcher to conclude or *judge the outcome* as an indication of lowered social presence in the face-to-face mediated workshop, but heightened social presence in the computer-mediated workshop.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Introduction**

While Chapter 3 outlined the general principles and methodology of qualitative case study research as delineated by qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1988; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1967, 1976, 1994, 1995; Stake & Trumbull, 1982) Chapter 4 explains how the researcher followed the researchers' guidelines to identify appropriate sites, recruit participants, gather observation and interview data, process these data, and evaluate the data in accord with Stake's (1976) specified twelve qualitative research events (Figure 3-1).

### **Setting and Site Selection**

Using the criteria listed in Chapter 3, the researcher identified three universities via a review of AWP (2011a) and an Internet search. As with participants' names, pseudonyms were used for the three universities. Thus, the three universities were Southern Willow University (SWU), Eastern Magnolia University (EMU), and Northern Sycamore University (NSU).

SWU is a private institution located in southwestern Virginia. Its face-to-face mediated high-residency graduate creative writing program began in 1960. Since its inception its graduates have been recipients of both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Over the past ten years, SWU graduates have published over two hundred books. In light of the school's exemplary history as a high-residency creative writing program that uses the University of Iowa's gold standard workshop method, information

from SWU's participants was to be used to establish a baseline as to what constitutes an effective and efficient face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshop for comparison purposes with the comparatively newer M.F.A. programs offered by EMU and NSU.

For comparison purposes, according to AWP (2011a), SWU offers a two-year studio-research program that requires students to complete a total of 48 credit hours. These hours are divided into twenty-four workshop elective hours; sixteen literature credit hours; and an eight credit hour thesis. The university teaches several genres: fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, playwriting, screenwriting, and children's literature (AWP, 2011a). Students are allowed to focus on one particular genre. In addition to group workshops, SWU's program also includes focused tutorials for its M.F.A. students.

NSU is a Canadian public university located in a western city. NSU offers an optional-residency studio M.F.A. program offering genre choices in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, playwriting, screenwriting, writing for children and young adults and translation. Workshops are taught totally online as asynchronous computer-mediated distance education classes. A summer residency program is available, but is not mandatory.

NSU's creative writing M.F.A. program is considered to be Canada's premier creative writing program. Started in 1946, it became an independent studio creative writing M.F.A. program in 1965, making it Canada's longest instituted M.F.A. program. Its computer-mediated optional-residency program was instituted five years ago as a logical expansion of its long-standing and highly successful high-residency program, which like SWU's program has graduated numerous distinguished writers.

NSU's M.F.A. program is a two-year studio program with the option of student participation in a low-residency graduate program. NSU also has a conventional high-residency M.F.A. program. Both high-residency and optional-residency M.F.A. students are required to complete 36 graduate hours devoted entirely to workshops in three of the nine genres offered including a creative thesis. NSU was selected for this study because it is the only university listed with AWP (2011a) that offers a mono-linguistic completely computer-mediated distance education M.F.A. program.<sup>5</sup> NSU also offers an optional ten-day summer residency to its computer-mediated students.

EMU is an urban university located in central Virginia and like SWU offers a high-residency studio-research M.F.A. program. Like NSU and SWU, EMU offers workshops in prose fiction, focusing primarily on short fiction. Classes in novel writing and screenwriting, its other two prose fiction options, are offered intermittingly. The program's other chief genre is poetry.

EMU, like SWU and NSU met the researcher's criteria. Additionally, *Poets & Writers*, a well-established periodical about and for writers, selected EMU as one of the top fifty U.S. M.F.A. programs for 2010 calling it one of the top ranked programs among relatively new M.F.A. programs (Abramson, 2009). While *Poets & Writers* ("MFA Nation," 2011) dropped EMU from its top fifty ranking in 2011, the magazine still ranked EMU high among the twenty-five M.F.A. programs receiving honorable mention. Additionally EMU was accessible to the researcher and she had established contacts with faculty in the English Department, including a faculty member of the creative writing program.

---

<sup>5</sup> The only other totally computer-mediated distance education M.F.A. program listed with AWP (2011a) is the bi-lingual M.F.A. program offered by the University of Texas at El Paso.

EMU's program, initiated in 1983, is a relatively new, high residency, studio-research creative writing M.F.A. program. A three-year program, graduates are required to complete a minimum of twelve semester hours of workshops; twelve semester hours of graduate literature studies; and six to twelve hours of thesis work. The remaining twelve to eighteen required hours can consist of additional workshops, literature classes, and/or electives in another department like education for a total of 48 graduate hours.

In accord with the above mentioned criteria the high-residency program at SWU located in southwest Virginia is approximately 100 miles away from the researcher's residence. EMU is approximately 40 miles from the researcher's residence. These distances made both universities reasonably accessible to the researcher by car.

Workshops at SWU and EMU were held once a week on different days either in the late afternoon or at night making them time accessible to her as well. As NSU's computer-mediated classes were all asynchronous, time of access was not an issue. Additionally, all three universities' classes were conducted solely in English.

All three universities were certified programs registered with AWP (2011a) and offered M.F.A. programs. All three universities' workshops utilized the University of Iowa's traditional social constructivist design and organization, and offered prose fiction workshops as either short fiction or novel writing. NSU's program was conducted totally online as students have the option of attending a summer residency session held in Vancouver. Finally, all three programs' workshop times were mono-linguistic.

Thus the only critical differences between the three programs were the mediating tool of face-to-face mediated communication versus computer-mediated communication and the writing requirements (length of submitted manuscripts). Since the case study's



design was to compare the pedagogical and affective efficiency and efficacy of the two discrete delivery systems for prose fiction creative writing workshops and the three universities met the researcher's need to get a maximum variation of sampling perspectives within the given boundaries of the study (Starke, 1995) while also meeting the researcher's personal criteria for accessibility and funding restrictions the three schools were determined to be suitable for the current case study. Table 4-1 compares the three universities' respective M.F.A. programs.

**Table 4-1: Comparison Chart of EMU's, NSU's, and SWU's M.F.A. Creative Writing Programs (AWP, 2011a)**

EMU's M.F.A Program	NSU's M.F.A. Program	SWU's M.F.A. Program
Studio-Research Program	Studio Program	Studio-Research Program
3 years	2 years	2 years
48 credit hour graduation requirement	36 credit hour graduation requirement	48 credit hour graduation requirement
12 credit workshop hours required	36 credit workshops hours required	24 credit workshop hours required
12 literature credit hours required	No requirement	16 literature credit hours required
6 to 12 credit creative thesis hours required	6 credit creative thesis hours required	8 credit creative thesis hours required
Offers multiple genres	Offers multiple genres	Offers multiple genres
Does not require students to take workshops in more than one genre	Requires students to take workshops in more than one genre	Does not require students to take workshops in more than one genre

### **Participants: Identification and Recruitment**

Permission to have access to workshop instructors and students to conduct the case study was requested from the three universities' program administrators as soon as the researcher received IRB approval (#HM13076) in August 2010. SWU's and EMU's administrators immediately contacted their programs' prose fiction instructors to determine which were interested in participating and felt their schedules and workloads would allow them adequate time to participate. The instructors at SWU and EMU

responded relatively quickly; however, there was a four week delay with NSU. The program coordinator for NSU's optional-residency program explained this delay was due to the time it took NSU's creative writing director, the coordinator's supervisor, to approve the request. The delay was due to administrative issues, therefore, not concerns about the nature or the proposed methodology of the case study. A start up date with NSU was further delayed because the program coordinator had difficulty finding an interested prose fiction teacher who felt he/she had the time to participate. For while interest was high, time restrictions had to take priority he explained on the part of instructors. When one did agree, she was immediately contacted by email and the process used with SWU and EMU was continued with NSU.

Once instructors were identified by the respective administrators, the researcher contacted each one by email identifying herself as an education doctoral student. In the same email the researcher explained the purpose and the reason for the case study in addition to voicing her appreciation for their participation.

The three identified instructors confirmed their agreement to participate indicating, however, in accord with social constructivist's democratic student goal-directed design, their students would also have to acquiesce to having the researcher physically or virtually present during the workshop meetings in addition to having their manuscripts and possibly their critiques read by the researcher. All of the students at EMU and NSU expressed interest in participating and warmly welcomed the researcher to their workshops. Such was not the case with SWU.

Like the other two instructors at EMU and NSU, SWU's creative writing teacher was enthusiastic about the case study. However, from the outset she expressed concern

that her students might not agree to have the researcher attend their workshop meetings. This proved to be the case as she said her students felt the researcher's presence would be like "talking in front of a therapist."

Two compromises were proposed. One was to allow the researcher to attend one, possibly two, workshop meetings in addition to conducting one-on-one interviews. The students, however, felt the researcher's attendance at even a single meeting would be too intrusive. They did agree to interviews. The researcher provided the instructor with her email address along with a list of the questions indicating she was willing to conduct interviews in person on SWU's campus, by telephone, or if students preferred they could email their answers to her questions. Initially the four students the instructor had identified as being interested agreed to interviews and contacted the researcher confirming they would participate. In the same emails, three students indicated they preferred to have the questions emailed to them. One requested to do his interview by telephone and provided a phone number and a time when he could be reached. The researcher attempted twice to get follow-up responses by sending reminder emails and calling the phone number the one student provided three times. She also sent a follow-up email to the latter student explaining the problem she had encountered. Ultimately, only one student responded by emailing her written responses to the researcher. There was no further contact between the students and the researcher.

The researcher appreciates SWU's program's director, the instructor's and the one student's assistance and input. However, due to the other students' failure to respond, the limited interview data from SWU that were secured were omitted as the researcher and her advisor felt these were insufficient to make an equitable comparison or to provide

even minimal baseline data information compared to that gathered from EMU's and NSU's participants. While this omission was regrettable due to SWU's creative writing program's reputation and long history, its omission was not deemed critical or detrimental to the case study as their input was intended to provide a baseline, which was not absolutely necessary given the wealth of information obtained through the literature search on the workshop approach.

#### Comparison of instructors

The program administrators interviewed indicated M.F.A. creative writing instructors are hired primarily on the basis of three criteria. They have collegial personalities; they have published a minimum of two book-length works (e.g., collected short stories; novels; poetry volumes; creative nonfiction, etc.) by a recognized commercial press thereby demonstrating they are talented writers; and they possess a thorough knowledge of contemporary and classical literature which indicates they possess substantial knowledge and appreciate diverse literary genres, writing styles, and techniques so as to be responsive to students' diverse genre needs and interests.

Three M.F.A. writing instructors were interviewed. The two EMU instructors were experienced face-to-face mediated fiction writing workshops teachers; neither had taught a computer-mediated workshop. NSU's instructor was also a veteran face-to-face mediated workshop instructor; the computer-mediated workshops the researcher observed were the first computer-mediated workshops she had taught. All instructors were published authors. NSU's computer-mediated instructor had published two books: an award-winning collection of short stories and a nonfiction book about an extensive tree-

planting project she was a part of for seventeen years. A NSU M.F.A. graduate herself, she teaches creative writing part-time at NSU.

The EMU instructor for the face-to-face mediated workshop whose class the researcher observed is a full-time tenured associate professor. To date she has published two novels with a third one pending publication. Additionally she has written numerous short stories that have been published in various literary journals. With doctorate degrees in literature and in fiction writing she has taught short fiction and novel writing workshops as well as literature classes. The second EMU instructor the researcher interviewed is a full professor at EMU, a former program director of EMU's creative writing program, and a seasoned author having published multiple novels including two sets of trilogies. He responded primarily as an administrator, and secondarily as a face-to-face mediated workshop instructor.

#### Criteria for student acceptance

Regarding criteria for student acceptance, program administrators and workshop instructors indicated prospective creative writing M.F.A. candidates are not required to have an English degree or a B.F.A. in creative writing as a pre-requisite. Rather administrators indicated they seek candidates that demonstrate an ability to convey an appreciation of life's experiences in a clear vision with a fresh voice that makes their presentation of characters, plot, tone, and mood compelling by their exceptional ability to correctly, albeit roughly, apply writing craft techniques. By comparison, rejected candidates' manuscripts are filled with hackneyed platitudes, rehashed plots, and stereotypical story characters. Thus, acceptable candidates possess what program administrators and instructors from both universities referred to as "spark," explaining

they were adverse to using the word “talent,” which they indicated was far too objective to define.

Table 4-2 below delineates the two universities’ M.F.A. program application requirements.

**Table 4-2: Comparison of EMU’s and NSU’s Basic Application Requirements**

<b>EMU’s M.F.A. Basic Application Requirements</b> (AWP, 2011a)	<b>NSU’s M.F.A. Basic Application Requirements</b> (AWP, 2011a)
Undergraduate degree: GPA unspecified	Undergraduate degree from 4-yr. institution with a min. GPA of B+
GRE	No equivalent required
3 reference letters	3 reference letters
Statement of Purpose with emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and writing habits</li> <li>• Previous writing workshop experience</li> <li>• Students perspective on his/her responsibility to writers’ community</li> </ul>	Cover letter with emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and/or life experiences relevant to writing program</li> <li>• Indication of preferred genre</li> <li>• If applicable a listing of commercially published creative work and/or readings</li> </ul>
Portfolio: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poetry: 8 to 10 poems and/or</li> <li>• Fiction, drama, and/or nonfiction: 20 to 50 pages</li> </ul>	Portfolio: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 2; maximum of 3 genres</li> <li>• Poetry: 20 pages, single-spaced</li> <li>• Fiction: 20 pages, double-spaced (short fiction and/or novels)</li> <li>• Screenplay: 20 pages</li> <li>• Stage play: 30 pages</li> <li>• Children’s lit: 20 pages, double-spaced</li> <li>• Translated literature: 20 pages</li> <li>• No collaborative work</li> </ul>
TOEFL (if applicable)	TOEFL (if applicable)

### Comparison of students

EMU’s face-to-face mediated workshop had eleven students. Eight were enrolled fulltime in the M.F.A. program for creative writing; two were doctoral students in the university’s interdisciplinary Media, Art and Text (MATX<sup>6</sup>) program that combines arts and humanities. The eleventh student was a veteran journalist and writer. A long-time acquaintance of the instructor, he attended with her permission as he is neither an M.F.A.

<sup>6</sup> The MATX program is designed for those who hold a master’s degree (M.A., M.F.A., or M.S.) in a relevant field and who wish to expand their research and creative or professional practice.

nor an EMU student. With the exception of the journalist and the MATX students all other students were second- and third-year M.F.A. students. Additionally, with the exception of the journalist who was not enrolled as an M.F.A. student, the remaining participants were acquainted with most of the other participants from previous classes and workshops. All eleven students in the face-to-face mediated workshop knew the instructor from personal contacts or from previous classes. Finally, several, but not all, student participants were grant recipients employed by EMU as teaching assistants. Prior to the workshop the researcher knew the instructor, but was not acquainted with any of the students.

Five and six participants respectively were initially enrolled in the two computer-mediated workshops. All eleven participants were second year M.F.A. students enrolled in NSU's optional-residency program. Most of the participants, unlike their counterparts in the face-to-face mediated workshop, were employed professionally as teachers, business managers, journalists, and/or public administrators. At least two participants have, or will soon have, respectively a collection of short stories and a novel commercially published. Prior to the workshops the researcher did not know any of the students; nor did the students know each other or their instructor.

Table 4-3 gives an overview of the participants included in the case study when data collection started in September 2010.

**Table 4-3: Overview of case study participants at beginning of study**

	<b>EMU Participants</b>	<b>NSU Participants</b>
<b>Program administrators</b>	Instructors rotate every two years assuming responsibility as director in addition to teaching. They continue to work under the supervision of the department chair.	Non-instructional administrator in place since 2006, the inception of the optional-residency program. Serves under the direction of the creative writing program chair.
<b>Instructors</b>	Tenured associate professor with a Ph.D. in literature and creative writing; published author of two novels, several short stories and literary articles.	Part-time instructor with an M.F.A.; published author of a collection of short stories and a nonfiction novel length work.
<b>Students<sup>7</sup></b>	8 second- and third-year M.F.A. students with varying undergraduate degrees; 2 MAXT Ph.D. students; and 1 professional journalist who has published two nonfiction book-length works.	11 second-year M.F.A. students with varying undergraduate degrees; most were professionally employed as teachers, a newspaper editor, a college registrar; business managers, and/or public administrators. Two had already published professionally or had professional publications pending.

## **Comparison of Workshops**

### Genre focus for the face-to-face mediated workshop

The face-to-face mediated M.F.A. workshop was focused on novel writing. Per activity theory, the workshop's object was for students to complete a rough draft of a full-length novel by the end of the second semester. None of the students completed an entire draft, but most indicated they had a firm narrative arc and had drafted a substantial number of pages by the end of the second semester. Students were also required to read and report on a craft-related aspect of one novel per semester, and read and report on one First Novelist<sup>8</sup> contender. The former requirement was met. Students also completed the

---

<sup>7</sup>One student in the face-to-face workshop withdrew after the first semester because he wanted to concentrate on writing short stories. One student from the computer-mediated workshop also withdrew early so she could focus on getting her first novel published.

<sup>8</sup>The First Novelist Award is an award sponsored by EMU to honor a writer who has successfully published a first novel. Nominations are solicited nationwide from publishers, editors, agents, and writers.



second required reading, but due to time limitations were not required to report on any First Novelist books although they did briefly share summaries in class of some of the novel entries they had read.

#### Genre focus for the computer-mediated workshops

The computer-mediated workshop focused on short fiction. Per activity theory, students' object was to write three to four short stories during the first semester; during the second semester they were to continue to submit new manuscripts and a rewritten version of one previous submission. The exact number of stories was not specified rather students had to write an aggregate total of 15,000 words. This resulted in some students writing three stories, some four. Students were also required to write on one craft-related topic. This latter requirement did not have a minimum word number requirement. All students still enrolled during the second semester met all course requirements

#### Workshops' instructional design and organization

Based on the researcher's observations and in accord with the respective instructors' syllabi and explications, all three workshops utilized a social constructivist pedagogical model based on the traditional workshop approach delineated by Blythe and Sweet (2008). In accord with this model students distributed their manuscripts a week before they were scheduled to have their manuscript critiqued. This allowed other participants adequate time to read, prepare critiques, and in general be prepared to discuss a manuscript's strengths and weaknesses. Peer critiques in both the face-to-face mediated workshop and in the two computer-mediated workshops mixed praise, constructive

---

A panel of EMU readers narrows the field to three or four promising new works, and from that short list, three prominent judges affiliated with EMU choose the recipient of the First Novelist Award.

criticism, and suggestions for improvement regarding all aspects of a manuscript's content and the writer's use of writing craft techniques. Critical points in the critiques included, but were not limited to, a writer's use of narrative arc, character arc, point of view, pacing, mood, tone, and setting as part of their critiques (Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Bryant, 1988; Gardner, 1983a; Wilbers, 1981). Critiques, however, were not line-by-line edits.

Participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop wrote three to four manuscript submissions per semester ranging from 25 to 35 pages per manuscript submission as parts of an entire novel. In addition to their individual manuscript submissions, on nights their own manuscript was not scheduled to be discussed, students and the instructor were responsible for critiquing those students whose manuscript submissions were scheduled to be critiqued. Again, per activity theory's rules and division of labor categories, peer critics were expected to meticulously read their peers' previously distributed manuscript submissions and write one- to two-page critiques of each manuscript submitted a week earlier for review in the following week's workshop. As peer critics, participants were instructed to praise one or more aspects of the manuscript in addition to pointing out craft-related flaws and suggest possible solutions. In workshop students used their critiques as their talking points to assist them orally discuss their peers' manuscripts. At the end of the discourse, the author received his/her peers' written critiques. As an equitable peer critic, the instructor also prepared and used a similar critique as talking points for workshop discourses. Finally, all participants, students and the instructor, often amended their critiques during workshop discussions with additional comments

they felt were salient. Participants indicated these impromptu comments were often inspired by verbal comments made during workshop.

Participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop were not required to make a certain number of comments per workshop or to speak for a specified length of time. However, the instructor could and did call on participants randomly for comments to ensure the student whose manuscript was being critiqued heard from as many workshop participants as possible, not just the more outspoken ones.

In addition to the above requirement, participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop were also required to read six full-length novels that the instructor had chosen prior to the first semester the workshop met. During the second semester, six new novel choices were selected based on students' suggestions. In addition to reading these specified novels, students were required to lead critical analytical discussions in workshop about two of the twelve novels focusing on one or two specific craft-related techniques the novelist used. They were also required to read and report on at least one of the contenders for EMU's First Novelist Award. As indicated above, however, due to time limitations only the reading assignment was completed for the latter although some time was allotted at intermittent times for students to briefly share what first novelist they were reading or had read. Such discussions did not entail detailed craft-related analyses.

Like their counterparts in the face-to-face mediated workshop, participants in the computer-mediated workshop submitted three to four original pieces of short fiction presented in three to four different workshops. The length of each manuscript could vary as long as collectively all manuscripts culminated in a minimum of 15,000 words. During the second semester, each participant also had to submit a rewrite of one earlier critiqued

manuscript. All story manuscripts were due a week in advance; workshop discussions were then conducted asynchronously the following week from Wednesday through Friday, Pacific Standard Time (PST). Workshop discussion requirements mandated the other participants post initial detailed critiques of two to four paragraphs in addition to at least four more postings, also two to four paragraphs in length, that responded to other participants' comments and/or comments and questions the author posted after all initial critiques had been posted. After everyone had posted his/her initial responses, the author of that week's submitted manuscript was free to post any comments and/or questions he/she had as discussion of the manuscript was open to everyone Thursday and Friday.

Like their face-to-face workshop counterparts, participants in the computer-mediated workshops were assigned to read supplemental stories and prepare craft-related analytic interpretations of one to two pages in length. For example, minimalism as demonstrated by "The Princess and the Plumber," and experimental writing demonstrated by the short story, "Sharks" were two craft-related topics students responded to by analyzing in depth how Heti (2001) and Eldridge (2004) the respective stories' authors, employed these different literary techniques in their respective stories.

In terms of critical writing assignments, including the length and depth of critiques, and supplemental readings with corollary presentation requirements, workshop expectations and procedural practices were equal. There was a reading variance between the respective workshops' academic requirements as the face-to-face workshop participants were required to read first novels as part of the First Novelist Award for which the computer-mediated workshops participants did not have an equivalent

requirement. Additionally, although the computer-mediated workshop participants had to read more short stories than novels, the number of pages was not equivalent.

More importantly was the substantial difference in the amount of writing required of the different workshop participants as those in the novel workshop were required to compose considerably more per manuscript as novel submissions compared to those in the computer-mediated workshops writing short stories.

### **Data Collection: Researcher's Dual Roles**

During the research phase the researcher performed two discrete roles. She was a neutral, non-participatory observer of the workshops and she actively interviewed participants. In this capacity the researcher discharged eight of Stake's twelve events.

She:

- Selected, observed, judged
- Observed designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes
- Talked with clients, program staff, audiences
- Identified program scope
- Overviewed program activities
- Discovered purposes concerns
- Conceptualized issues, problems
- Identified data needs regarding issues

In the course of being an interviewer she discharged six of the same above events. She:

- Talked with clients, program staff, audiences
- Identified program scope
- Overviewed program activities
- Discovered purposes concerns
- Conceptualized issues, problems
- Identified data needs regarding issues

In her capacity as an observer, she attended all but the first scheduled face-to-face mediated workshop of the two semester (32 weeks total) course. She was absent from the opening class as the instructor for the workshop needed to query her students to ensure

they were comfortable being part of the research which included having the researcher present. During the ensuing face-to-face mediated workshops, the researcher received and read copies of writers' manuscripts in preparation for the following week's discourse. By the students' choice she did not receive any copies of their written critiques to each other, but as oral discussions essentially repeated what they had written this lack of additional hardcopy data was not considered a deficiency.

With regard to the two computer-mediated workshops she virtually observed the combined semesters' thirty-two scheduled classes by receiving via eBulletin all workshop-related postings that included announcements, manuscripts with accompanying peer critiques, and topic discussions. She also received interview information from students using her NSU eBulletin and EMU email accounts.

Program administrators, instructors, and all twenty-two students from the three workshops were asked for interviews. In addition to the former program director and the face-to-face workshop instructor, eight students from the face-to-face mediated workshop agreed to interviews. Two others expressed an interest, but did not follow-through. From the two computer-mediated workshops six participants in addition to the instructor and the program coordinator were interviewed.

The researcher adhered to Merriam's (1998) unstructured/informal format (pp. 73-74) using a list of predetermined questions to guide her, but that allowed her to expand on emerging issues. In this manner those interviewed were asked to provide their respective opinions regarding their workshop's operational and affective efficiency and effectiveness. If they were students their views were asked from their perspective as learners; if they were instructors their views were asked from their perspective as

workshop designers, organizers, facilitators, and conventional teachers providing direct instruction. If they were their program's administrator, their views were asked from their perspective as an administrator. Appendices 1 through 4 contain questions posed to each group of participants.

By interviewing administrative, instructional, and student participants, attending all 32 weeks of workshop meetings, reading twenty-two students' new and/or revised manuscripts weekly, and in the case of the computer-mediated workshop, participants' written critiques that were equivalent to the verbal discussions conducted in the face-to-face mediated workshop the researcher listened to weekly, the researcher obtained sufficient data to ensure the current case study's rigor or trustworthiness and validity in accord with the criteria presented by Creswell (2007), Marshall and Rossman (2006), and Stake (1976, 1994) by triangulating longitudinal data garnered from multiple participants with different perspectives over an extended period of time against alternative theories to determine what participants considered to be critical factors.

All four sets of interview questions were initially reviewed by the researcher's Dissertation Committee Chair. Questions were then submitted for review by IRB and subsequently approved (#HM13076). The questions addressed to the program directors were asked directly without further approval. Questions for students were first submitted to the respective instructors before being either posed directly to the face-to-face mediated students in one-on-one interviews or emailed to the computer-mediated students.

The researcher's interview with the former program director for EMU was conducted during his regularly scheduled office hours in the former director's university

office. The program coordinator for NSU received his questions by email and subsequently emailed his responses back to the researcher.

Questions for the face-to-face mediated workshop instructor were, at her request, conducted at her home as she frequently works from home. The questions for the computer-mediated instructor were emailed and subsequently returned by email.

Students in the face-to-face mediated workshop who agreed to interviews were met at 4:00 pm to accommodate the researcher's work schedule. Five participants suggested interviews be conducted at EMU's library as they were teaching assistants and that was the most convenient meeting place for them. One face-to-face mediated student asked to meet the researcher at a small coffee shop within walking distance of his home so he would not have to make a special trip to campus. This interview was subsequently held outside the coffee shop in an outdoor seating area in front of the shop. As it was 4:00 pm the patio area was essentially empty the interview was held without others hearing the conversation. The sixth face-to-face mediated workshop respondent asked to meet at a Panera's restaurant near her home as she indicated she often works on her novel at the restaurant after driving her children to school. The researcher met her at 11:00 am. As she was already present at the restaurant, the researcher joined her and conducted the interview accordingly. Though the restaurant was busy, since no one was sitting close to us and the respondent was comfortable with the setting the researcher did not suggest a change in location. The seventh and final face-to-face mediated workshop respondent asked to meet in his downtown office late in the afternoon on a regular business day. The researcher arrived at 4 pm and the interview was conducted. Again, while there were passers-by in the hallway, and the participant received one phone call from his wife, the



interview was otherwise private and uninterrupted. All interviews were congenial. Respondents were open with their comments, frequently elaborating on the information they provided. Interviews lasted from sixty to ninety minutes.

At the conclusion of the second semester's workshop schedule, the same questions were again posed to the students to see if respondents had altered their thoughts and/or opinions after their workshop experiences. For time-saving and logistical reasons, questions were emailed. Six of the eight students in the face-to-face workshop responded. The eighth individual indicated he would, but did not do so. All six students in the computer-mediated workshop that responded the first time did so a second time. Program administrators and instructors were not formally interviewed a second time although the researcher and each of the instructors did informally discuss social presence issues that arose with regard to certain participants in two of the three workshops. These issues are elaborated on in Chapter 5.

### **Data Analysis**

As a direct result of the repeated observations and interviews, the researcher completed Stake's (1976) (Figure 3-1) directive for qualitative researchers to identify a program's scope; to overview a program's activities; to discover a program's purposes and concerns; and to identify data needs regarding issues. As a result of her observations and interviews she undertook to conceptualize issues and problems while she continued to discover purposes and concerns; to identify data needs regarding issues; to thematize and prepare portrayals for the case study; and to winnow and match issues to her audiences.

In order to fully accomplish Stake's (1976) directive to thematize as a means for preparing portrayals for the case study and to winnow and match issues for her audiences, the researcher examined her observational and interview data to determine how the three critical components Bransford et al. (2000) and Garrison et al. (2001) identified as standards of effective and efficient social constructivist teaching and learning communities: teaching presence; social presence; and cognitive presence, were or were not demonstrated in each workshop.

In accord with a qualitative researcher's overall purpose to determine if important and repeated patterns are present in the data (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006), three different coding typologies were used to categorize the specific subcomponents and subordinate components of teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. For teaching presence the researcher adapted Anderson's et al. (2001) coded typology for use with both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops. For social presence she adapted Rourke's et al. (2001) typology. Adaptations were again made so she could apply the same classification system to both delivery systems. For cognitive presence she adapted Vaughn and Garrison's coding system and once more applied it to both delivery systems.

Since qualitative coding systems' purpose is to organize gathered research data for analysis, the above pre-designed codes were used because they had proven validity and reliability based on their previous use by the respective researchers, and pinpointed specifically the aspects of the same three categories, teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence, the original code designers used them for. Additionally, the data

they organized was easily transferable to Stake's (1976) broader coding scheme the researcher used to synthesize the data.

#### An examination of teaching presence

For teaching presence the researcher looked to see how the two respective instructors designed and organized their instruction. She looked expressly at course syllabi, the instructors' stated expectations regarding students' performance, workshop procedure and protocol. She also paid specific attention to how each instructor established and maintained a sense of her personal social presence by facilitating discourse in general and how she interacted with students. Finally, the researcher noted to what degree and in what manner each instructor provided students with direct instruction. In doing so she paid particular attention to identify the workshops' scope; what activities were required of students; and possible issues evolving with regard to instruction either in terms of design, facilitation of discourse, and/or how direct instruction was delivered to students as these are the prime activities that Bransford et al. (2000), Garrison et al. (2001), and Chickering and Gamson (1987) in particular have targeted as requisite components of a strong teaching presence.

Tables 4-4a, b; 4-5a, b; and 4-6a, b adapted from Anderson et al. (2001) specify teaching presence indicators and examples the researcher used to help her code Stake's (1976) directed tasks. She then expanded these data to complete Stake's (1976) coding schematic by labeling antecedents as the instructors' intended workshop instructional design and organization; what instructors intended a facilitated discourse to produce; and how much and how often they interjected direct instruction to hone their students' craft-related knowledge. Transactional data consisted of her actual observations. For standards

she used Bransford et al. (2000), Garrison et al. (2001), and Chickering's and Gamson's (1987) criteria. Outcomes are discussed in Chapter 6 and to some degree in cognitive presence below.

**Table 4-4a: Coded indicators for instructional design and organization for the face-to-face mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Setting curriculum	Bring <i>two</i> copies of your comments: one for the author, one for me.
Designing methods	When you turn in a section for discussion, it should be at least 25-30 pages long.
Establishing time parameters	As a matter of respect for the work and your colleagues, I expect you to arrive on time and avoid leaving early.
Establishing etiquette	All remarks, written and oral, will be phrased tactfully.
Managerial matters (organizational, procedural, administrative)	Get 11 folders and start keeping a file for each novel-in-progress.

**Table 4-4b: Coded indicators for instructional design and organization for the computer-mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Setting curriculum	You can set a revision for one of your workshops (instead of a fresh story) just so long as you've fulfilled the 15,000 word target for the year.
Designing methods	I have suggested topics, but you can come up with on your own—whatever the readings inspire.
Establishing time parameters	Manuscripts will be workshopped the week following, as usual.
Establishing netiquette	If you've posted thoroughly in the forum, this will be enough...If you have questions, just ask.
Managerial matters (organizational, procedural, administrative)	Last order of business: Remembrance Day <sup>9</sup> is coming up, and it falls awkwardly right in the middle of our workshop. I'll suggest we push on through, just like usual, so as not to short-change our writer of the week. If anyone needs to take off for the day, that's fine—just let us know when the workshop opens.

<sup>9</sup> Canadians commemorate November 11<sup>th</sup> as Remembrance Day the same way Americans do November 11<sup>th</sup> as Veterans' Day.

**Table 4-5a: Coded indicators for facilitating discourse for the face-to face mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 8)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement	Do broad strokes or nit-picky comments help?
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	Ominous—how can you deal with the father? Is this a tendency for violence? You could go that direction; young readers respond to that.
Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	When have 50 pages push through a scene, a draft, or a chapter. An expository bridge is okay at times.
Setting climate for learning	One way of figuring out is to write your way through it.
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	What makes him a target for jerks, but a magnet for girls? Do girls want to protect him because he is bullied?
Asking a relevant question	There is no specific magic here. What would happen if you increased references to magic? If you omitted them?
Assess the efficacy of the process	Roy had some chronology questions. Do not go back—write forward; you can go back and rearrange later.

**Table 4-5b: Coded indicators for facilitating discourse for the computer-mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 8)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement	Sheila said she wondered how this piece was working as “a short story,” which brought up some interesting questions.
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	But I’ll ask you all before we start talking about ways to nudge it one direction or another.
Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	I do feel that a lot of this could be ironed out if we have a closer POV...
Setting climate for learning	Mention the kind of feedback you’re looking for in this draft.
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	The shape of a story is generally defined by conflict. What is the conflict in this story?
Asking a relevant question	What is a short story supposed to achieve?
Assess the efficacy of the process	The ending is working really well, we agreed.

**Table 4-6a: Coded indicators for providing direct instruction for the face-to-face mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 10)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Present content/questions	POV is not as powerful. Usually don't get parental POVs in young adult lit.
Focus the discussion on specific issues	Hunter is your main character, but he is too great of a guy. Make him unlikable in some way. Otherwise the reader glides over him without penetrating his character.
Summarize the discussion	Scott seems older than 16 and Stephen and Rachel than 24. The first chapter provides mystery so we need to see Stephen more clearly physically.
Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback.	Is he lying to himself? There's a detachment with his backward glance. Looking back is ironic.
Diagnose misconceptions	He passes off his dizziness. What does this say about Buddy? I suggest downplaying since it does not fit in with his character unless you expand on it.
Inject knowledge from diverse sources, e.g., textbook, articles, Internet, personal experiences (includes pointers to resources)	Dickens does this in <i>Mutual Friend</i> .
Identifying relevant elements	Limit metaphors. You need to be more intimate with your characters.

**Table 4-6b: Coded indicators for providing direct instruction for the computer-mediated instructor (Adapted from Anderson et al., 2001, p. 10)**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Present content/questions	This is a long one. Some thought the story could be tightened and trimmed. Charles thought it could go the other way—longer, a novel. We'll have to see where this goes...
Focus the discussion on specific issues	I went back and reread that part with Jonathan...If Jonathan is the one who does the leaving, if Morgan drives him away, then somehow that would make more sense to me...
Summarize the discussion	We resolved that some parts of the story could grow while others get clipped back.
Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback.	Like a frame/conceit? Have I got that right?
Diagnose misconceptions	I'd rather see her vulnerable, than be told she was vulnerable.
Inject knowledge from diverse sources, e.g., textbook, articles, internet, personal experiences (includes pointers to resources)	Some stories start with a bang. Consider Kiana Davenport's "The Lipstick Tree":
Identifying relevant elements	I feel a like a writer can divide my attention but once in a story. They can have flashbacks or they can have letters/poems/diary entries.

### An examination of social presence

In her examination of social presence the researcher sought to assess to what degree participants established trust and respect for each other by sharing personal information with the group (self-revelation) and/or empathetic messages; their communication styles including their respective nonverbal behaviors and paralinguistic as was appropriate by visual observation of speakers during discourses for the face-to-face mediated participants and the written tone of comments for computer-mediated participants. She also assessed the frequency and duration or length of their verbal and/or written comments. She also specifically asked participants in the face-to-face mediated and in the computer-mediated workshops about their respective comfort levels using computer technology and if privacy issues were a concern if this information was not obvious in other comments. Finally, in terms of social presence she sought to determine how participants dealt with conflict since critiquing manuscripts poses a complex learning situation with neither facile nor single solutions. Tables 4-7a and b, adapted from Rourke et al. (2001), specify social indicators and examples for each delivery system.

As with teaching presence, in accord with Stake's directives (1976), the researcher's purpose was primarily to conceptualize issues and problems regarding social presence in terms of increased and/or decreased psychological distance in the workshops by observing designated antecedents, transactions, and outcomes. Using a coding design conceptualized by Rourke et al. (2001), the category indicators correlate to Stake's (1976) intended behaviors or antecedents of what would be expected. Cited examples consisting of quotes from participants provide Stake's transactional data. Rourke's et al.

(2001) definitions are Stake's equivalent standards of what should be transpiring. Stake's judgment data are explained fully in Chapter 6 and to a lesser degree in the cognitive presence discussion at the end of this chapter.

**Table 4-7a: Coding indicators for social presence for face-to-face mediated workshop (Adapted from Rourke et al., 2001, pp. 12-13)**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Affective	Expressions of emotion	Conventional expressions of emotion	<b>Inst.:</b> "My crazy sister once..." <b>Students:</b> none
	Use of humor	Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm	<b>Instructor:</b> Last week when A.L. Kennedy was at my house, she was petting Miriam (cat) and right next to Miriam's bed she'd left a big... <b>Students:</b> None
	Self-disclosure	Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability	<b>Inst:</b> When I was interviewing for the TAG program... <b>Students:</b> None.
Inter-active	Continuing a thread	Continues point of discussion from a previous speaker	<b>Inst.:</b> Need to see people like characters—vivid with histories. <b>Wm.:</b> Is a recitation instead of a story <b>Sandra:</b> There's a lack of background. This is the first time we meet Carlisle, but don't know her. <b>Andrea:</b> Reads like a report.
	Quoting from others' passages	Reading from copies of ms.	<b>Inst.:</b> On page 24 we are with Carlisle, but the backstory is Laurel's. <b>Students:</b> Occasionally referenced a page.
	Referring explicitly to others' messages	Direct references to others' comments	<b>Inst.:</b> As Lynn pointed out... <b>Students:</b> As a previous speaker said...(frequently said).
	Asking questions	Students ask questions of other students or of the teacher	At end of discussion: <b>Jane:</b> "I don't have any questions; your comments are helpful, but painful." <b>Rosie:</b> "No questions. Thank you for complicating everything for me."
	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	Complimenting others' critical statement or the contents of others' messages	<b>Inst.:</b> Andrea really worked a lot on her novel over break and has done wonders. <b>Students:</b> Required to do in critiques and discussion
	Expressing agreement	Expressing agreement with others' statements or the content of others' critiques	<b>Inst.:</b> Rory scavenging trash dumps and land fills informs us of the world without being preached to. <b>Andrea:</b> Rory holds onto stuff. It's a gateway into discovery.
Cohesive	Vocatives	Addressing or referring to participants by name	<b>Inst.:</b> Where is this relationship going? Bruce, we haven't heard from you, what do you think? <b>Students:</b> Didn't do.
	Addresses or refers to group using inclusive pronouns	Addresses the group as we, us, our group	<b>Inst.:</b> Made a general practice of doing <b>Students:</b> Thank you everyone for your comments—(typical statement).
	Phatics, salutations	Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures	<b>Inst.:</b> Always brought cookies and soda and bottled water <b>Students:</b> Nothing addressed to group, only to individuals, except for Lewis who did occasionally.



**Table 4-7b: Coding indicators for social presence for computer-mediated workshop (Adapted from Rourke et al., 2001, pp. 12-13)**

<i>Cat-egory</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Affect-ive	Expressions of emotion	Conventional expressions of emotion, includes repetitious punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons.	<b>Inst.:</b> Everybody knows the Opt Res program is better than the face-to-face :p <b>Renata:</b> Thank you everyone for careful and insightful reading. This is SO helpful.
	Use of humor	Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm	<b>Inst.:</b> Who said I was sane? :p <b>Charles:</b> Never said you were! I'm just "upping my game" as it were :-)
	Self-disclosure	Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability	<b>Inst.:</b> Oh god, that happens to me all the time. <b>Lois:</b> As a former punk rock girl (with a Chelsea I might add!)
Inter-active	Continuing a thread	Continues point of discussion from a previous speaker	Standard motif for eBulletin
	Quoting from others' passages	Quote others entire message or selections of others' messages	Standard motif for eBulletin
	Referring explicitly to others' messages	Direct references to contents of others' posts	<b>Inst.:</b> As Lois says... <b>Renata:</b> To take up Lois' Bernie Madoff angle...
	Asking questions	Students ask questions of other students or of the teacher	<b>Inst.:</b> If the signmaker (plus one to two others—old pals, maybe?) becomes true character then this wouldn't be that hard to pull off. Need another couple of scenes though. Where to put them? <b>Renata to Lois:</b> Maybe Phil is confronted with the sign-maker's wife?
	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	Complimenting others or the contents of others' messages	<b>Carolyn:</b> Wow. Lots of good ideas in here, Renata. As we know, writing is such a lonely slogfest, so it's certainly appreciated when people really read close.
	Expressing agreement	Expressing agreement with others or the content of others' messages.	<b>Inst.:</b> Wow, indeed. You've made a ton of decision-making already, I see. These are all good choices—I think we pretty much agreed about these things you mention.
Co-hesive	Vocatives	Addressing or referring to participants by name	<b>Inst.:</b> At any rate, as Lois says, the part about Al's wife leaving feels remote. <b>Lois:</b> Renata, this is an interesting comment.
	Addresses or refers to group using inclusive pronouns	Addresses the group as we, us, our group	<b>Inst.:</b> There's plenty to debate, and we could stay busy for days, but it's time to press on. <b>Charles:</b> Yeah...you guys got me thinking...
	Phatics, salutations	Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures	<b>Inst.:</b> Next week is Reading Week, and that means no school. Enjoy your time off, everyone. <b>Carolyn:</b> Hi folks!

### An examination of cognitive presence

Bransford et al. (2000) and Garrison et al. (2001) indicate cognitive presence equates with learner autonomy. They also contend, as do other researchers (Bakhtin, 1986; Bourdieu, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Dewey, 1964; Gunawardena, 1995; Moore, 1972; Rogoff, 1990; Smagorinsky, 2001; Rovai, 2001; Tudge, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998) that learner autonomy is achieved when teaching presence and social presence are effectively and consistently demonstrated. In other words, the more the components of teaching presence and social presence are actualized in a teaching and learning community the less psychological distancing there is between participants. Since decreased psychological distancing indicates increased trust and respect amongst participants (Rovai, 2001) the likelihood increases that cognitive presence will increase proportionately. Conversely, increased psychological distancing indicates depressed levels of trust and respect amongst members which in turn increases the likelihood of decreased cognitive presence (Duncan, 2005; Moore, 1972; Neff, 1998; Warschauer 1998; Zevenbergen, 1996).

Therefore in order to access to what degree participants felt their respective workshop experiences had helped them advance as fiction writers, the researcher asked participants to indicate how much teaching presence and social presence they identified with their face-to-face mediated and their computer-mediated workshops respectively. A sampling of these data is given in Tables 4-8 and 4-9 below. Adapting the contents of Vaughn's and Garrison's (2005) coding scheme to Stake's (1976) more conceptual model Stake's intended classification for teaching presence and cognitive presence is represented by Vaughn's and Garrison's triggering issues. Stake's transactional social

presence components are demonstrated by Vaughn’s and Garrison’s themes of immediacy; sense of community; familiarity; and general values. Stake’s transactional events or what really happened, are represented by participants’ comments. Standards, though not included, remain constant. For teaching presence the standards are the three subcomponents of instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and providing direct instruction. For social presence the standards are: communication styles, nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage and dramaturgical cues; immediacy; reciprocity; and interactivity. Stake’s judgment category is fully discussed in detail in Chapter 6

**Table 4-8: Face-to-face themes and comments from participant interviews regarding cognitive presence (n=8) (Adapted from Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 6)**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Interview comments</i>
<i>Triggering event issue</i> a. Initiating the discussion b. Provide brainstorming opportunities	In individual interviews all eight participants lauded brainstorming in the face-to-face workshop indicating brainstorming was the essence of workshoping. In reality there was a lot of repetition in the actual workshop. Lynn’s and Rosie’s comments were typical of interview comments: “There were a few times I would have liked to encourage the group to move on already.” “[T]here reached a point there at the end where it seemed we were all saying the same things over and over to one another.”
<i>Exploration</i> a. immediacy of communication b. sense of community familiarity general values	a. Need for spontaneity and group interaction: Typical comments from Jane and William: “I need to talk through to learn—live interaction working with people rather than reading on screen.” “I spend enough time alone with the computer. b. William’s sentiments typical: “Camaraderie. Have people that respect your work.” c. Lewis’ comment typical: “Emails lack the nuances of a verbal communication.” d. Lynn’s summarized the group’s perception: “in a workshop you get twelve brains working together collectively about a story instead of twelve individualized brains working separately.”
<i>Integration</i> a. sense of responsibility b. sense of time commitment	a. Several participants questioned genuineness of comments. Cierra for example said: “I think we ignored some problem writing.” Four of eight respondents said they stuck with their “instinct” as to what was best for a story regardless of what was said in workshop. Remaining three said they considered what the majority indicated, but didn’t necessarily follow through with the stated suggestions. A deadline (writing a certain number of pages for a session) was the primary criterion six of the eight students gave as their workshop goal. b. General consensus was writing critiques was tedious and time consuming. The amount of writing was one reason they did not want to take a computer-mediated workshop. Andrea indicated some participants wrote the same thing week after week. All seven respondents indicated they got more out of discussions than critiques. Four respondents indicated they did not read everyone’s critiques. Otherwise participants’ time commitment goal was to write a certain number of pages by deadline. The latter was the dominant reason for workshoping based on participants’ interview answers.
<i>Resolution/application</i>	8 said the workshop helped them meet their page number goal; 6 wanted more craft instruction; 5 indicated they lacked respect and trust of peers; 2 wanted smaller groups.

**Table 4-9: Computer-mediated themes and comments from participant interviews regarding cognitive presence (n=6) (Adapted from Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 6)**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Interview comments</i>
<i>Triggering event issue</i>	No related comments provided.
<i>Exploration</i> a. Ability to extend the conversation, debate and discussion b. Flexibility of access	a. Each workshop produced 25 stories with some participants submitting 3 others 4. (Number of actual words was determining factor). Comment ranges for each group were from: 37 to 73 per story; and from 47 to 120 comments per story. b. Aside from Graham's one-time complaint of time lags due to time zone differences, no one else had concerns regarding time lags. Some participants experienced Internet connections due to a glitch with their provider, inclement weather, or broken equipment while traveling abroad on pleasure or business.
<i>Integration</i> a. Reflective nature b. Sense of responsibility c. Time commitment and workload issues	a. Consensus of six respondents was that written (online) comments were better thought out, more perceptive, and detailed. b. Number of comments and lengths of several clearly indicated participants took the workshop seriously. Comments conveyed in Table 4-7b support this. c. No comments (complaints) were voiced.
<i>Resolution/application</i>	6 of the respondents were at a minimum satisfied. 1 of the 6 criticized a peer's reaction to criticism; 1 of 6 questioned tone of 2 of her peers' critiques; 1 peer indicated he had no respect for his peers, but did for his instructor.

As previously indicated, access to the computer-mediated workshops was delayed by approximately four weeks. Notwithstanding, once access was granted and the instructor and her students agreed to participate, the researcher started her virtual observation of the two computer-mediated workshops by reading all past and current story manuscripts, topic discussions, and workshop comments. As indicated above, her observation criteria essentially remained the same she used for the face-to-face mediated workshop in that she focused on how the instructor established and maintained her own teaching presence and also sought to establish and maintain social presence in the computer-mediated workshops; participants' levels of respect and trust indicated by socio-emotional messaging; their concerns regarding computer privacy and electronic literacy; and their level of interaction exemplified by immediacy, reciprocity, and communication styles displayed through the tone of their critiques and follow-up

remarks. In other words, the researcher sought to determine whether comments were sarcastic or supportive, the tone generally friendly and relaxed or dominant and contentious.

All interviews for face-to-face workshop participants and EMU's former program director were conducted in person.<sup>10</sup> Interviews with students were primarily conducted in EMU's library away from other students with three exceptions. Interviews with participants in the computer-mediated workshops with students, the instructor, and the program coordinator were conducted using the same questions used for face-to-face participants via email due to the distance, the cost of phone calls, and to maintain the integrity of a computer-mediated environment. The program coordinator, the creative writing workshop instructor, and six of the students emailed back their responses.

### **Procedural Summary**

To recap Chapter 3's previous procedural discussion, Creswell (2007) identifies seven procedural steps qualitative researchers should follow. In accord with his criteria the current researcher followed these steps to collect data.

First, because this was a case study bounded by two educational delivery systems, the researcher explored and selected sites that met these boundary criteria to ensure substantial data were forthcoming. Tables 4-4 through 4-9 verify this was the case. These data are further investigated in Chapter 5.

Second, as also previously indicated, once sites were identified, because the study's focus was on people working and studying in public institutions, the researcher obtained IRB approval (#HM13076) before contacting potential participants.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Appendices A, B, and C for copies of the questions posed to each group of interviewees.

Third, once individuals were contacted and had consented to be part of the study, the researcher built rapport with them. This Creswell (2007) indicates can be done by speaking with participants regarding the particulars of the study, assuring them of total anonymity, clarifying any possible risks no matter how remote, explaining any benefits they may garner from participating, and requesting them to sign a written consent form. These steps were taken in the face-to-face workshop the first night the researcher attended. She reiterated these assurances in her one-on-one interviews. She did the same with NSU's computer-mediated participants in her emails by expressing appreciation for their help and assuring them their manuscripts and responses would remain confidential and be protected. Additionally, while she was a non-participatory participant in all three workshops, the researcher congratulated participants any time they shared good news whether it was about publication or having a baby.

Fourth, the researcher started collecting data as soon as possible to maximize the amount of longitudinal data she collected over the span of two semesters. This proved to be especially critical as researchers (Gunawardena, 1995; Walther, 1992) have shown it takes computer-mediated groups longer to coalesce than face-to-face mediated groups to take to coalesce.

Fifth, hardcopy records were maintained of verbal interviews, emails, and manuscripts submitted for critiquing. While participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop chose not to share their written critiques with the researcher, she was present for all face-to-face mediated workshop discussions, which students indicated reflected their written comments.

Since participants' manuscripts and critiques were available once posted on eBulletin, NSU's virtual learning environment, the researcher had complete access to students' manuscripts, critiques, and on-going discussions past and present. Postings included all the students' and the instructors' workshop communications and input posted from the start of the workshop. Collected data excluded any personal emails the instructor had with students and/or students had between themselves they carried out via their personal eBulletin email accounts.

Sixth, field notes were discussed with participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop. This step was not necessary with NSU as they responded to interview questions via email or through eBulletin so any quotes are verbatim.

Seventh, upon completion of data collection, the researcher coded and stored the data prior to writing the final report adapting the coding systems developed by Anderson et al. (2001), Rourke et al. (2001), Vaughn and Garrison (2005), and Stake (1976) to assess teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in the face-to-face mediated and in the computer-mediated workshops (Tables 4-3 through 4-9).

### **Methodological Validity and Rigor**

Critical to any study, qualitative or quantitative, is the researcher's guarantee that the data collected and represented are valid and trustworthy since without such proven assurances the value of the study as an independent result of research or its usefulness as a springboard for future research is circumspect. While validity and rigor were touched on as part of the data analysis discussion, such issues are deemed of sufficient importance to warrant reiteration.

Qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) state a study's trustworthiness or rigor is based on extensive field data, data analysis that traverses from narrow codes to broader inter-related themes to possible abstract axioms. To help assure readers of a study's trustworthiness, the researcher at a minimum needs to indicate two steps were taken (Creswell, 2007). The current study utilized four.

The first step Creswell (2007) identifies is for a researcher to institute a prolonged engagement that includes repeated observations. The researcher for this case study accomplished this step by physically attending a face-to-face mediated workshop that met once a week (Monday) from 7 to 9:40 pm for two semesters. She simultaneously attended two computer-mediated workshops virtually or online that convened for computer-mediated discourses over a three-day period (Wednesday through Friday, PST) every week during the same two semesters.

As part of her observations she read all manuscript submissions, read computer-mediated participants' critiques and comments, and listened to the face-to-face mediated participants' critical workshop discussions. Additionally, as part of her observations she focused attention on participants' verbal, nonverbal, and written communication styles. For both groups she looked specifically for affective, interactive, and cohesive behaviors. (Tables 4-7 a, b). Regarding the two instructors she observed she looked for specifics regarding how each designed her course (Tables 4-4 a, b), how each facilitated discourse in her workshop (Tables 4-5 a, b), and how each interjected direct instruction into her workshop (Tables 4-6 a, b).



Second, in accord with established qualitative methodologies (Denzin, 1970; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009), the researcher triangulated the data she gathered from her extended and repeated observations with interview data obtained from students, administrators, and instructors. Her final step in the triangulation process was to assess these data against alternative theories. Triangulation of data from these three perspectives was done “to confirm data and to reduce irrelevant bias and interpretation” (Stake, 1994, p. 37).

Third, the study was subjected to *peer debriefing* and *external auditing* (Creswell, 2003). The former, performed by the researcher’s dissertation chair, was done according to Creswell (2003), to ensure the case study “resonate[d] with people other than the researcher” (p. 196). *External auditing* was also conducted by the other three members of the researcher’s dissertation committee at the mid-point and again at the completion of the case study, in accord with Creswell’s guidelines, to ensure the researcher addressed all points germane to the study.

Fourth, in accord with current qualitative research practices, it was not assumed that the current study would be generalizable. As qualitative researchers Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Lincoln (1995), Marshall and Rossman (2006), Pinnegar and Daynes (2006), and Peshkin (1993) maintain, human behavior is variable, dependent on the shifting contexts of time, place, and phenomenon. It was felt, however, to use Pinnegar and Dayne’s terminology, that the study can be considered to be *transferable*, providing readers with insight regarding whether or not it is feasible and viable to transfer face-to-face mediated creative prose fiction writing workshops to similarly collaborative

constructivist, interactive creative prose fiction writing workshops taught as computer-mediated distance education classes based on an analysis of the data.

Chapter 5 examines these data explicitly in light of applicable theories and other researchers' findings. Chapter 6 presents general conclusions that the data support from previous researchers' findings and provides specific conclusions based on the current case study.

## CHAPTER 5

### Introduction

As previously stated the current case study's two primary purposes are: 1) to better understand conventionally taught creative writing workshops operational pedagogy and correlative affective features to determine if workshops are transferable to a computer-mediated delivery system in order to 2) aid administrators' decision-making process regarding the pedagogical usefulness of expanding their existing creative writing programs to offer an optional-residency creative writing program in concert with their current high-residency program.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicted creative writing programs continue to contend with critics' complaints and an increasing student demand for computer-mediated classes. Regarding the former, critics continue to ask four basic questions: 1) can creative writing be taught? And if it can be taught, 2) what should creative writing programs and workshops teach? 3) Who should teach creative writing workshops? And 4) how should creative writing workshops be taught? Pursuant to these questions critics have called for creative writing programs to more closely align themselves with composition classes by concentrating on writing craft (Bishop, 1994; Cain, 1999a, b; Dunning, 2010; Camoin, 1994; Haake, 1994; Kalamaras, 1999; Mayers, 1999; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005; Shelnut, 1994; Smiley, 1994). Others cite a need for improved assessment techniques (Boulter, 2004; Kroll, 1999; Sajé, 2004). Some others feel the current workshop removes an author's ownership of his/her writing (Holtman &

Lent, 1995; Larson, 1998). As a result their recommendation is to change the way workshops are conducted (Guevara, 1998; Holtman and Lent, 1995).

Additional complaints lodged against writing programs are that they fail to integrate literary criticism in their programs and fail to use standardized curricula (Houston et al., 2001; Lim, 2003; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005). Workshops have also been faulted for being competitive arenas that empower some participants and intimidate others (Bly, 2001; Bell, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Shelnut, 1994). Finally, critics state that not all creative writing instructors, including award-winning writers, are capable or competent teachers (Bly, 2001; Garrett, 1994; Lim, 2003; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005; Shellnut, 1989a; Smiley, 1994), and that students as untrained and inexperienced writers are not qualified to critique their peers' manuscripts (Andrews, 2009; Bly, 2001; Graff, 2009; Light, 2002; Shelnut, 1994).

As these issues continue to be such dominant issues in the literature, in fulfillment of the case study's purpose to better understand the operational pedagogical and affective features of a conventionally taught creative writing workshop these issues will be investigated from current administrators', teachers', and students' perspectives to assess if they are relevant to them as the primary users of workshops, and if so how such complaints may or may not be affected by conducting a workshop using a computer-mediated delivery system.

This second aspect of the investigation fulfilled the case study's second purpose which was to aid administrators make an informed decision by providing them as much information as possible regarding the pedagogical usefulness of offering their current high-residency program in concert with an optional-residency program by examining

from the primary users' perspectives how they were or were not affected by taking a creative writing workshop totally online through a computer-mediated delivery system.

The reason for this assessment is based on information from AWP (2011a) and May (2011) that North American colleges and universities currently offer forty-eight hybrid M.F.A. creative writing programs that combine high-residency or on-campus classes with low-residency or distance education classes. Two additional M.F.A. programs currently offer optional no-residency programs (AWP, 2011a; May, 2011).

Research conducted by Allen and Seaman (2005) and supported by NCES (2008) statistics indicate as more students request computer-mediated distance education courses (NCES, 2008) college administrators are increasingly likely to pursue computer-mediated distance education options for numerous programs to increase enrollments. In light of the fact that creative writing M.F.A. degrees are particularly popular with students attracting large numbers of applicants (AWP, 2011b; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Delaney, 2008; Fenza, 2009; Gouge, 2009; Morely, 2007; Myers, 1996) creative writing M.F.A. programs are likely candidates for this expansion.

### **The Issues**

In spite of their popularity, creative writing programs have been questioned repeatedly on four points: 1) whether creative writing can be taught; and if it can be taught 2) who should teach it; 3) what should be taught; and 4) how should it be taught? Such questions have evoked controversy amongst those both directly and peripherally associated with creative writing programs (Barden, 2008; Bishop, 1994; Bly, 2001; Cain, 1999a, b; 2009; Dunning, 2010; Fenza, 2000; Guevara, 1998; Keegan, 2006; Kalamarus, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005).

Such questions assume an added dimension when creative writing is offered as computer-mediated distance education as some educators strongly question the operational and affective efficiency and efficacy of computer-mediated distance education in general (Duncan, 2005; Gance, 2002; Grenier-Winthur, 1999; Hara & Kling, 2000; Hiltz & Johnson, 1990; Neff, 1998; Ragan & White, 2001; Salaberry, 2000; Stodel et al., 2006; Warschauer, 1997). Conversely, a number of researchers have provided evidence that with sufficient effort and an adjusted mindset of expectations and work habits on the part of instructors and students, computer-mediated distance education is not only as operationally effective and efficient as face-to-face mediated classes are, they are also as equally affectively efficient and effective (Bernard et al., 2004; Breuch, 2004; Brindley et al., 2009; Garrison, 2000, 2007; Garrison et al., 2001; Gunawardena, 1995; Gunwardenia and Zittle, 1997; Rice & Love, 1987; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Walther, 1992, 1995).

In fulfillment of the case study's two purposes to better understand workshops pedagogical and affective processes in order to determine if a computer-mediated delivery system is as pedagogically and affectively useful for teachers and students in order to aid administrators' decision-making process regarding possible program expansion, the researcher used four research questions. These questions were framed to determine first how M.F.A. program administrators, M.F.A. instructors, and M.F.A. students enrolled in a face-to-face mediated creative writing workshop and two computer-mediated distance education creative writing workshops felt about critics' complaints and suggested changes, and if such criticisms were justified, what impact on how and what instructional changes as participants they would recommend. Second, the

case study compared and contrasted the workshop experiences of instructors and students as the primary users of the respective delivery systems to assess if they, as users, were equally, less, or more satisfied with their respective delivery system experiences. With these points mind, Research Question One focused exclusively on interviewed M.F.A. program administrators', instructors', and students' perceptions and responses to critics' complaints and calls for program changes to creative writing programs' departmental status, lack of standard curricula, and the need to expand programs' scope by asking: Will transposing collaborative, interactive face-to-face workshops into virtual computer-mediated distance education prose fiction writing workshops ameliorate or exacerbate existing issues currently identified with creative writing programs regarding if creative writing can be taught, and if so, who, what, how, should it be taught?

The other criticisms regarding students' affective responses to peers' criticism, workshop time management, and student and teacher competence are responded to in Research Questions Two and Three which look specifically at operational and affective efficiency and effectiveness issues of both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops by asking in Research Question Two: How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors utilize collaborative social constructivist, interactive, and activity educational theories, and account for transactional distance education to meet their teaching objectives for creative prose fiction writing workshops when teaching a workshop as a computer-mediated distance education class compared to how effectively and efficiently creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors use social constructivism, interactive learning and activity theory to meet their teaching objectives when teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops face-to-face?

And in Research Question Three: How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops meet students' affective and educational needs and expectations for social collaboration, psychological support, and educational content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers compared to the spontaneous and robust social and psychological interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?

Research Question Four culminates the data analysis by examining how effectively and efficiently creative writing workshops facilitate learner autonomy which for M.F.A. students is defined specifically as a student's academic advancement towards his/her ability to independently write commercially publishable fiction by asking: How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated distance education workshops help students advance in their goal to write prose fiction of sufficient quality to be seriously considered for publication by real world publishing houses compared to participation in face-to-face workshops?

#### Creative writing workshop class design and organization

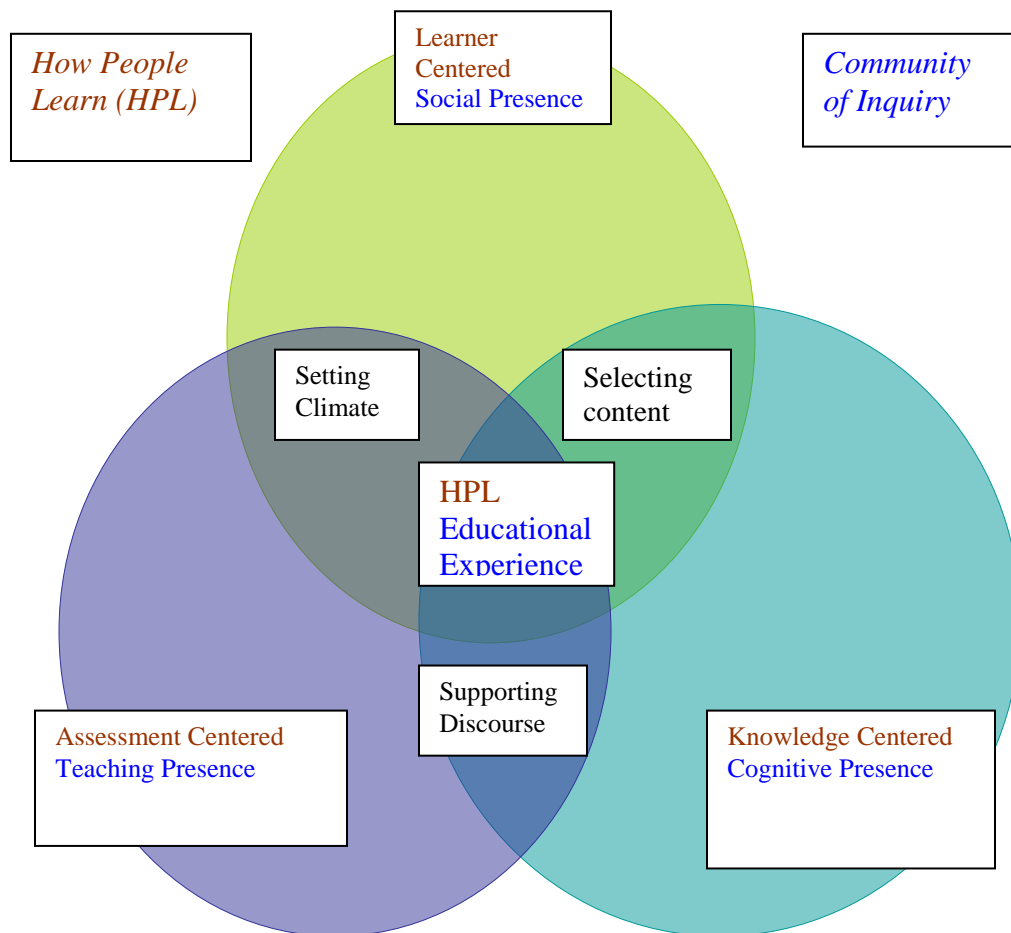
The *workshop approach* is considered to be the quintessential paradigm for creative writing workshops on the basis it is the most frequently used model for creative writing workshops (Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Bryant, 1988; Guevara, 1998; Holtman & Lent, 1995). It therefore served as the standard for all four research questions as both the face-to-face mediated creative writing workshop and the computer-mediated distance education creative writing workshops observed for this case study used the workshop approach. As indicated in Chapter 4, to further ensure the two discretely mediated



workshops were as identical as possible in terms of content and approach, those chosen for observation focused on narrative fiction as opposed to poetry, screenwriting, drama, or creative nonfiction.

It should be noted, however, that although both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops were fiction classes, participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop were writing novels whereas the computer-mediated workshop participants wrote short stories. Therefore, while similar as both were prose fiction workshops focused on narratives, characterizations, etc. there were also distinct differences in composition techniques and practices used.

Based on an extensive literature review and an aggregate of the National Research Council's Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education paradigm of *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000) and *Community of Inquiry* (Garrison et al., 2001) the pedagogical efficiency and efficacy of creative writing workshops and their socio-psychological effects on M.F.A. students' emotions and work quality and productivity pursuant to Research Questions Two, Three, and Four were assessed. Figure 5-1 thematically presents how these two theories intersect.



**Figure 5-1: Correlation of *How People Learn (HPL)* (Bransford et al., 2000) and *Community of Inquiry* (Garrison et al., 2001) (Adapted from Shea et al., 2003, p. 78)**

According to the respective researchers for each of these theoretical constructs (Bransford et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2001) the three main classifications relevant to efficient and effective social constructivist pedagogy are cognitive presence or learner autonomy, social presence, and teaching presence. Each of these is addressed in depth below as they relate to workshop operational efficiency and effectiveness, affective elements of workshopping, and learner autonomy. By way as an introduction to each area of learning, definitions of each category (Shea et al., 2003) are given below. Although Shea and his colleagues' definitions refer primarily to a computer-mediated teaching and

learning community, as Figure 5-1 proposed by Shea et al. (2003) clearly shows each area or presence applies equally to face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated instruction.

Cognitive presence is the extent to which students are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained discourse in a community of inquiry,...it is achieved in concert with effective teaching presence and satisfactory social presence (p. 65).

Cognitive presence therefore is the equivalent of learner autonomy (Moore, 1997; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002).

Social presence is viewed as the ability of students to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry and is deemed critical in the absence of physical presence and attendant teacher immediacy necessary to sustain learning in the classroom (p. 65).

Social presence is further defined by three major subcomponents, each of which has from two to four subordinate components (Table 2-1).

Teaching presence is the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile outcomes. Teaching presence has three components: Instructional Design and Organization, Facilitating Discourse, and Direct Instruction (p. 65).

Like social presence, teaching presence has three subordinate components (Table 2-1 and Figure 2-3).

Using the research findings from these three theories in addition to the basic constructs of social constructivism (Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978) interactive theory (Bakhtin, 1986; Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983), transactional reading and writing theory (Faust, 2000; Rosenblatt, 2005) and *habitus, capital, and field* (Bourdieu, 1993; Hanks, 2005; Marsh, 2006), affective control theory (Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993) the researcher used research data gathered from a year's observation of one face-to-face mediated and

two computer-mediated creative writing workshops and interviews conducted with participants from all three workshops to assess the respective mediated workshops' pedagogical, linguistic, and social-psychological effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, for reader convenience, the face-to-face mediated creative novel writing workshop will simply be referred to as the face-to-face mediated workshop; the two asynchronous computer-mediated distance education short story creative fiction writing workshops will similarly be referred to as computer-mediated workshops.

### **Research Question Number One: Critics' Complaints and Concerns**

Responses to criticism cited in the literature (Andrews, 2009; Bishop, 1994; Bly, 2001; Cain, 2009; Haake, 1994; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999; Moxley, 1989; Radavich, 1999; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005) that creative writing workshops are too insular and independent from their literary scholarship and composition co-branches in the English Department; creative writing programs' need to broaden their program to include literary scholarship and compositional studies; and creative writing programs' need to implement standardized curricula are the focus of the first research question: Will transposing a collaborative, interactive face-to-face workshop into a virtual computer-mediated distance education prose fiction writing workshop ameliorate or exacerbate existing issues currently identified with creative writing programs regarding if creative writing can be taught, and if so, who, what, and how should it be taught?

Numerous critics (Andrews, 2009; Bishop, 1994; Bly, 2001; Cain, 1999a, b, 2009; Dunning, 2010; Houston et al., 2001; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999; Morely, 2007; Shelnett, 1989a) consider creative writing programs' insularity and

independence from literary scholarship and composition a critical flaw of creative writing programs. They feel failing to teach formal literary scholarship and practical compositional writing is detrimental to creative writing students' educational and career goals, which according to some writing instructors (Bishop, 1994; Bell, 1994; Boyle, 1994; Delbanco, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Lish, 1994) and some students (Andrews, 2009; Turkle et al., 1994) including some interviewed for this case study, are to publish and to teach creative writing. A corollary complaint of critics is their concern that creative writing programs hire professional writers to conduct workshops. Critics explain the reason for this latter concern is that writers are usually untrained teachers and therefore put students at risk of receiving an inadequate education especially because they do not use a standardized curriculum to ensure writing classes integrate literary scholarship, craft instruction, and compositional studies. These issues were addressed in one-to-one interviews with the students, instructors, and program administrators participating in this case study.

#### Creative writing programs' insularity

As indicated above, a repeated criticism amongst critics concerns creative writing programs' insularity or separation from English studies and composition, post-secondary English Departments' other academic branches. Some critics (Andrews, 2009; Bishop, 1994; Bizzaro, 2004, 2009; Cain, 1999 a, b; Dunning, 2010; Garrett, 1989; Graff, 2009; Haake, 1994; Houston et al., 2000; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Radavich, 1999; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005; Shelnut, 1989 a, 1994) severely fault creative writing programs' disdain of compositional context and literary theory as being detrimental to students' creative writing education. Ritter (2001), in particular, is critical

stating creative writing students are thwarted upon graduation when they find they are ill-prepared to compete for highly sought after teaching jobs in English departments because they lack knowledge and credentials for teaching either literature or composition.

Other writing teachers and students take the dichotomous position that neither theory nor composition is in conflict (Austen, 2005; Justice, 1977; LaFemina, 2005; Light, 2002; McCrory, 2010; Turkle et al., 1994). For example, Light (2002) found in his interviews of forty creative writing students that “[t]here is no support in the findings for suggesting that these different modes of writing [creative versus compositional writing] are anything other than differences of degree” (p. 273). English teachers (Austen, 2005) and creative writing teachers (LaFemina, 2003; McCrory, 2010) indicate they merge creative writing with literature when they teach traditional literature classes.

#### The need for literary scholarship

Nor do proponents of contemporary M.F.A. creative writing programs, including AWP’s director (Fenza, 2009), post-secondary writing teachers and administrators (Gardner, 1983 a,b; Dillard, 1994; Grimes, 1999) and creative writing historians (Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996, 2008) feel literary criticism is germane to teaching creative writing. Conversely, they see it as possibly being detrimental. For example, novelist and creative writing teacher John Gardner (1983a) stated an extensive education in literary scholarship that includes literary criticism and theory hampers novice writers because it causes them to write as theorists and critics, not as narrators or storytellers. He complains too many students schooled in criticism and theory attempt to introduce symbolism at the outset of their novel instead of focusing on the craft of introducing characters and developing an interesting plot. Grimes (1999), as indicated in Chapter 2, shares Gardner’s sentiments

stating saddling a creative writing student with a background in literary scholarship “dooms” his creativity as a writer. Dillard, a writer, teacher and former program administrator, has been equally outspoken stating:

I think it’s terrible. I think it works absolutely against you...I think theory works against the grain. It’s fine if people want to do it, but imaginative work, artistic work, is essentially *conjunctive*. It is a drawing together of unlikely things. That how the imagination works. Theory and analytical work, on the other hand, are *disjunctive*. It’s all a matter of taking something apart (emphasis in the original).  
Let the reader study theory. Leave the writers alone (pp. 84-85).

Specifically in response to critics’ suggestions to suppress creative writing programs’ independence and align them more closely with the other two branches by mandating creative writing students take traditional literature, literary scholarship, and composition classes as part of their M.F.A degree requirements, the two program administrators interviewed for this case study indicated they felt theoretical criticism was not necessary to teach creative writing. NSU’s program coordinator stated succinctly: “We place no weight on [literary criticism] at all.” EMU’s former program director stated: “Students have access to Form and Theory class that can be useful professionally, but literary criticism can block students.”

As a combined studio-research M.F.A. program, EMU’s creative writing program students must take a minimum of twelve hours of literary studies in addition to eighteen elective hours that can include additional workshop or literature classes. Notwithstanding, the former director reiterated his program’s equal emphasis on literature and literary research courses does not subvert or override his program’s studio or workshop component. Rather, he emphasized the primary purpose of any workshop is to hone students’ writing ability. As he phrased it, “literary courses are useful for third-year

students that want to be professional writers and have academic expectations, but are not necessary for a person to be a writer.”

The program administrator at NSU, whose school offers a strictly studio or workshop program, indicated he does not view his program’s independence from traditional literary research and compositional studies as being insular. Rather he indicated his program’s purpose is appropriately focused on students’ stated desire to improve and shape their existing imaginative writing ability by learning about the practical craft aspects of literary form and theory. This he said includes effective use of narrative arc, point of view, establishing mood, and so forth as opposed to formal literary scholarship, which he indicated, is primarily taught to teach students to analyze and explain polished works of prose and poetry from different theoretical perspectives. The same applies he indicated to composition and rhetoric studies that teach students to read and write fact-based texts as formal disquisitions advancing such civic and social causes as environmental conservation, civil rights, etc. (Green, 2001) as opposed to creative fiction and creative nonfiction that also frequently address such social and civic issues, but through narration, not disquisition.

In short both NSU’s current and EMU’s former program administrators’ position was that their programs are not insular; rather that inclusion of literary scholarship, literary analysis, research, and composition is counterproductive to their programs’ purpose and intent to help students become autonomous creative writers, not literary scholars or disquisitional essayists.

Instructors and students interviewed agreed with their respective program administrators’ position that concentrating on interpretative literary scholarship, research,



literary analysis, and/or compositional studies is not germane to learning to be a creative writer. While they did not discount the value of learning form and theory, they did not feel it was requisite. For example, the instructor for the face-to-face workshop, who is also currently director of her creative writing program, indicated:

Theory and criticism are another way of looking at works and how they are expressed in text; it can be frustrating to try to understand without textual analysis, but it is even more frustrating when a writer doesn't think telling a good story involves a theme. A theme is necessary to make a story meaningful. Characters need to act for a reason. Authors need to ask themselves what it feels to be this character." Citing Foucault doesn't do that for the writer.

The NSU instructor for the computer-mediated workshop concurred: "Though my academic history is in [literary criticism], I don't think there is much of a connection between good writing and theory. In fact, I think the application of theory to the creative process can distract from the fundamentals, which are really quite simple."

The M.F.A. students interviewed agreed with their administrators and teachers stating that understanding the need for theme is what matters, not an understanding of literary criticism which is entirely different. For example, Christopher, a participant in one of the computer-mediated workshops stated:

I think criticism and theory should be included coincidental with the workshop, but only as it informs the writing that is currently happening. I think the criticism of MFA students who lack that knowledge is often leveled by those in academia, whose careers are built on that stuff. Most MFA students I know are writers, not necessarily traditional students or aspiring professors. I love talking form and theory, but I don't think it will necessarily make me a better writer. Writing (often) and discussing that writing (just as often) more likely will.

Jane, a participant in the face-to-face workshop concurred completely with her EMU instructor. "As an undergraduate I had intense literature classes with very good teachers studying Proust, Levi Strauss, Freud. Having read so widely and deeply has

helped me tremendously to include an underlying theme to my story.” Lewis, a fellow face-to-face participant, was even more emphatic:

I am blessedly free of literary theory. “A cigar is just a cigar.” I see art chat and literary chat as ridiculous. All they do is manipulate material, rearrange biography and update myths...There have been generations of writers who didn’t learn academic criticism who were successful writers.

#### Standardized curricula and trained teachers

On a related topic, all three groups of participants who were interviewed, program administrators, instructors, and students, concurred with critics that reading is critical if one is to be successful writing. They did not, however, endorse reading for the same reason literary scholars cite.

Creative writing program administrators, students, and instructors stated the primary reason for reading acclaimed contemporary and classic authors is to analyze these authors’ works for their use of such craft techniques as point of view, character arc, tone, mood, pacing, etc. to learn effective applications of writing craft techniques like time transitions, setting mood, etc.

In response to some critics’ complaint that creative writing workshops focus too much attention on current popular literature due to its commercial appeal (Garrett, 1989; Shelnutt, 1989a), the two workshop instructors whose classes the researcher observed not only emphasized reading in general, but required their students to read widely from a canon of both exemplary classical and contemporary works for the purposes of analyzing authors’ use of craft (LaFemina, 2003; McCrory, 2011). As a result, in the face-to-face mediated novel writing workshop, the instructor’s mandated supplemental reading list included *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Lolita* (1955) as well as the adult and young adult contemporary novels of A. L. Kennedy (2004) and Victor Lodato (2009) respectively.

These latter choices dealing specifically with alcoholism and teen suicide clearly indicated the instructor's awareness of her students' need to be cognizant of the fact that both well-known and new authors often make critical social issues their underlying themes.

Similarly in the computer-mediated short fiction workshops, the instructor exposed her students to an equally broad range of writing topics by requiring they read and post online their interpretations and/or analytical comments concerning a diverse selection of short story writers' use of craft techniques that ranged from traditional stories like David Bezmozgis' "Tapka" (2004) and Steven Milhauser's "The Knife Thrower" (1998) to Courtney Elridge's "Sharks"(2004) which dramatically breaks from the traditional and familiar use of narrative arc in short fiction and George Saunders' socially-critical magical realism short story, "Sea Oak" (2000). Again, like her counterpart for the face-to-face mediated workshop, the instructor for the computer-mediated workshops chose stories that not only diverged from the commercially successful and conventional, but addressed psychologically traumatic issues from coming of age stories to obsessive phobias and political-economical stories satirizing capitalistic economies that demean and reify individuals.

All participants who were interviewed, students, instructors, and administrators, unanimously disagreed with critics' calls for standardized curricula. As both program administrators verified only published writers are hired to teach M.F.A. creative writing classes (Lim, 2003). For example, NSU's director stated, "For instructors we look for publications and consider their reputations in Canada; we also consult our colleagues in both writing programs for their opinions about potential instructors." EMU's former

director indicated his program's criteria were similar: "We need different writers who have different perspectives." Administrators also emphasized that their respective programs purposely select writers with distinctly different genre and stylistic preferences to ensure M.F.A. students are exposed to writers who are knowledgeable working with a diversity of writing styles and genres. Since M.F.A. students are novice writers still experimenting by writing in various styles and genres in order to find their individual "voice" it is therefore imperative the administrators said that students be allowed to use a range of different writing styles and genres as they progress towards becoming autonomous writers. For this reason, administrators did not see any reason to dictate a prescriptive canon of supplemental texts, to regiment instruction, or to require that teachers be specifically trained in narrow pedagogical practices stating such administrative actions and requirements would impede instructors' ability, and limit students' exposure to a broad canon of renowned contemporary and classical writers that instructors with their broad knowledge and experience as accomplished writers use to help students hone their skills. A point other administrators and creative writing teachers support (Bell, 1997; Fenza, 2000; LaFemina, 2008).

All workshop students that were interviewed likewise agreed that prescriptive curricula were unsuitable for creative writing workshops. Some students in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshop did, however, state they saw a need for craft writing techniques instruction as not all M.F.A. students are versed in basic writing craft terminology. For example, Sophie, a participant in a computer-mediated workshop said: "I like [writing craft] taught with workshops. I've had workshops before with none and I had a hard time improving and being aware of various techniques and

strategies. I see [writing craft] as being like a basketball drill and the writing workshop like a game where you try out new skills.” Andrea, a face-to-face mediated workshop student whose undergraduate degree was in history, not English, stated she would definitely have benefited from more craft instruction: “My early stories were terrible because I didn’t have structural knowledge. I would have handled them better if I’d had that knowledge.”

Collectively, five students in the face-to-face mediated and one student in the computer-mediated workshop indicated they felt a need for more concurrent craft instruction. Finally Sheila, one of the students in one of the computer-mediated workshops indicated she would have been satisfied with just a supplemental reading list of craft-related books and articles for reading outside of class requirements. The other two students interviewed in the face-to-face mediated and the other four in the computer-mediated workshop indicated they did not feel a need for additional craft instruction before or as part of a workshop in general, or for the one they had just taken.

### Workshop practices

As indicated in Chapter 2, the prevailing instructional design for creative writing workshops is the model Paul Engle is credited with refining at the University of Iowa (Myers, 1996; Wilbers, 1981). Referred to simply as the *workshop approach* (Blythe & Sweet, 2008) it adheres to the basic concept that one or more students submit their manuscript to their workshop peers and instructor. The instructor and the workshoped students’ peers in turn carefully read the submitted manuscripts, prepare comments regarding how well the respective authors did or did not show characterization, plot development, established mood, etc., but do not do line-by-line edits as the manuscripts

are works in progress, not completed stories. Written critiques and class discussions therefore concentrate on how as readers the other workshop participants feel each manuscript can be improved from a craft perspective based on deficiencies they saw in plotting, characterization, point of view, etc. In accord with this heuristic model, workshopped authors do not interrupt until everyone has commented. This practice of precluding the author from commenting during the discussion, commonly referred to as the “gag rule,” has been severely criticized by some critics as being punitive and intimidating (Bly, 2001), but supported by others (Camoin, 1994; Grimes, 1999). Supporters contend a well-written manuscript can stand on its own. Conversely, if the author has to explain what and why he wrote what he/she did then he/she has failed to compel the reader to keep reading. After initial comments are made, workshopped authors are usually allowed to respond to their peers’ critiques and the discourse continues assuming the author has comments to make and/or wants further assistance or clarification.

Because the gag rule typically only temporarily precludes an author from participating in the discourse, the model is ultimately an example of social constructivism since with the assistance of the instructor or another student capable of leading the discussion, all participants in the workshop engage in a discourse with the purpose of solving a real-life problem that does not have one obvious answer, but conceivably several viable answers. Similarly, the problem to be resolved with the manuscript can usually be handled by several diverse possibilities. Both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops observed for this case study adhered to this practice and again none of the students interviewed objected to this standard practice and

procedure. For example, William said about this practice, “I do think it is probably better for the person being discussed to remain silent until the end of the discussion, unless, of course, as sometimes happens, the people in the workshop are missing or mis-interpreting something, and the conversation is going in the wrong direction.” Cierra’s observation was similar to that of William’s and her other peers’ responses.

I prefer this traditional approach. As a writer being discussed, I like to sit back and listen to the reader’s responses; as a reader, I find it annoying, frankly, when the writer talks too much and over-directs his or her critique. As authors we won’t be there to defend or explain our work to every reader. I think it’s reasonable for a writer to ask a few questions in the manuscript or at the start of the discussion so the conversation can be fruitful for him or her, but to step aside and let the workshop do its work after that.

### **Research Question Number Two: Operational Pedagogical Efficiency and Effectiveness of Creative Writing Workshops**

Continuing to adhere to the case study’s purpose to better understand the operational pedagogy and affective features of creative writing workshops, the purpose of the second research question was to compare how operationally effective and efficient face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops are for teaching M.F.A. students to use craft-related writing tools independently, a requisite skill students need to acquire to be autonomous writers. Specifically Research Question Two asked: How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors utilize collaborative social constructivist, interactive, and activity educational theories, and account for transactional distance to meet their teaching objectives for creative prose fiction writing workshops when teaching a workshop as a computer-mediated distance education class compared to how effectively and efficiently creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors use social constructivism, interactive learning and activity theory to

meet their teaching objectives when teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops face-to-face?

According to researchers (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness, & Beckett, 2005; Bransford et al., 2000; Moore, 1972; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Tu, 2000; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), a socially constructivist designed course's operational efficiency and efficacy is largely determined by the three components of teaching presence: the course's instructional design and organization; how well the teacher facilitates discourse; and how well the teacher provides direct instruction.

Two different groups of contemporary social constructivist educational researchers (Bransford et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2001) have distilled their discrete interpretations of social constructivism in the classroom into three primary constructs: teaching presence or assessment centered; social presence or learner centered; and cognitive presence or knowledge centered (Figure 2-1). Though Bransford et al. (2000) and Garrison et al. (2001) used different terms, an examination of their respective explanations indicate their constructs are identical. Moreover, when the three constructs are implemented in a teaching and learning community, research (Bransford et al., 2005; Rex et al., 2002; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001; Shea et al., 2003) confirm Chickering's and Gamson's (1987) seven principles of good teaching practice shown below are demonstrated (Figure 5-2).



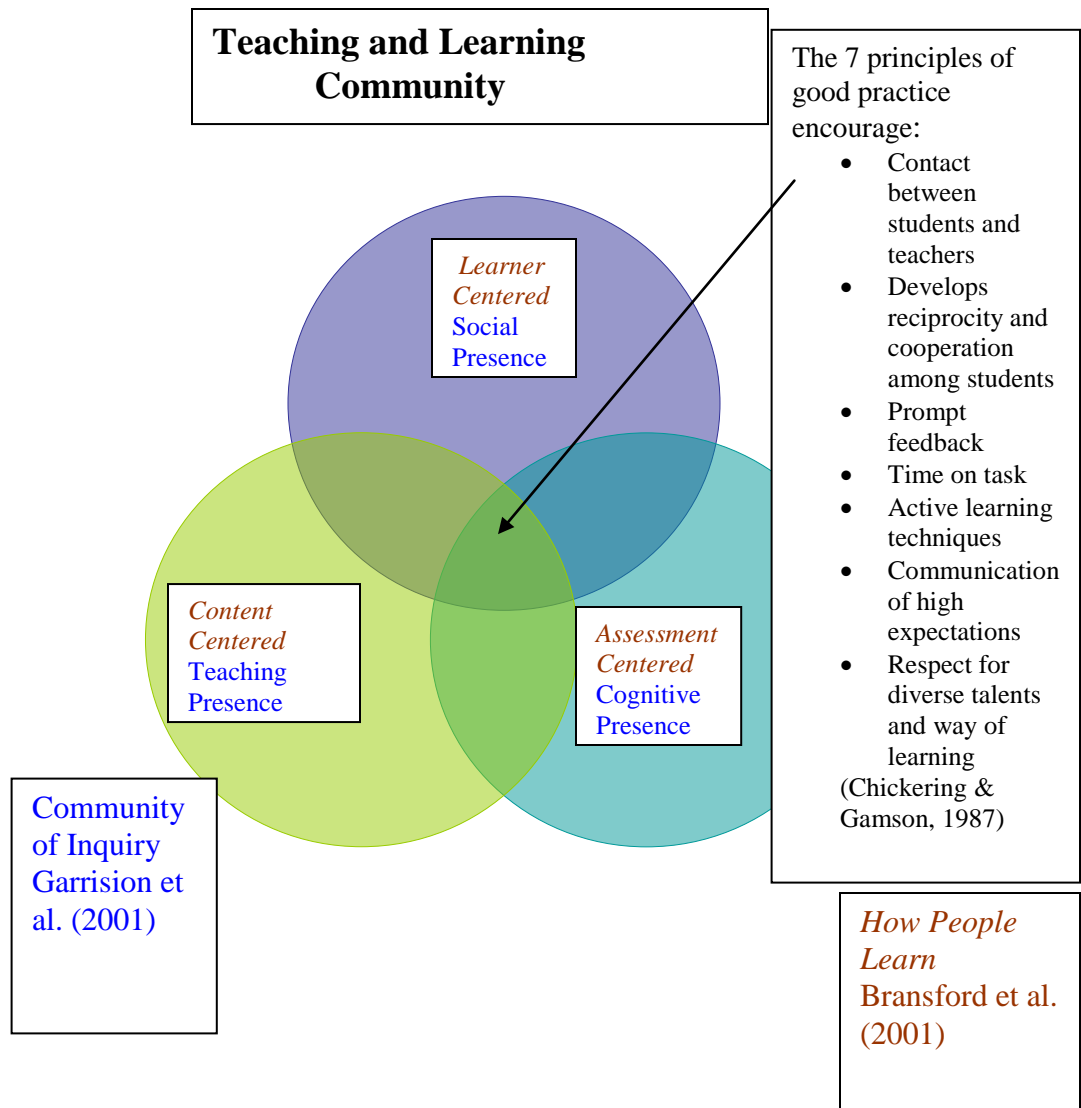


Figure 5-2: Adapted version of schematic that shows an overlay of *How People Learn* (Bransford et al., 2000) and *Community of Inquiry* (Garrison et al., 2001) from Shea et al. (2003, p. 78). In the above diagram *How People Learn* precepts are in brown; *Community of Inquiry* are in blue.

### **Teaching Presence**

Using activity theory terminology, a social constructivist instructor’s primary pedagogical responsibility or object is to assist students to become autonomous learners. This requires that they know and appreciate students’ needs and interests (Bransford et al., 2005). For instructors of creative writing workshops this equates with an instructor’s ability to determine their students’ writing strengths and weaknesses as well as helping

them find a genre they are most comfortable with. Instructors accomplish this objective by exposing their students to a range of writing experiences and techniques as a way to teach them craft-related skills and knowledge as well as exposing them to different genres through reading assignments with the intent that by doing so they are helping their students become successful writers in the shortest time possible. According to novelist John MacDonald (1989): “[The writing instructor is] there to point out the shortcuts to competent work...taking heads stuffed with the odds and ends of our culture, taking young people who want to turn the odds and the dreams and yearnings into acceptable, accessible form” (p. 86).

According to researchers (Anderson et al., 2001; Bransford et al., 2005; Bransford et al., 2000; Garrison et al., 2001; Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Moore, 1972; Shea et al., 2003; Rourke et al., 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) effective teachers assist their students to become autonomous learners by ensuring a strong teaching presence as exemplified by instruction that is 1) well designed and organized; 2) by facilitating discourse so that students engage in meaningful and purposeful discourse; and 3) by providing direct instruction as experts in the field to ensure students do not persist in using erroneous data or applying inaccurate methods to solve problems (Figure 5-3.)

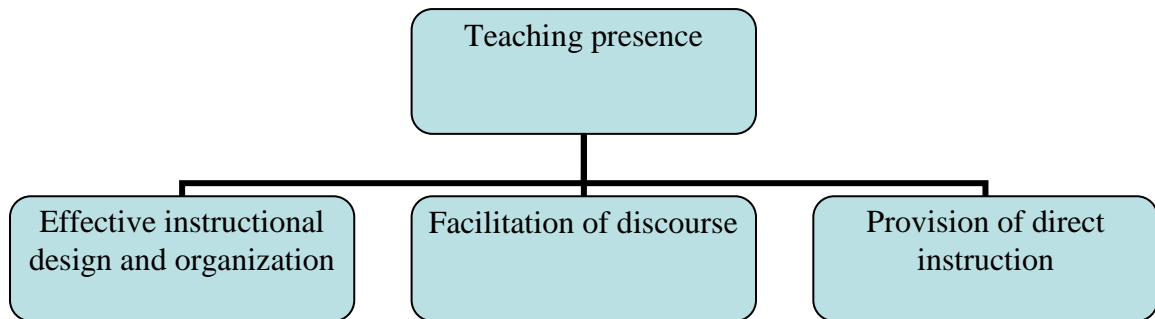


Figure 5-3: The three subcomponents of teaching presence

Since each of these three subordinate components is salient to an operationally effectively and efficiently taught workshop each one is discussed separately below.

### Effective instructional design and organization

Although the workshop paradigm suggests considerable conformity, in practice the instructional design and organization of creative writing workshops vary widely due to differences in teachers (Bell, 1994, 1997; Bly, 2001; Garrett, 1994; Gioia, 1986; Guevara, 1998; Lish, 1994; Shelnutt, 1994; Smiley, 1994). Students in the face-to-face mediated workshop and in the computer-mediated workshops verified this in their interviews. For example, Andrea, in the face-to-face mediated workshop said, “I have had three different [creative writing] instructors for workshops. Each one is different. One leaps right in; another outlines; and one I did not get along with at all as he was extremely critical and derogatory of the kind of writing I want to do.” Graham, a student in one of the computer-mediated workshops did not go into details, but did indicate that another instructor he had had for another computer-mediated workshop he had taken had used a different approach than his current one. “This class is very good, but the most skilled online facilitator/instructor I’ve had was [my screenwriting instructor]. It might be worth interviewing her about how she sets up class both in terms of structure (posting dates, discussions, reminders, due dates, etc. and in terms of procedures (establishing dynamics of the writers in class, balancing theory with workshopping, being critical and encouraging at the same time).” Charles, another participant in a computer-mediated workshop indicated he had to drop a class because he totally disagreed with the instructor’s approach. “Last year I began a workshop that I had to drop out from, as the

instructor reacted in a hostile manner toward my workshopping approach, and had constructed the workshop atmosphere far more suited to an undergraduate level.”

The only substantial difference that interviewees commented on, and which the researcher also noted, between the designs of the three workshops that were observed for this case study, concerned time parameters. For example, the most notable difference between the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops naturally concerned meeting times. Whereas the computer-mediated workshops were designed to ensure students participated the equivalent of three hours per week as stated in the course outline, official class discourse time ran from Wednesday noon to Friday ten o'clock am PST for both workshops. Additionally every participant in the two computer-mediated workshops was required to write two to four paragraphs for his/her initial response to a peer's manuscript followed by a minimum of three additional comments of three to four paragraphs each. As a result the total number of comments made per story ranged from 37 to 73 with an average of 57 for one computer-mediated workshop, and from 47 to 120 comments per story with an average of 89 for the other workshop. By contrast, in the face-to-face mediated workshop where two to three manuscript submissions were workshopped weekly, the number of comments per workshop averaged fifteen per manuscript with the first submission getting more time and attention devoted to it than the last manuscript, to which as little as fifteen minutes may have been given due to time constraints because some participants spoke at length during discussions of the first and second manuscripts. This inevitably curtailed discussion of the third manuscript scheduled for critiquing.

As a result several participants in the face-to-face workshop made time management related recommendations in their respective interviews regarding how face-to-face mediated workshops in general could be improved. For example, Cierra, a student from the face-to-face workshop commented, “My suggestion for all workshops—for all classes really—is to stick to a time structure for class discussion. If three people are slated for workshop, then each work should be allotted a certain amount of time.” Roy, another student in the face-to-face mediated workshop was especially emphatic about time management for workshops:

If the workshop meets 2.5 hours a week, and there are no more than three pieces to be discussed per week, each discussion running no more than 30 minutes, this leaves at least an hour each week for other activities...If the workshop ever goes over by more than 5 minutes, the facilitator must take class out for a meal. This is a reminder that time is \$ [sic], even for students.

None of the students in the computer-mediated workshops who were interviewed expressed any time management concerns. Rather several students in the computer-mediated workshops stated how much they preferred the flexibility and freedom working online afforded them. For example, Carolyn, a participant in one of the computer-mediated workshops said: “I like online workshops. I can work, am currently about to have a baby and can continue with my life and projects which I would not be able to do in face-face-face workshops. I feel like it’s a concentrated experience with little time wasted.”

#### Facilitating discourse

Authentic problem-solving discourse is considered to be the mainstay of a social constructivist classroom. Accordingly social constructivist researchers (Bransford et al., 2005; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Freire, 1970; Moore, 1972; Umbach & Wawrzynski,

2005; Wilhelm et al., 2001) place a high premium on instructors ensuring classroom or community discourses challenge students' higher thinking skills and convey the instructor's high expectations regarding the quantity and quality of their students' work. Included in such expectations is that students will disagree, but resolve their conflicts (Anderson et al., 2001; Dillard, 1994) amicably in the spirit of dynamic, but not polemic discourse.

For example, the instructor for the face-to-face mediated workshop engaged her students in a meaningful dialogue focused on the specific craft technique of character arc and narrative arc. After participants shared their initial comments with the group, the instructor continued the discussion by asking all of the students, including the writer, to consider the need for a supernatural character named May to be part of the novel's narrative arc.

**Instructor:** What is May's function? Is she necessary?

**Roy:** How is May pushing the action forward? I don't see her interacting or pushing. Could Madelyn just find [May's] journal? Is May going to see her?

**Jane:** Could there be a reaction where May sees breakup and confrontation—I want to see this directly, not indirectly from May. The reader can see what May does without May.

**Instructor:** I want to feel the argument between Madelyn and Cannon. See her getting mad and storming out. Why isn't Cannon trying to have sex with Madelyn? You have close to emotional moments without feeling those emotions. You have a spunky heroine—Madelyn—doing research, forcing information from her mother and grandmother. You need to invest in your unfolding mystery, not in May. Could you use pages of May's diary in lieu of May in person? Look at Barbara Vine's *Anna's Book*. She combines diary and present action.

**Andrea:** Could May show the moment-by-moment confrontation?

**Rosie:** Maybe Madelyn wanted May as a guardian angel. A thought up ghost of a person? Right now I don't feel the two parts, the supernatural and the celebrity culture, communicating with each other. Does May serve greater forces of the novel? You have a compelling real life story—right now the supernatural takes from that. It's a matter of connection.

**Lynn (Author):** May might become antagonistic because wants to keep the secret in the family, among the women. She does not want her family's secret published.

I feel the new part of the novel will turn into one story. I'm cloudy about what Madelyn knows.

**Instructor:** Readers will want to know explicitly what occurred.

The instructor for the computer-mediated workshop posted the following to her students as part of a story discourse that also focused on a craft discussion.

**Instructor:** Christopher points out an interesting thing—and let me know if I've got this all wrong, Christopher. The use of the conditional tense—"we would smoke"—nurtures a feeling that we're immersed in any particular moment "ever-present" tense. At what point does the story need to touch down in particular moments, particular scenes? Notice the ever-present exposition. The rest is scene. It's that old showing-telling continuum again. What ratio of storytelling styles are we looking for here?

**Christopher:** Yes, I think you've said it better what I mean. With this ever-present, it doesn't feel that there is room for these characters to do anything to break from their prescribed behaviors. Many times, I think, drama unfolds in stories when characters have the freedom to break from routine—conflict can happen and characters can change.

**Instructor:** It could be that Renata wants the story to live only in the now. If that's the case, what about the writing made us think of an older narrator looking back?

**Christopher:** The title "We Were Punk Rockers" kept a question looming for me. "What are they now?" I wanted to see the point at which these characters leave the lifestyle behind, or at least something I could point to as the reason they eventually would.

**Bea:** Agreed—the title is not "We are Punk-Rockers." There is distance between the narrative voice and the events being described.

A basic operational structural component and affective feature that activity theory and social constructivism share is individuals learn most efficiently and effectively when they work collegially with others who share the same learning objective (Moro, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Wilhelm et al., 2001). Participants in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops verified this point. When asked what made the workshop approach effective and efficient for them, everyone interviewed referenced workshop discourse as being the most effective measure responsible for helping them hone their writing knowledge and skills. Specifically, students in all three workshops

repeatedly stated receiving constructive criticism from their instructor and peers in the workshop saved them time and effort as their peers' and instructors' critiques pointed out for them specific craft errors, inconsistencies, etc. in their manuscripts. In addition to the practical assistance the workshop's discourse afforded them, most of the students interviewed indicated belonging to a cohesive group that shared what many described as a passion for writing was a powerful intrinsic motivator that supported them by creating a feeling of camaraderie and trust knowing they could depend on their peers and instructor to honestly help them improve their manuscripts specifically and their overall writing skills and knowledge in general. For example, several interviewees stated they learned as much when their particular manuscript was the subject of the discussion as they did from suggestions made regarding how others' manuscripts could be improved because they repeatedly found craft-related recommendations made about a peer's manuscript were equally applicable to their own. Cierra expanded this even further: "A lot of critiquing helps me to write better. Lay[ing] out rules for others helps me to apply the same rules to myself when I am writing." Rosie pointed out: "I take a lot of notes during workshop. Some ideas that pop in my head are in response to something someone else has said. Often those are places where a reader's response and the writer's intent collide...It's a matter of making the most of the workshop by hearing as much of what others think as possible." And as Carolyn, a student in one of the computer-mediated workshops, indicated at the completion of her manuscript's review by peers: "See, so many options to consider! That is what I ultimately love about workshopping with you guys, it feels like brainstorming for the betterment of the piece."



Participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop said they liked it too that they frequently continued their constructive discussions outside the classroom during breaks and throughout the day as they interacted frequently during the week since many of them worked on campus at the Writing Center and in the English Department as teaching assistants. For example, Rosie commented “I always found myself talking further about my work with classmates outside of the workshop setting.” Additionally, as second- and third-year M.F.A. students,<sup>11</sup> several knew each other from previous classes and had formed friendships with different members, thereby deepening social-bonds that made discussion of their manuscripts away from class more likely.

Students in the face-to-face mediated workshop recognized written critiques as useful discourse tools. First, they indicated preparing written critiques of their peers’ manuscripts helped them identify craft-related strengths and weaknesses in their peers’ manuscripts. Second, by being required to have their critiques prepared ahead of the workshop discourse they said the critiques helped facilitate oral workshop discourses. As Lynn said in her interview, “When you write comments you take your experience as a reader and write your comments based on that. You find conclusions when you write because as you write you can pinpoint nagging points...Andrea gave me a good idea to help that we didn’t have time to discuss since sometimes someone so dominates that the workshop gets off subject.” Cierra was divided in her responses to written comments stating, “Quality is in written comments, but I fear miscommunication.” Roy, who indicated at the outset he would have preferred a computer-mediated program with just written comments stated:

---

<sup>11</sup> EMU has a three-year M.F.A. program; NSU’s M.F.A. program is a two-year program.

I feel a much better alternative would be to have deadlines for reading and giving the person in WK [sic] comments that he could save until later to read and ponder. That would save me emotionally. Specifically I would get comments, hold onto them for a week or two after I've written more and gained objectivity about what comments comment on. Then they wouldn't be as emotionally devastating.

Participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop also saw written critiques as an important time-saving measure because manuscript discussions in the face-to-face mediated workshop were frequently delayed as administrative and/or clerical workshop related topics concerning announcements of visiting writers, important writing conferences like AWP's annual conference, students' suggestions for supplemental novel titles, etc. were discussed first. While such issues were germane, they nevertheless shortened the already limited time available for manuscript discussions.

Paradoxically, despite their acknowledgement of the usefulness of written critiques, most participants in the face-to-face workshop indicated they disliked actually writing critiques because preparing them was excessively labor intensive and time consuming. For example, in spite of Cierra's comment stated above she also said, "Density of [writing comments]—is not something I want to do. It is a chore sorting through. It is joyless."

Participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop also indicted they disliked receiving written critiques. Some participants complained their peers' wording was too ambiguous making it difficult to determine what others were trying to tell them was wrong with their manuscripts; or else they said comments were so contrived and over-edited that they came across as being artificial and dishonest. For example, Cierra said, "Comments on paper alone are more of a mystery conversation. People can fudge a response on paper writing what they would not say in person because it wouldn't work in

person.” Lynn agreed stating she preferred face-to-face over emailed comments due to possible ambiguity.

E-mails are easier, but when I had to email my instructor I didn’t have a chance to circle around and ask the same question from a different angle. I met her twice face-to-face and had a detailed conversation with her because I could keep coming back to ask my question until I had clearly articulated my question. With e-mail I got my final answer in one message, which didn’t answer my question, but I didn’t want to keep pestering her. Face-to-face I was comfortable repeating the question until I was comfortable I understood her response.

Finally, some participants indicated the critiques were so harshly critical as to border on being cruel. According to Lynn some people “craft a personality” in their critiques. Many students, including Jane, indicated they were emotionally hurt after reading some critiques of her manuscripts: “Emailed critiques are a lot more devastating because there’s no benefit of getting to know the person sending them. Mean comments about my work always make me feel sad so strictly emailed comments create a sadness for me without any fulfillment of interaction.” In her interview Rosie said, “that after listening to the same manuscript discussed verbally with all the emotional undercurrents and nuances of paralanguage and nonverbal behaviors, written critiques leave me wondering which interpretation is more honest—what a peer said in class or what he/she had written in his/her critique? I like getting written comments, but I want that a cushion. Nonverbals provide that initial cushion.”

Lewis concurred saying,

Email is acceptable, but dialogue provides for finer points of construction. You sound differently when you speak versus write. You emphasize what you mean when you talk. That does not usually translate into written emails. The written message can get twisted; it can be misinterpreted. Many writers who have written too fast go to press with a message that comes across sounding angry, frustrated, confused. In a detached situation you get your message through, but emails lack the nuances of a verbal communication. In face-to-face you see eyebrows raised, hear a finger drumming. You don’t get that in electronic communications.

Interviewed students from the face-to-face mediated workshop also attributed their preference to hearing peers' comments as opposed to reading them because they found their peers spontaneous and extemporaneous comments during a workshop discourse especially helpful. Referring to such comments as *brainstorming*, participants from the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated spontaneous ideas and extemporaneous comments originated from listening to others' prepared critiques. Lynn for example said, "in a face-to-face workshop you get twelve brains working together collectively about a story instead of twelve individualized brains working separately." Rosie and Lewis concurred saying respectively, "Hearing from twenty voices at once helps to hack out a solution. It's helpful to hear so many viewpoints when working on a problem. That doesn't happen with online communication. There's no interacting, no amending." "Having multiple viewpoints—an aggregate, makes more sense. You can see how others accept what is said." As such, students in the face-to-face mediated workshop agreed that collective brainstorming generated a lot more ideas, including ideas no one had previously considered or included in their critiques. As a result participants indicated suggestions made in workshop helped them not just to revise chapters they had already written, but to conceptualize and write new material as well. Again according Rosie,

Face-to-face challenges you to think spontaneously. Talking forces further reflection while reading comments alone does not. Online comments are more marginal, they're not recharged. Verbal discussion allows us more leeway to be open to suggestions than a note does. Responses are more personal, someone can tell you "I did this for this reason". I for one am more open to suggestions of the person sitting next to me. Computer-mediated communication is more intimidating. There's no emotion with online communication. I don't feel I can express myself comfortably online.

For similar reasons some students in the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated in their interviews that they did not read their peers' written critiques because they benefited more from spontaneous in-person workshop discussions of their manuscripts. They also stated they thought written critiques were inferior because they sounded harsh and/or lackluster after listening to spontaneous oral discourse during workshop that so frequently generated new suggestions and ideas that were invariably missing from written critiques prepared as they were before workshop and without the benefit of group input. As Rosie put it, "People alter their comments in class after hearing what someone else says. I'll write spontaneous notes and corrections in addition to my written comments because of what someone says."

Consequently, of the eight participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop that were interviewed, all eight acknowledged that even though not everything was discussed in workshop due to time limitations, they were selective about whose critiques they read indicating that without any nonverbal and paralanguage indicators from the peer responsible for writing a critique, written critiques on the whole were not very valuable to them. Repeatedly they indicted too often a peer's intended message was open for misinterpretation due to repetitious, vague, and/or harsh wording. As a result many said written critiques did more to stymie their writing efforts than assist them as such critiques left them feeling frustrated, anxious, and depressed. For example, William stated, "I think there is a trick, though, in figuring out when to trust them [peers] and when to ignore them and do your own thing. I think sometimes it's important to consider that the people in this room, as smart and talented as they are they are required to say something about

your work, and sometimes I think the comments that come out are dictated more by that than anything else.”

Nor were the students alone in their assessment. Critically acclaimed and award-winning writer Madison Smartt Bell, who taught as a visiting writer at the University of Iowa, wrote of his time teaching at the University of Iowa,

When the classroom discussion was finished, these fourteen annotated copies would be handed to the unfortunate author along with mine. My heart misgave me every time I watched the student (victim) gather them up and an inner voice whispered, *Please, when you get home, just burn those things*” (emphasis in the original) (1997, p. 7).

Paradoxically he was not convinced workshop discussions were always beneficial either.

It’s hard to get workshops to recognize finished work and accept it as such because they are designed to be fault-finding machines and they will function that way whether there are faults or not.

That is, in workshops you are rewarded for success and punished for failure, and one of the things this leads people to do is stop attempting what they don’t initially do well. Which is very limiting. So you have to try to fight that somehow, but its difficult because it’s hard to change the fundamental nature of a group that lends toward *consensus* (emphasis in original). And that’s the stated goal, consensus, you want that. But aesthetically, consensus is not necessarily good for the individual writer. So I always tell people, usually at the beginning of the assembly of the group, “You must understand that ninety percent of what you hear will probably not be relevant or useful. And you have to be able yourself, as a student to discriminate the useful advice from useless advice” (1994, p. 7).

In line with Bell’s latter comment, students in the face-to-face mediated workshop similarly recognized that spontaneous and extemporaneous comments “shot-from-the-hip” or “off-the-cuff” comments can and frequently do have negative repercussions. For that reason they indicated they depended heavily on their peers’ nonverbal behaviors and paralanguage. For example, Andrea explained nonverbal head nods and averted eyes helped her gauge her peers’ approval or rejection of what was being said because she

noted such nonverbal behaviors allowed her to “read the room.” In other words as she explained it, if she saw several of her peers nodding their heads she knew they approved of a peer’s criticism; whereas several sets of down-cast eyes indicated a peer’s point was not well-received. Other participants who expressed similar sentiments agreed nonverbal behaviors cushioned peers’ negative criticisms when they read directly from their written critiques during workshop discourses. Their point is supported by writer and creative writing teacher Graeme Harper:

[T]he human face...is a set of physiological activities, movements, impacted upon by emotions, psychological tendencies, needs, expectations, desires, interactions with others, creative possibilities founded in the actions of expression...As we make and re-make our own faces we rightly assume the making and re-making of other faces. The core elements are there, but the act of living a face, itself emphasizes the simple fact that how we appear is never entirely fixed and how we impact on our appearance is always determined by both external and internal influences (2010, pp. 176-177).

Finally, all participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop acknowledged spontaneous brainstorming could potentially slow the discussion precipitously when one or more group members had trouble articulating or were overly garrulous, as both types of speakers took a disproportionate amount of time to make a single point. Rosie for example said, “I think there are times we’d reach a point there at the end of a workshop where it seemed like we were all saying the same things over and over to one another.” Cierra and Jane concurred. According to Cierra, “There were a few times when I would have liked to encourage the group to move on already. I didn’t necessarily want to argue or disagree, but I got the message and it felt like a waste of time to keep at it.” And Jane said, “When certain points are beaten to death I get frustrated. Some people need to get to

a point more articulately, They don't need to give answers, they need to bring up questions. Once an issue has been parsed out it stops being interesting.”

Participants in the computer-mediated workshops agreed with their counterparts in the face-to-face mediated workshop that preparing lengthy initial written critiques and then responding to those same peers' in-depth critiques followed by an on-going dialogic discussion all in writing was considerably more time-consuming and labor intensive than face-to-face mediated verbal discussions. Notwithstanding they also stated they preferred the greater detail and emphasis communicating totally in writing provided them. As authors they especially liked the fact their peers' written comments detailed how they had or had not used finer nuances of craft to create accurate and powerful writing. As writers too they indicated verbatim written critiques enabled them to peruse their peers' criticisms and suggestions without the personal emotional baggage they felt attends listening to oral critiques does. Christopher for example said,

I think a bit longer before pressing 'send' and it seems those critiquing me do as well. We also have the luxury of re-reading a post for clarification as well as quoting directly from another's response for elaboration and clarification. I don't know that softening or sharpening is a concern, but I want to be as clear and precise as possible with my words.

Sophie concurred,

I feel like it's a concentrated experience with little time wasted. I can also consider the comments and respond in my own time. I feel my quality of workshopping has to be better as my comments are written out—I can't bluff through not reading a story or talk a lot without saying anything.

Additionally, although Graham, a student in one of the computer-mediated workshops, found waiting for responses exasperating due to time zone differences and therefore communication time lags, he and all the other students in both computer-mediated workshops indicated in their interviews they found their computer-mediated



workshop's three-day time frame for responding provided them the same benefits students in the face-to-face workshop lauded. For example, Lois, a participant in a computer-mediated workshop indicated in her interview that,

With the structure of the critiques comes spontaneity, because I feel like I'm in an environment that allows me to be spontaneous... Off-the-cuff always has its place. A bit of self-censoring can be helpful in getting to the point, but also a bit of rambling can have a brainstorming effect, eventually someone might come up with something. I'm not sure either face-to-face or online lends itself better to spontaneity. I have trouble reacting quickly, so instead of babbling through five minutes of class to find one decent point, I can pause and ponder and save everyone a bit of time and patience. I will forego a little spontaneity for that control.

With the exception of Graham, students in the computer-mediated workshops similarly dismissed the importance of nonverbal behaviors indicating they found facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbals potentially more detrimental to a productive workshop discourse than beneficial. For example, Lois said, "[b]ecause I can't see my other classmates rolling their eyes, I am more likely to pursue different avenues of thinking both in my own writing (in the way I interpret the comments on my writing) and in my commenting too." Charles, another student in one of the computer-mediated workshops, was even more emphatic.

Non-verbals really are useless when it comes to writing. What do they communicate? A reader's actual feelings about a work? Or a reader's feelings about that writer? Their thoughts about a disagreed with criticism from the week before? When it comes to writing there are the words and the pages. That's all. Unless you are writing humor and need to see the readers react to a fresh piece (do they laugh? snicker? look confused?) non-verbals are a distraction.

Lois agreed for another reason,

I can be rather judgmental so I spend less time thinking of someone's behaviour and attitude scornfully and more time focusing on their work alone. I'm thinking of a woman in my summer workshop who had a particular behaviour that drove me a bit nutty, and I found it really hard to look past that. Online eliminates that stuff. I try to be more on point and less rambly than I am in real life, I usually try

to do a quick re-read of my postings before pressing send to see if I'm being helpful or just hearing myself speak.

### Providing direct instruction

Notwithstanding a recent tendency of some social constructivist educators to emphasize peer interaction, many other social constructivist educators contend the driving force ensuring student cognitive maturation from novice to autonomous learner remains solidly rooted with the instructor for it is his/her responsibility to guide the student through his/her zone of proximal development by way of explanation, questioning, referencing outside sources, confirming students' knowledge, perceptions, and methods as well as correcting their misperceptions and errors, and summarizing lesson content (Anderson et al., 2001; Bransford et al., 2005, Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Marsh & Ketterer, 2005, Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Rust, 2005; Swan & Shih, 2005). According to creative writing teachers Bly (2001), Bell (1997), Gardner (1983a), and MacDonald (1989) this same principle applies to creative writing. For while M.F.A. students have what creative writing program administrators and instructors interviewed for this case study referred to as "a spark" and what Bell (1997) refers to as a writer's "black box," both referring to a person's innate talent and desire to write, because even the most talented M.F.A. students are typically inexperienced, students benefit considerably from direct instruction and guidance from a qualified creative writing teacher (Fenza, 2000; LaFemina, 2008). Like other teachers, the creative writing teacher provides the necessary instruction the novice writer needs to hone his/her ability and desire by learning from his/her teacher how to effectively and efficiently structure or craft a story so that readers will be motivated to read his/her fiction. For this reason, direct instruction by the teacher is critical for only as a published writer can

he/she truly ensure talented and motivated but inexperienced writing students learn how to become autonomous writers more quickly than if they were left alone to discover proper story crafting on their own. For example, in the face-to-face mediated workshop the instructor made the following comments at the end of the discussion wherein she both summarized the discussion and gave the student needed direction.

Carlisle sees herself as assertive; others see her as porny. At the same time Carlisle is taking control. We need to know what does Carlisle want and what is standing in her way? You need a “through line”—a main story. Carlisle’s love relationships versus her professional life. How much does she want each one? You need to establish your characters. Right now we are not sure what she wants. How is she being thwarted other than by her sexuality? She is not self-reflective enough. Is her being impulsive or getting angry that gets her into trouble? We need to know what else she wants and how that gets her into trouble. Right now she is big physically, personality, and celebrity-wise. How much ambition does she have? You have not articulated this enough.

You need to organize and structure more. Give different reactions to her flashbacks. You might use songs from the albums to help you organize a through line. But we definitely need to see her suffer more.

Following the discourse of another student’s manuscript the instructor summarized key points that were discussed in addition to giving direct instruction to the student.

What does Meemo want, but is not getting? He comes on with swagger, but quickly loses the wind in his sails. He has not met Sha yet, so what makes Marguerite special? She is a turning point for Memo, but her presence also weakens Sha’s impact later. Meemo is not happy. He chooses not to have sex with Marguerite in spite of her strong come on. Is Marguerite also playing the game?

Meemo would be more realized if he reifies Marguerite—sees her solely as a conquest. Such nuances of characters better reflect the male psychological character.

Role-play—what would Sha do?

Remember pacing over the length of the book. If you keep Sha’s name you will need a secondary figure to her. Keep the father more interested in being her father. Lila is a threat, but why does Sha dread her so much? Are there outside pressures Sha faces but is unable to decide about? We need to know what other people’s expectations are for Sha...

Meemo and the bus ride—he thinks of Sha, but he can't think of what to write that she'd want to read. Why do we feel sympathy for him? Inject a sense of foreboding.

You need to raise similar questions about dishonesty. You need more squalor in Meemo's story. Rami strings him along with drugs. Meemo recognizes this, but does not want to believe it. You need more contextual details—why doesn't Meemo succumb to the drugs and alcohol when Rami offers them to him?

The instructor for the computer-mediated workshop made similar comments indicating her understanding of her students' needs and her role as the “expert.” In the following exchange she provided direct instruction by challenging her students to respond to her request for suggestions based on her expertise as a writer to recognize what the manuscript was missing.

Carolyn wisely pointed out that the story tapers off. But it's not necessarily an ending. Renata's at 2,000 words, and certainly there is room to grow. How much of the story is already on the page? How much is left to come? This is a common thing with first drafts—we write too much exposition at the beginning and not enough scene at the end. I think Christopher is pointing to this when he says the story could begin with something punchier. Thoughts?

Right now we have a movement from the collective to the individuals. We see them all together at the beginning, and as the story progresses, we see their alliances and conflicts too. Christopher points out some great opportunities for scene development. The cigarette burn scene, etc. What can you imagine happening if the story continued? As Bea says, the story “does not yet pull together into a thread, a few characters, an incident, a departure, an arc—not for anyone.” What more is needed to make that happen? Who are the compelling characters for you? Did they succeed? Did they fail? Why?

At the end there's a really curious thing going on. We see the punk kids telling stories about “how bad they had it.” Is all this stuff true? If so, what does it mean? Are they hyperbolizing? Jason is First Nations, or so the story tells us. But then his mother was a circus performer, and then a palm reader in Cuba during the Bay of Pigs. If they're making all those traumatic events up, what does it say about them? Their punk status in general? Does it reinforce Renata's idea that punk is a uniform?

In response to the instructor's prompts for her students' input, Carolyn answered by mentioning the character, Claire, as touching a chord with her personally. Though phrased as a question, she gives suggestions as to what brings the group back together

after years of separation. Finally, she reiterates the instructor's sense of being left hanging due to a lack of narrative arc or plot development.

The story is highly believable. I could see the "we". The descriptions are bang on with amusing whimsical details. The reference to hating any older person who lived in the suburbs made me laugh out loud. Claire, getting a piercing every time she sleeps with occasional boyfriend? Love it. The whole eating disorder section was crazy good. I have to believe you didn't make this stuff up. Did you?

Not sure where you going with this, but if anything I wanted to see more, I was engrossed from the title (that sounds like a punk chant) to the end or the place where you stopped (didn't feel like an end per se). What I want now is to see it turned into something. What is the story here? What has prompted this sharing of those crazy punk rock days? Is it a reunion? Are they 'old' now and living in the burbs? Is this a wedding? Funeral? That first apartment building being torn down? An anniversary of Sid Vicious' death? We have the collective first person voice and a few great characters, now what can we do with them? For me it doesn't have to have a complicated plot or much of a plot at all, just a framework and a reason for the story to exist.

In response to these various concerns and queries, Renata, the author wrote:

I am not sure fictionally what might have prompted the flashing into the past. Although I might end with a break-up of the collective "we"—a statement about how in some senses, autonomy was indeed achieved, but in others—there was a complete let-down and failure of the terms the collective had set up for its members (as they went their separate ways). So, I thought about starting in the present with one of the solitary characters contacting the narrator. I had actually written in (but edited out) a brief introductory section that involved Jason contacting the narrator over the phone after years of not speaking to each other. Jason says he had been institutionalized "360 days" in the last three years. But in reading this prologue, it felt completely pasted on and out of context especially in relation to the ironic knowing voice of the collective.

I have to say the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural voice is loud. I can think of no other word for it. It seems to take over all other voices in the story and it appears to be very opaque and inherently ironic. I had difficulty including the individual stories without quite a bit of set up. This made me think I can not vary the story too much in terms of altering tense or voice.

In true social constructivist fashion, the participants' dialogic discourse shows peers reacting to the instructor's direct instruction by bringing to light craft deficiencies the author recognizes she will need to address in future rewrites. Moreover, though one discussion of one story did not teach students everything they needed to learn, it

broadened their general knowledge of the use of craft which in turn will help them improve future writing endeavors.

### **Research Question Number Three: Affective Components Impacting Face-to-Face mediated and Computer-mediated Workshops**

As discussed earlier, the traditional workshop approach is firmly grounded in social constructivism. The primary operational axiom of social constructivism is that individuals progress instructionally the most effectively and efficiently when an expert, either a teacher or a more knowledgeable peer, demonstrates a new skill, providing assistance as the learner's proficiency increases proportionately until he/she is able to perform the new skill with equivalent appropriation, at which point the learner advances to the next level of learning by building on his/her newly acquired knowledge. Finally learning is expedited when the learner participates in a collegial group or community focused on a shared educational object or outcome that has meaning and purpose for them (Freire, 1970; Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Wilhelm, 2002; Wilhelm et al., 2001).

While Research Question Two examined the operational efficacy and efficiency of social constructivism when applied to creative writing workshops taught using the traditional workshop approach (Blythe & Sweet, 2008) by examining how an instructor for a face-to-face mediated workshop and an instructor of two computer-mediated workshops respectively designed and organized their instruction, facilitated discourse, and provided direction, Research Question Three continues the case study's purpose to better understand creative writing workshops by focusing on the affective aspect of workshops. By better understanding how instructors and students respond affectively in a computer-mediated workshop, creative writing administrators will have additional

information they can use in their decision-making process regarding the overall pedagogical usefulness of expanding their current high-residency creative writing programs to include an optional-residency creative writing program as well. With this in mind, Research Question Number Three examines how affective components of a teaching and learning community impacted face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshop participants by asking: How effectively and efficiently do computer online distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops meet students' social, psychological, and educational needs and expectations for social collaboration, psychological support, and educational content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers compared to the spontaneous and robust social and psychological interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?

#### Five theories

To fully understand how the social constructivist paradigm translates to creative writing workshops in general and to computer-mediated workshops in particular to determine if the two mediated types of workshops were socio-emotionally comparable, it was necessary to examine the five educational, linguistic, socio-psychological, and cognitive theories presented in Chapter 2. These theories were Bakhtin's interactive theory (1986); Rosenblatt's transactional reading and writing theory (2005); Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* (1993); Moore's transactional distance (1972); and MacKinnon's and Heise's affect control theory (1993).

### Social constructivism

Vygotsky (1978), one of the primary developers of social constructivism, identified a) external dialogue; b) a learner's zone of proximal development; and c) the learner's internal convergence of the spoken to the abstract that exemplifies learners' shift from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological as three critical features that define the learning process.

According to Vygotsky (1978), whether the learner is a child or an adult, the developmental process originates within a social context, a dialogic exchange. Vygotsky referred to this as the learner's interpsychological level. As learners process or internalize the knowledge they gain from dialogue, they transform it into abstract cognitive recognition. In Vygotsky's words this is "when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge" (p. 24). He goes on to say, convergence, or learning, occurs within each learner's zone of proximal development which he defined as:

those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed "bud" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits" of development. The actual developmental level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively (p. 87).

At the final stage, the "mental development prospectively" the learner has successfully "intrapsychologized" knowledge which he/she continues to use for successive acquisitions of knowledge. Moreover, as Marsh and Ketterer (2005) point out, learners' dialogic exchanges need not be limited to verbal face-to-face communications; dialogic exchanges transpire as cogently well between learners and various non-animated educational modalities like books and computers as they do with human teachers.



Interactive, transactional reading and writing, *habitus*, *capital*, and *field*, and transactional distance theories

Three correlative theories that align with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism and further explain the learning process are Bakhtin's linguistic interactive theory (1986), Rosenblatt's psycho-educational transactional reading and writing theory (2005), and Bourdieu's sociological concepts of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* (1993). All three theories share Vygotsky's theory that individuals interpret language, spoken and written, based on their personal cultural, historical, social, and prior educational experiences. For Bakhtin, this means that dialogue combines one person's internal language or meaning of words with the external language voiced as speech of another person to produce an exchange as a speaker's inner language is transformed to his outer speech which in turn is re-interpreted and retransformed by the listener into his or her inner language which in turn he/she responds to with his/her own transformed outer speech. The result, as Morson (1983) states, "[is] people of different groups, ages, generations, locales [speaking with] their own dialects, each bearing the imprint of a collection of values and a distillation of experiences" discoursing so that "[s]peech always takes place between particular people, in a particular situation, for a particular reason. The particularities shape the creation of each utterance" (pp. 229-230).

In concert with Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's theories is Rosenblatt's transactional reading and writing theory (2005). Similar to Vygotsky's contention of interpsychological and intrapsychological convergence and subsequent transformation of knowledge through dialogic exchange, and Bakhtin's interactive theory wherein "we wrest particular meanings out of general systems, [making] us all creators [so that] a speaker is to his utterance what an author is to his text" (Holoquist, 1983, p. 315),

Rosenblatt contends every reader and writer subjectively internalizes what he/she reads and/or writes based on his/her public and private purpose for either reading or writing and subsequently interprets what is read or written based on his/her social, historical, cultural, and prior educational ontogeny. In Rosenblatt's words:

Essential to any reading is the readers' adoption, conscious or unconscious, or what I have termed a *stance* guiding the "choosing activity" in the stream of consciousness. Recall that any linguistic event carries both public and private aspects. As the transition with the printed text stirs up elements of the linguistic-experiential reservoir, the reader adopts a selective attitude or stance, bringing certain aspects into the center of attention and pushing others into the fringes of consciousness. A stance reflects the reader's purpose. The situation, the purpose, and the linguistic—experiential equipment of the reader as well as the signs on the page enter into the transaction and affect the extent to which public and private meanings and associations will be attended to...In short the writer is always transacting with a personal, social, and cultural environment. Thus, the [reading and] writing process must be seen as always embodying both personal and social, or individual and environmental factors (pp. 10, 17).

According to Bourdieu (1993) a homology exists between a person's social, cultural, educational, and historical ontogeny and their verbal and nonverbal language that constitutes his/her *habitus*. Furthermore, such an ontogeny is shaped by the individual's *field* which Hanks (2005) indicates is "defined in social theory [as] a form of social organization with two main aspects: (a) a configuration of social roles, agent positions, and the structures they fit into and b) the historical process in which those two positions are actually taken up, occupied by actors (individual or collective)" (p. 72). Thus as Hanks (2005) points out, to Bourdieu, *habitus* not only evolves specifically from a person interacting with his/her *field*, but his/her *habitus* is totally dependent on *field* for its existence. Additionally, the amount, what kind, and how much money or material possessions, education and refined culture, and social connections a person accrues constitute his/her *economical*, *cultural*, and *social capital* respectively. Consequently the

more wealth, higher education, and sophisticated artistic and literary tastes, and powerful friends and acquaintances one has the more *economic, cultural, and social capital* one has. Inversely, those from a lower SES bracket, with minimal education, and few politically or financially influential contacts are considered to have lower amounts of *capital*. Moreover, one's *habitus* and *field* tend to directly correlate with one's *capital*.

Additionally according to Moore (1997) the inherent spatial distance between teacher and learner in computer-mediated education systems is likely to create a type of psychological gap due to participants' lack of close proximity which eliminates many of the non-visual, visual, and audio cues speakers depend on to conduct cogent dialogic exchanges. According to Moore:

With separation there is a psychological and communication space to be crossed, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner. It is this psychological and communications space that is the transactional distance (1997, p. 22).

#### Affect control theory

The fifth theory germane to participants' affective reactions in a workshop is affect control theory (Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993). Affect control theory focuses on individuals' affective reactions to others' overt behaviors. Briefly stated individuals tailor their affective reactions to others in accord with what and how they expect another person to act or behave. They base their determinations on several factors including, but not limited to, their familiarity with a person and the person's appearance and actions. For example, an employee anticipates a supervisor to act in a certain manner due to having been in his/her employ for a length of time in addition to the traits he/she assigns to supervisory personnel in general. That being the case the employee typically assumes the appropriate

deferential attitude that combines compliance with friendliness. However, when a person acts differently than expected from another's expectations, the person viewing the aberrant behavior adjusts his/her own responses accordingly. Such adjustments become permanent if the person observing or receiving the results of other's atypical behavior determines the new behaviors to be long-lasting such as the result of learning a supervisor has been diagnosed with a terminal illness and therefore has become more demanding and contentious. Otherwise, the one observing or being affected by the other's change in mood, attitude, or actions only temporarily adjusts his/her behaviors in accord with what is determined to be a temporary shift in behavior due to a short-term change in circumstances. To continue the above example, the same employee would most likely convey sympathy and more patience in dealing with a supervisor's snappish attitude when he/she learned his/her boss had lost a family member in a car crash or had a bad cold.

How each of these psycho-educational, linguistic, and sociological theories impact M.F.A. students' progress towards becoming autonomous writers in terms of the workshop experience is examined below in the context of social presence's three key characteristics: social context, electronic literacy, and intersubjectivity (Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) which are discussed below in the global context of social presence.

#### Social presence defined

Within a social constructivist teaching and learning community (Figure 2-3) social presence is considered to be the lynchpin that attendant features support and maintain. Therefore it is central to an understanding of the overall affective as well as operational effectiveness and efficiency of creative writing workshops to examine the

underlying psychological or affective elements of what researchers refer to as social presence in context of a creative writing workshop.

Early telecommunications research conducted by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) defined social presence as being “a quality of the communications medium” (p. 65) and therefore heavily dependent on the medium’s “capacity to transmit information about facial expression, direction of looking, posture, dress and non-verbal vocal cues” (p. 65). This, according to Short and his colleagues made a user’s choice of a particular medium (e.g., talking face-to-face with both visual and audio cues or using a telephone with only audio) a subjective as opposed to an objective choice as the user based his/her choice on his/her need to have more or less social presence when communicating. In other words Short et al. (1976) determined when someone desired heightened social presence, he/she communicated face-to-face; if a decreased social presence was preferred, a phone call was sufficient due to the lack of visual cues. While later researchers, Biocca (1997); Cutler (1996); Garramone et al. (1986); Gunawardena (1995); Perse et al. (1992); and Walther (1992) concurred with Short and his colleague’s assessment that users define social presence subjectively, they disagreed with Short’s et al. (1976) theory that visual cues alone are requisite to increase social presence. Rather they argue, and indicate that various field studies have shown, that users define social presence not based on the number of social cues like dress, tone of voice and/or nonverbal behaviors that are available to communicants, but rather on a user’s ability to “feel that a form, behavior, or sensory experience indicates the presence of another intelligence. The amount of social presence is the degree to which a user feels access to the intelligence, intentions, and sensory impressions of another” (Biocca, 1997, p. 17).

Thus social presence researchers say is defined by the amount of *psychological distance* users perceive exists between communicants, which may or may not be influenced subjectively by visual and vocal cues (Gunawardena, 1995; Moore, 1997; Tu, 2000; Walther, 1992, 1995).

As a result of these refinements, researchers (Garrison et al., 2001; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovia, 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) indicate there is general agreement that the key features of social presence relevant to both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated teaching and learning communities are comprised of three subcomponents: 1) social context with the subordinate components of (a) task authenticity, (b) goal-direction, and (c) self-revelation; 2) online communication with the subordinate components of (a) privacy and (b) electronic literacy; and 3) interactivity with the subordinate components of (a) communication styles, paralanguage, nonverbal behaviors, and dramaturgical cues; (b) immediacy; and (c) reciprocity. (Figure 5-4.)

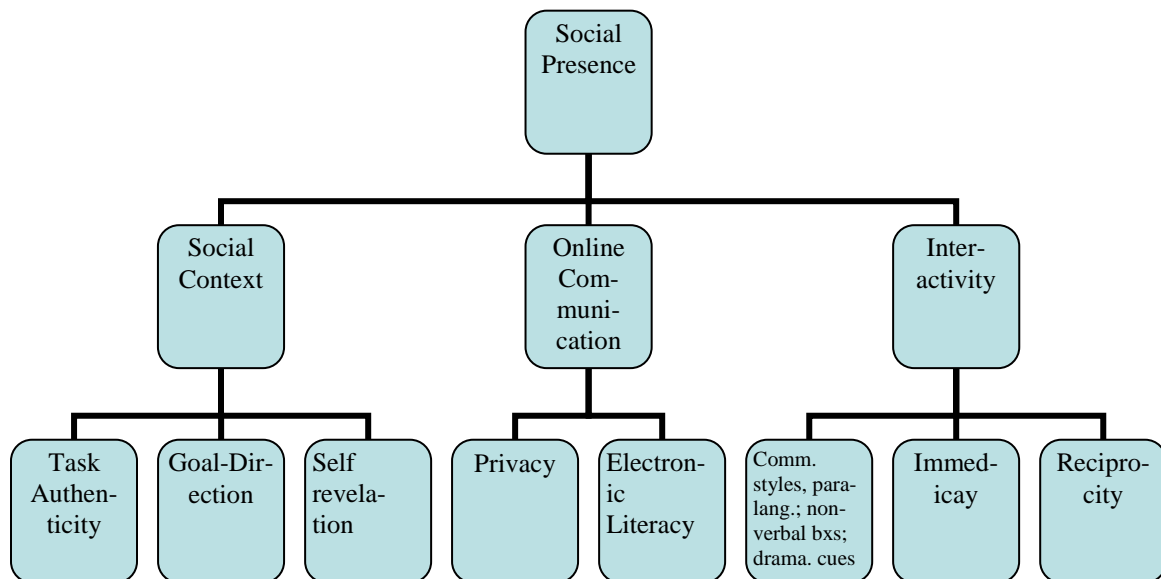


Figure 5-4: Social presence's three subcomponents and eight subordinate components

The first subcomponent, social context, includes the subordinate components of task authenticity, goal-direction, and self-revelation. Task authenticity refers to whether the problem assigned to a group is facile due to the fact participants have all the information they need to resolve the problem so clearly stated there is little to no room left for conflict or multiple solutions. The alternative is an authentic problem indicating the problem is realistic presenting students with insufficient data and multiple viable solutions. With so much variance, disagreement or conflict is almost inevitable.

Goal-direction refers to whether the purpose of the task is of immediate concern and use to the students, or is teacher/curriculum imposed strictly as a learning activity for which students may or may not see a relevant reason for learning.

Self-revelation indicates the amount of trust participants feel with regard to each other as revealed by their willingness or reticence to exchange socio-emotional messages that may or may not be germane to the task. The more they are willing to exchange socio-emotional messages indicates a greater sense of trust and respect and subsequently infers a reduced psychological distance exists between them as community members.

The second subcomponent, online communication, with the subordinated components of privacy and electronic literacy, involves participants' privacy concerns if using computers in public places like libraries or at a work site, and users' technical expertise using a computer. Both subordinate components are relevant to social presence as they can impact the third subcomponent, interactivity.

Interactivity and its three subordinate components refer to how participants respond to different communication styles including participants' paralinguistic or vocal intonations, nonverbal behaviors like facial expressions and body language, and certain

dramaturgical cues like a person's clothing or a participant's choice to sit at the head of the table, etc. Immediacy is the frequency and length of participants' responses which indicate a psychological proximity with other participants as community members. Reciprocity refers to individuals' willingness or reticence to participate in dialogic exchanges, which again reflects individuals' psychological distance from their community peers.

An additional correlative causal element likely to impact the level of social presence in a teaching and learning community is the political, social, and educational philosophies of the discrete university's creative writing program. For example, twenty-one of twenty-nine M.F.A. program administrators interviewed for the September/October 2011 issue of *Poets & Writers* highlighting M.F.A. programs ("Advice from the Programs," 2011) emphasized how important it is for a prospective M.F.A. student to consider a creative writing program's faculty and a college's environment in addition to a creative writing program's specific community culture before applying. It was considered critical to include this additional element because while conflict is a natural aspect of social constructivism (Billett, 2002; Barry & Crant, 2000; DeVries, 1997; Garrett, 1994; Rice & Love, 1987; Zevenbergen, 1996) all causal factors must be considered in the context of social presence. This is necessary in order to better understand the genesis of conflict between students and between students and instructors. It also explains why some community conflicts are resolvable while others stop progress for an individual or for an entire group and subsequently affect students' progress towards becoming autonomous learners. Therefore, in light of the substantial research indicating organizational cultures, including school cultures ("Advice from the



Programs,” 2011; Bell, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Gordon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1992) that exert a considerable influence on social presence within a teaching and learning community, for the current case study the researcher added organization and program cultures as a fourth subordinate component related to interactivity. (Figure 5-5.)

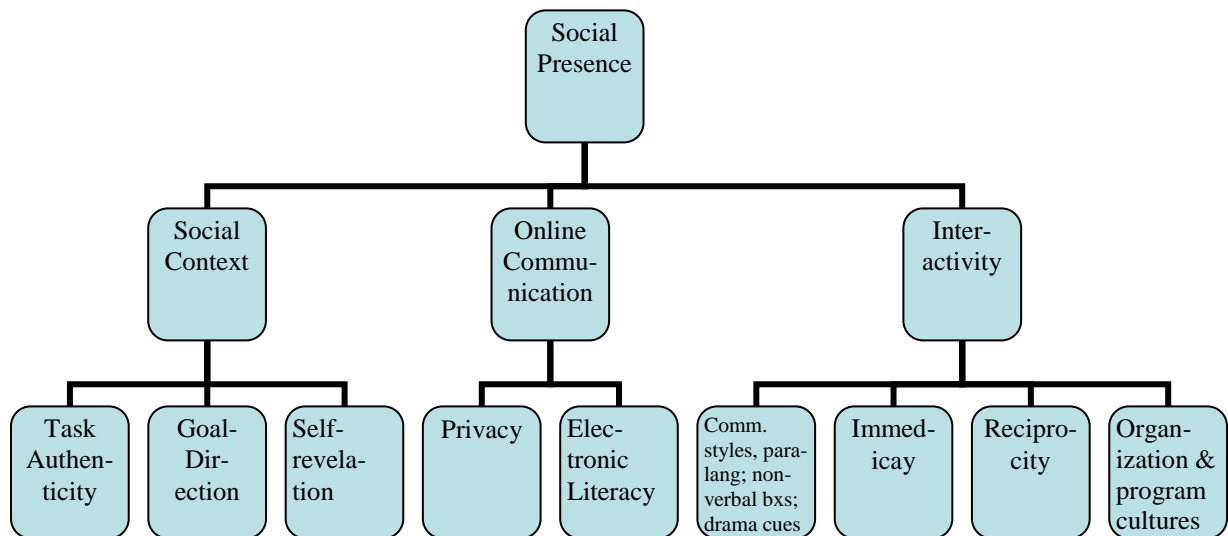


Figure 5-5: Revised version of social presence showing three subcomponents and nine subordinate components

As each of the three subcomponents, social context, online communication, and interactivity, is related to the social constructive paradigm of Vygotsky’s interpsychological to intrapsychological transformation of language between learner and teacher (1978), Bakhtin’s interactive theory (1986), Bourdieu’s *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* (1993; Hanks, 2005), Rosenblatt’s transactional reading and writing theory (2005) in addition to Moore’s transactional distance theory (1997) and MacKinnon’s and Heise’s affect control theory (1993) which in turn help to understand the affective impacts of workshopping, each of the social presence subcomponents and their subordinate components are discussed individually in the overall context of Research Question Number Three: How effectively and efficiently do computer online distance education

creative prose fiction writing workshops meet students' social, psychological, and educational needs and expectations for social collaboration, psychological support, and educational content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers compared to the spontaneous and robust social and psychological interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?

### Social context

As indicated above in Figure 5-5 and in Chapter 2 (Figure 2-3), social presence has three subcomponents: social context, online communication, and interactivity. The first of these, social context, has three subordinate components: task authenticity; goal-direction; and self-revelation (Figure 5-6). The following explains the nature and theoretical connection of social context in general followed by an explication of the specific nature of each subordinate component and how it relates to Vygotsky's social constructivism, Bakhtin's interactive theory, Rosenblatt's transactional reading and writing theory, Bourdieu's *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* concepts, Moore's transactional distance, and MacKinnon's and Heise's affect control theory. This discussion is followed by an examination of how each of the three subordinate components was demonstrated by participants in the respective face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops.

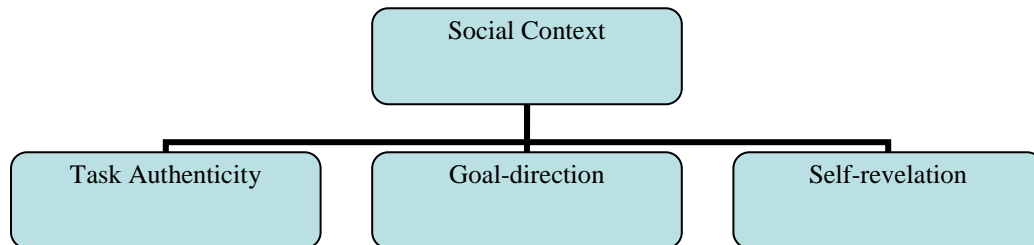


Figure 5-6: Three subordinate components of social context

As conceived of by Vygotsky (1978) and elucidated by other advocates of social constructivism (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia, 1998; Wilhelm, 2002; Wilhelm et al., 2001) learning occurs as a teacher provides direct instruction and the community of learners applies this explicit instruction to solve one or more authentic communal problems. Various researchers (Billett, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Rogoff, 1990; Rourke et al., 2001; Tu, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998) have examined each of these features in detail and in the wider context of instruction. Based on their findings social context includes task authenticity, goal-direction, and self-revelation. When these components are combined they promote learner autonomy provided there is an adequate degree of learner participation (Smagorinsky, 2001).

#### Social context: Task authenticity and goal-direction

Task authenticity is determined by task complexity. Well-structured problems, which are the kind commonly presented in classroom settings, tend to lack genuine authenticity as they have well-defined prescriptive features that lead to logical outcomes (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia, 1998). Authentic problems also referred to as ill-defined or complex problems are the kind generally encountered in the workplace. Authentic problems are more realistic as they do not point to logical conclusions. Authentic problems may or may not present participants with all the necessary information to resolve the issue, and can be resolved using multiple criteria because authentic problems frequently do not have definitive solutions (Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia 1998).

Face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops present participants with authentic problem-solving tasks as each participant in the workshop responds to and/or prepares workshop manuscripts as a transactional reader and/or as a transactional writer (Rosenblatt, 2005). As a transactional reader and/or writer each peer's reaction to a manuscript is different based on his/her social, cultural, educational, and historical background (Billett, 2002; Bourdieu, 1993; Holquist, 1983; Marsh, 2006; Morson, 1983; Rosenblatt, 2005). This makes reaching what Rogoff (1990), Tudge (1992), and Wertsch (1998) refer to as *intersubjectivity* or an agreed on understanding of common purpose, notwithstanding the diversity that each reader brings to the text based on his/her personal and individualized social, cultural, educational, and historical experiential background. However, intersubjectivity is far more difficult to achieve, if achievement is even possible, if there is substantial diversity amongst participants' respectful experiential histories (Bourdieu, 1993; Marsh, 2006; Smagorinsky, 2001, Zevenbergen, 1996). Hence writing manuscripts and critiquing peers' manuscripts constitute authentic tasks.

Closely related to task authenticity is goal-direction. In the same way writing and critiquing workshop manuscripts are perceived by participants to be authentic tasks, participants also consider these to be self goal-directed tasks (Billett, 2002), since participants' ultimate objective is self-fulfillment in terms of gaining appropriation not just mastery (Wertsch, 1998) of creative writing craft techniques. In other words, if participants' objective is simply to be able to write a story that is technically well crafted, but tepid, unimaginative, and predictable because it follows a formulistic plot with stereotypical characters, what Gardner (1983a) refers to as "workshopy" (p. 88) writing and Bernays (Milstein, 2010) as "a self-consciousness about writing a story" (p. 93),

participants would have mastered the task of writing. On the other hand, by writing an original story with innovative characters and a pertinent thematic message that pulls a reader in and causes him/her to reflect on what he/she has read the writer has demonstrated he/she has gained a greater cognitive presence or learner autonomy as defined by Vygotsky (1978) by appropriating an understanding of creative writing. By analogy, the former manuscript would be akin to the musician who plays Chopin's nocturnes with mechanical correctness because he/she has mastered the notes; the latter accomplishment can be compared to the student who plays with the dynamism of a virtuoso indicating he/she has appropriated the underlying meaning and nuances of the music because he/she understands the soul of the music (Smagorinsky, 2001; Wertsch, 1998).

When therefore asked to respond if their respective workshops met their workshop goals, seven of the eight individuals in the face-to-face mediated workshop that were interviewed indicated they felt it had. For example, Cierra said, "Yes, my goals were met. I expected to be held to deadlines and to receive feedback that I could take or leave. I expected [my instructor's] feedback would be especially constructive and it was." Jane's response was similar, "Yes! I got nearly 200 pages of draft written, which was the most important thing." However, their expectation criteria revealed they had relatively low expectations based on their previous experiences in face-to-face mediated workshops as all participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop that were interviewed indicated they wanted to complete a considerable portion if not an entire draft of a novel. Aside from this several expressed a certain amount of disappointment. For example, Jane indicated she expected little else from the workshop aside from completing a certain

number of pages, “I didn’t have many expectations otherwise.” Roy stated, “Yes, it met my expectations, which were very humble. It forced me to write (a positive), but the sessions seemed too long and not very helpful (a strong negative, but an expected one.)”

All total, five of the eight students interviewed specified that having deadlines and a specific number of pages to complete were sufficient workshop objectives. Andrea was even more explicit indicating that while the workshop met her draft completion expectation, an unmet objective for the workshop *per se* was to receive more craft advice.

The workshop met my expectations for workshops. We had our round robin discussions, the submissions, the required comments and responses from the author. All of that fit the workshop pattern perfectly...[sic] but I had hoped it would do more for my novel. I wish I had learned more craft (we talked about this a little I think). I wanted to understand how to structure a novel, how to organize it and instead I felt like I got pitched in feet first. That may not have anything to do with the workshop set up; it may just be a method of writing that I am not friendly with...The meetings with [my instructor], privately were marvelous, but in class some students’ comments were in direct contradiction with her advice and my original plan. That’s to be expected, I know, but I wish we could have had some kind of cohesive framework or philosophy on writing that we could have had presented at the beginning of the class...I would have liked a craft philosophy or “these are some various ways that you could go about this” sessions.

William too had mixed feelings voicing his concern about his peers’ lack of experience in critiquing anything but short fiction.

I guess the workshop did meet my expectations in some ways and in other ways it did not. I came into the room a little wary, honestly unsure of whether or not workshopping a novel the way we ordinarily talk about short fiction would work, and ultimately found that, for me at least, this was not the best way to work and progress. So in that it did meet my expectations. Sounds very negative, I know—it’s a fine group of talented people, I just don’t think the process was effective for this type of project, and I didn’t really expect it to...I think that we as a group are all oriented towards short fiction in our discussions because that is the type of work we have workshopped before. Because of this, we ended up discussing these novel sections in ways I found to be often sort of unhelpful. As an example: In one of my submissions we met a group of characters at a restaurant and spent a few pages with them, eventually even going home with one for a short scene. A lot of the discussion of this submission revolved around why we met these people, why we spent time with them if they didn’t pop back up by the end of the session.

While this would be a perfectly valid question in short piece, I think in a novel submission the answer is something like ‘They don’t come back because I haven’t gotten to that part yet’ or possibly ‘I don’t know.’ I think that kind of conversation resulted in a lot of revising and reworking of sections over and over when it would have been better to just keep moving forward, exploring and figuring things out on the fly. And that is probably a problem that is implicit in a workshop—people are always going to have a hard time moving forward when a room of respected peers just told them the spot they are currently on is ineffective or needs some work.

In total contrast to his response, Rosie stated:

When the class began, I suppose I expected to write my little submissions, each one tight and in chronological order, to hear about micro concerns, dialogue issues, sentence-level revisions, and then move forward to my next chronological submission. I think I expected that, by the end of it, I’d have a pretty good first draft, in need of much revision, of course, but a complete plot, all written out, from beginning to end, flawed but formulated. Instead, our comments—both given and received—tended towards the macro, and one by one, each of us, I think began to make radical changes in plot, characters, settings, etc. Some of the story they had been at the beginning. In all these ways, the novel workshop surpassed by [sic] expectations. Insofar as the structure of the class and the way it was run, it met all my expectations for a workshop, as it was run like every other creative writing workshop I have experienced.

Of the six participants from the two computer-mediated workshops who responded, three said their workshop surpassed their expectations as they received specific guidance on their particular short fiction manuscripts as well as considerable direct instruction on craft. For example, Graham said, “I would say that the workshop met my expectations, and in some ways, exceeded them.” Christopher concurred, “The workshop surpassed my expectations. Again, I found all the participants to be generous in their comments and support and the instructor to be highly conscientious and extremely supportive of each of us.” Sheila said succinctly, “[I]t surpassed my expectations.” Two specifically praised the instructor for her high level of expectations, her instructional design, and her direct instruction. Four others similarly indicated their appreciation of their peers’ high quality critiques. Only one, Lois, indicated she would have preferred

more craft, although she too had been satisfied with the workshop as a whole stating “I would say broadly yes, it did [meet my expectations] because I didn’t have too many expectations...Being not primarily a fiction writer, I would have liked more thought-provoking discussions on the craft and issues that come up. A few times we did, but not as common as i [sic] would have liked.”

#### Social context: Self-revelation

A second component germane to social context is self-revelation or social relations. As defined in the literature, self-revelation indicates the depth of familiarity participants have towards each other as manifested by the amount or degree of self-revelatory details individuals are willing to share with each other to help develop mutual trust and familiarity and reduce psychological distance (Cutler, 1996) and their use of empathic socio-emotional messages (McMahon, 1977).

According to contemporary social exchange theorists (Cutler, 1996; Molm, 2006) trust and commitment are more likely to result in reciprocal relationships in proportion to higher levels of risk and uncertainty. In other words, the greater participants’ concerns or feelings of uncertainty are that anticipated behaviors will not be reciprocated by other members of a dyad or group, the more likely those individuals will demonstrate the very behavior(s) they want to be reciprocated to demonstrate their own trustworthiness. It follows then that the more group members fear other members do not possess certain desired personal traits, the greater the probability those members will themselves initiate and demonstrate trusting behavior. Moreover, the longer the desired behaviors are consistently demonstrated, the deeper participants are likely to trust each other (Cutler, 1996; Molm, 2006). Educational researchers (Harris, 2001; Rex et al., 2002; Rovai, 2001;



Tu, 2000; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) concur that social presence increases in proportion as the participants share socio-emotional details with fellow community participants. Nor as these same researchers point out, do such socio-emotional communications have to be personal revelations. While frequently such messages disclose personal information (Cutler, 1996), they can be as simple as empathetic messages (McMahon, 1997) as the aim is to establish a sense of community amongst participants. For example, of the students in the face-to-face workshop, only Lewis tended to express a general greeting to the group's other members upon arrival as other members only spoke to immediate friends. Additionally, while Roy occasionally shared outside social information regarding trips to New York to see particular theatrical productions none of the other participants ever volunteered information of a similar social vein. Even the instructor announced a story Rosie had written had been accepted for publication whereas in the computer-mediated workshop students self-announced their upcoming publications as well as both good and bad news about family situations.

Paradoxically, in spite of the overwhelming emphasis participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop placed on the importance of camaraderie in a workshop setting they espoused in interviews, they demonstrated minimal socio-emotional messaging, an indicator of social context during workshop discourses. Some writing instructors attribute this to differences in individual students indicating some are naturally competitive while others are timid to the point of being paranoid (Bell, 1977; Garrett, 1994). Others credit such an absence to the fact that certain creative writing programs support a hierarchal order among faculty and students (Dillard, 1994; Lively, 2010). A third group maintains that students see even empathetic messages in a face-to-face mediated workshop as a

surfeit since participants have previously exchanged such messages before each weekly workshop as well-acquainted friends and colleagues (T. De Haven, communication, December 8, 2011).

Based on information participants provided and on the researcher's observations, there was support for all three alternatives. For example, in an interview one face-to-face mediated workshop participant indicated he was quite competitive. Another individual invariably sat with her shoulders hunched, head bowed, and her eyes downcast. Since she rarely volunteered a comment, she repeatedly had to be called on for her input.

Additionally, the researcher noticed the same participants always fraternized coming to class, waiting in the hallway for access to the meeting room, leaving class, and during break times. Along the same line, the same friends sat next to each other at the conference table for class sessions. Even at the two workshop/dinner meetings the instructor held at her home the last session of each semester, there was minimal mingling as the same groups of two to three close friends sat and chatted together to the virtual exclusion of other participants during the social part of the evening. Specifically, for example, two friends compared social data and video games on their smart phones with each other, essentially oblivious to the others around them during the social part of the evening.

Only once during a workshop when the discussion of the manuscript focused on an adolescent girl's first sexual encounter did several workshop members intimate personal information that indicated the scene being discussed resonated with them due to their personal experiences. Since most of the novel manuscripts written for the face-to-face mediated workshop dealt openly, even at times graphically, with sexual encounters,

the instructor often frankly compared the responses of characters in different manuscripts to similar situations in a popular television series, *Sex in the City*, students were familiar with. In doing so the instructor replicated what Rex and his colleagues (2002) indicated in their study a teacher did with his students as a way to establish reciprocity. This was, however, the first time students in the face-to-face mediated workshop had actually reciprocated with self-revelatory information. According to researchers an absence of reciprocal socio-emotional messaging on the part of participants decreases social presence in spite of an otherwise strong teaching presence.

In interviews several students from the face-to-face mediated workshop provided a possible explanation for the apparent diminished use of socio-emotional messages in the face-to-face mediated workshop. Seven of the eight respondents interviewed indicated they discussed workshop discourses and their manuscripts in particular outside of workshop either through emails or in face-to-face one-on-one conversations with each other and with the instructor. For example, William said, "I think it's pretty common for people to go back and ask each other questions about their comments outside of class, either in person or through E-mail...I have done this and seen this take place many times." And Rosie indicated, "I met with [the instructor] one-on-one after nearly every workshop... and I also always found myself talking further with classmates outside of the workshop setting." Thus based on their comments, while self-revelatory information was undoubtedly shared, it was most likely shared with specific participants privately as opposed with the wider workshop community. Additionally, while none of those interviewed specifically mentioned it, as second- and third-year M.F.A. students with the

exception of Lewis and to a limited degree the two MATX students, other participants knew each other from other classes as previously indicated in Chapter 4.

By contrast, participants in the computer-mediated workshop, not being previously acquainted with each other, apparently felt a greater risk and reacted by seeking to establish a social relationship by sharing a range of personal socio-emotional details frequently of a self-revelatory nature with each other. For example, in response to a story manuscript that dealt with a young woman whose personal and academic history had been less than stellar, Bea, a college registrar, shared the following socio-emotional information with her workshop.

I should admit here that I am the recipient of exactly this kind of letter (I work at a College) and I am left many times to make serious judgments about a person's future, at least as far as school is concerned based solely on the letter I have in front of me...When people do it well it can be even more revealing than Del's letter. I have been shocked by the things students have allowed me to see—transcripts from war crimes testimony (re: please do not think I'm crazy, but when the security guard approached me in uniform I freaked out—please don't make me leave school), record of abortion (re: missed my exam—please change my grade), medical records and address of the battered women's shelter (re: please don't tell anyone about me, please, please, please). I had a student plead to be allowed to delay the start date right before it started as he had witnessed his father kill his mother with a shotgun—he enclosed the police report and the newspaper clipping which named him as a witness...um, yeah, approved. I have had parents ask for a full-refund of tuition fees paid past the deadline as their child had died unexpectedly of a stroke at the age of 22—enclosing a death certificate. This is the kind of thing I see.

Carolyn, another participant in one of the computer-mediated workshops shared a more personal self-revelatory socio-emotional message:

Sometimes I just cry at my desk because I am too busy and overwhelmed to go anywhere. At my last job (with the deserted office as the "crying room") I once burst into tears at my desk and everyone just left me alone because . . . well, what could they do? We were all in our own pain. So, I'm sitting there sobbing and people are talking on the phone, walking around, eating their lunches. So weird. Overall, the cubicle culture is brutal. You hear people's brutal conversations - their fights with their kids and their husbands and wives - their highly personal

conversations (like with their doctors) and you have to pretend like you don't know what's going on. It's surreal.

The instructor who frequently stepped into the conversation with personal anecdotal information responded with the simple yet straightforward statement that demonstrated Rex and his colleagues' (2002) contention regarding how an instructor's personal stories create and maintain a sense of community in the classroom by writing in response to the above student's past predicament: "OMG, I find it so tragic and fascinating that there is a designated place, like an eye wash station, for crying at work."

Perhaps the most telling socio-emotional example shared by participants in one of the computer-mediated workshops was the humorous exchange between students and the instructor written as part of a craft discussion entitled "Breaking the Rules" which entailed students' response to an experimental story about a woman's irrational fear of sharks.

**Carolyn:** Good question... guess I like the IDEA of it [the story] and find the subject matter kinda kooky and the first part of the story works. It's just so ridiculous as so many of our fears are. For example . . . gonna get personal here, but I am afraid of apples. My friends think this is the craziest thing ever and they get a lot of laughs at my expense. I realize it's nuts, but just the sound of someone biting into a raw apple makes me have to leave the room. So, I get it. My issue with the story is it goes on too long so it has me, it has me, [sic] then it loses me. It goes from quirky and fun to tedious.

**Bea:** Really?? Apple biting? That is awesomely obscure - I hate balloons but that is pretty common I think - I can't stand to be around them and their potential for popping. I hate the crashy sound of dishes being put away, and I especially can't stand the sound effect or visual of someone slipping in movies (the squeaky sound of a person on the verge of falling off of glass) makes my hands sweat instantly. Also clowns make me feel violent. And ducks in bonnets as a decorative motif makes me crazy - I actually get angry and behave badly if confronted with them. I feel I have said too much.....eek:

To which the instructor and Bea had the following exchange:

**Instructor:** OMG, how did I miss this part of the conversation? I laughed out loud about the ducks in bonnets. My husband came in to ask what was so funny. I told him there was no way I could explain.

**Bea:** I know, right? Ducks in bonnets are EVIL!! Usually accompanied by white wicker baskets with dried flowers, wallpaper borders (featuring the repeated image of a watering can and a wide brimmed hat) and a bowl of potpourri. There is also a high likelihood of encountering angels on plinths and crystal mice in these environments. AVOID. AVOID

Again, such exchanges of personal socio-emotional information between students and between students and the instructor demonstrated a strong sense of connectivity amongst participants in spite of the physical distances separating members and that they had not met face-to-face. This supports researchers' contention that not only is social presence a critical aspect of a successful social constructivist educational teaching and learning community, but that it can also be established in a computer-mediated distance classroom setting, in this case a creative writing workshop (Cutler, 1996; Garrison et al., 2001; Gunawardena, 1995; Rice & Love, 1987; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Roberston et al., 2005; Shea et al., 2003; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Walther, 1992) as effectively as in a face-to-face mediated workshop (Bell, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Holtman & Lent, 1995).

#### Online communication

The second component under social presence is online communication. As indicated in Figures 2-3 and 5-7, it has two subordinate components: privacy and electronic literacy. While electronic literacy primarily concerns operational knowledge of a computer, both subordinate components affectively impact participants. Consequently they too contribute to whether or not a social constructivist teaching and learning community establishes and maintains viable social presence.

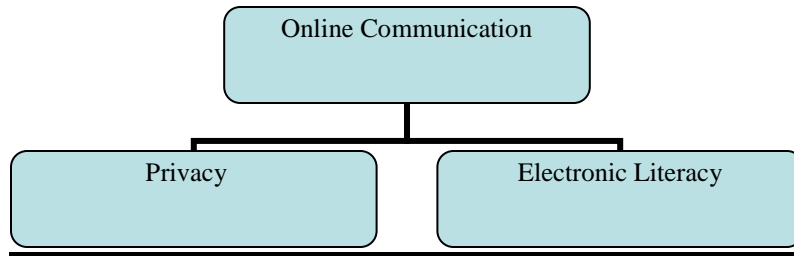


Figure 5-7: Subcomponent online communication with two subordinate components

### Online communication: Privacy

The first subordinate component of online communication is privacy which deals with environmental uncertainty. According to Tu (2000) the more visual a computer-mediated communication is, for example one that employs videoconferencing, the more participants may be inclined to feel a decreased sense of social presence.

Short et al. (1976) support Tu's finding. According to Short and his colleagues, using field studies with close-circuit television conferencing, even when dramaturgical indicators such as hierarchal seating arrangements and conspicuous clothing choices were presented that indicated a person's higher SES, in addition to nonverbal behaviors like staring or averted eyes, and paralanguage cues like a booming baritone, because participants were not in each other's immediate presence whereby they could reciprocate and/or react directly they felt further removed and therefore the degree of psychological distance increased. Conversely, other researchers' field studies (Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Rovai, 2001; Walther, 1992, 1995) found that without visual and audio cues participants were more likely to overcompensate for their lack and increase the amount of personal information they revealed to other participants as well as the duration and length of their reciprocal replies (immediacy and reciprocity) thereby decreasing psychological distance.

On the other hand Keisler et al. (1984) determined that when dramaturgical cues, nonverbal behaviors, and paralinguistic cues negatively influenced the social hierarchy of a group by giving ascendancy to those with more assertive and/or charismatic traits exemplified by nonverbal behaviors like assertive body language, staring, aggressive and/or assertive voice tones, and assumption by certain members to take preferential seats that less assertive participants were diffident. The latter spoke less and shared less information. Such reactions decreased the group's social presence due to a greater sense of increased psychological distance in spite of the fact that face-to-face mediated communication is considered to be a richer media format due to its greater number of available social cues (Keisler et al., 1984; Short et al., 1976; Walther, 1992).

As the computer-mediated workshop observed for this case study was asynchronous and therefore did not provide participants with either visual or auditory access it cannot be determined how participants in these computer-mediated workshops would have reacted to visual and auditory stimuli. Consequently, it will not be discussed.

Of note, however, based on comments made in interviews and in their class discussions with each other, participants in the computer-mediated workshops clearly indicated they did not feel at any time a reduced sense of overall social presence due to participating via asynchronous computer-mediated communication without visuals, but actually felt more at ease without them. In interviews, only Graham responded that he regretted not having any visual contact. Even then he indicated his sole concern was that without any visual contact with other participants he could not tell when a comment he had made was understood or not. He went on to indicate that he was therefore concerned his explanatory critiques were too verbose.



As a side effect of disagreeing online, I tend to write a lot in order to explain myself. I hope this doesn't come across as bullying, but it is in disagreement that I really miss those non-verbal cues to know whether or not I have been misunderstood, or if someone understands and just has an opposing opinion. I guess this is where I miss non-verbal cues the most—in knowing whether or not what I have said has been understood as I've intended it.

The preponderance of comments made by interviewees in the computer-mediated workshops was in accord with what researchers have found regarding non-creative writing computer-mediated teaching and learning communities (Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Robertson, Grant, & Jackson, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Walther, 1992) wherein participants indicated they felt more secure commenting due to the absence of visuals. According to researchers, this helped them as participants to establish and maintain trust and respect for one another. For example, Graham stated, "I don't actually think there's much difference in what you can experience online or face-to-face. A good online workshop needs to be well set-up in terms of making participants mindful of the fact they don't have non-verbal cues to communicate...You have to be a little more intentional about it online to compensate for not having non-verbal cues...[T]he expectation is that you will be honest and respectful." Lois was even more direct, "I don't miss these non-verbals as much as I thought I would. If anything, it creates a more even playing field." Sophie's comment concurred with the above researchers, "I tend to be more diplomatic but also more honest in online workshops. I spend some time considering how to say something and I try to veer away from jokes/sarcasm which I use a lot in f2f [sic]. When I venture into this, I use emoticons. It's easier to be more honest though—you don't have to see someone turning red or how they are interpreting your comments."

On the other hand, although none of the participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop had actually participated in an asynchronous computer-mediated workshop, six of the eight participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop that were interviewed indicated in their interviews they anticipated they would experience a substantial lack of social presence in computer-mediated workshops without visual context. For example, Andrea commented, “Emails can sound abrupt because you don’t know why something was said. Face-to-face you have a chance to clarify; you can ask if don’t understand. You can open up new avenues. Face-to-face you care as a person; it’s not one more thing in your inbox to take care of. Hazy text messages are real, but not as real as being in the same room.” Jane expressed similar thoughts, “Face-to-face is spontaneous. I need to talk through to learn. I need to interact by working with people rather than reading messages on a screen.” Rosie echoed their sentiments, “You don’t get many people interacting online. There’s no amending.”

Their concerns concur with researchers’ findings (Duncan, 2005; Grenier-Winther, 1999; Stodel et al., 2006) who found spatial distance caused participants to feel a lack of social presence and teaching presence. Only Roy from the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated he felt he would have preferred taking computer-mediated workshops stating: “I find the nonverbal communication effects of workshop difficult. I can tell when people are talking to talk not to communicate due to a lack of enthusiasm in their voices. I would not miss nonverbals if I received feedback in written form. I can tell from written words whether the writer is enthusiastic and honest or being pretentious.”

### Online communication: Electronic literacy

A major issue cited by researchers in computer-mediated education and communications (Hawisher & Selfe, 1991; Selfe, 1999; Tu, 2000) that can substantially hinder community building is whether participants in computer-mediated communities are electronically literate. As indicated in Chapter 2, the concept of electronic literacy involves a user's basic knowledge and capability to functionally use electronics. While not as obvious an issue for participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop as it was for participants in the computer-mediated workshops, the issue can and does affect face-to-face mediated participants too. For example, Blackboard, the virtual learning forum face-to-face mediated workshop participants used to communicate by email, was also frequently used by the instructor to post announcements and important administrative issues about the class. Moreover, participants from the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated in interviews they frequently communicated with each other regarding their manuscripts and workshop experiences via email. Therefore, even though electronic literacy was not as germane for them as it was for participants in the computer-mediated workshops, in light of its frequent use for face-to-face mediated workshop related issues it was clear participants in face-to-face mediated workshops need to be as electronically literate as their counterparts in computer-mediated workshops.

With this in mind, of those interviewed, only Cierra in the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated she had any qualms about her electronic literacy when she said she did not feel she was particularly computer savvy. She did, however, state she was comfortable using email. Moreover, during class she never indicated she had any

problems with her computer skills regarding accessing Blackboard, sending communications via Blackboard, email, etc.

Clearly, electronic literacy could have potentially constituted a paramount concern for participants in the computer-mediated workshops, including for the instructor, as the entire workshop was conducted online. Only Sheila, however, stated she had concerns with her electronic literacy, which as she indicated in her statement below never materialized.

This was my first on-line course, so I didn't really know what to expect. I hoped that I would manage to figure out how to work all of the programs and that I wouldn't come across as too much of a luddite, technologically speaking. In that, I surpassed my rather modest expectations :D [sic]

Given the widespread use of electronics today including the fact that more and more of today's post-secondary students have been born into the technological age and the fact that an increasing number of public K-12 schools utilize some kind of computerized equipment in the classroom, the issue of electronic literacy appears to be diminishing in importance. At the same time, as researchers have pointed out electronic literacy cannot be totally overlooked, ignored, or taken for granted that all users are equally electronic literate (Cutler, 1996; Neuman & Celano, 2006).

### Interactivity

The third and final subcomponent for social presence is interactivity (Gunawardena, 1995; Rafaeli, 1988; Rovia, 2001, Tu, 2000, Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Walther, 1992, 1995). As depicted in Figures 2-3 and 5-8 like the other subcomponents, interactivity has multiple subordinate components. These are communication styles, paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, and nonverbal behaviors; immediacy; reciprocity; and organization and program cultures.

Interactivity is germane to social presence as it relates directly to participants' willingness to engage in dynamic dialogic exchanges exemplified by the nature, quality, quantity, and purpose of participants' communications. When characterized by a conflation of positive communication styles, decreased psychological distance due to increased socio-emotional messages, and especially when potentially negative visual and audio nonverbal, paralinguistic, and dramaturgical cues are absent, participants are more likely to come to consensus or intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990; Tudge, 1992; Wertsch, 1998) according to numerous field studies (Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1998; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Walther, 1992). Conversely, when participants' dialogic exchanges are characterized by negative communication styles and dominant nonverbal cues, the community experiences an imbalance that precludes a sense of social presence created by a lack of mutual trust and respect amongst participants which in turn tends to prevent the group from agreeing on issues (Barry & Crant, 2000; Keisler et al., 1984; Short et al., 1976). Since interactivity affects all participants' socio-emotional feelings and attitudes concerning teaching and learning communities a brief explanation of what each subordinate component entails is given followed by how workshop participants individually and collectively demonstrated and/or were affected by each subordinate component.

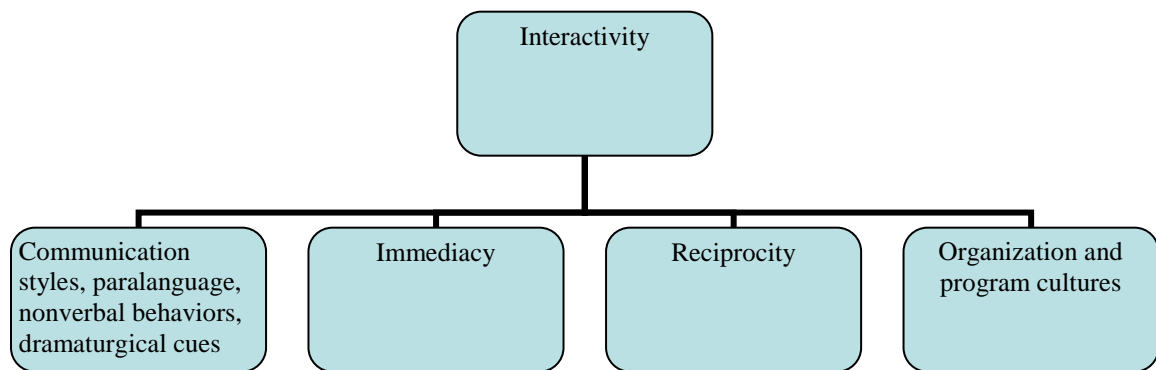


Figure 5-8: Interactivity and four subordinate components

### Interactivity: Communication styles

Communication styles, in concert with paralanguage, nonverbal behaviors and dramaturgical cues, contribute substantially to increased social presence (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Heise, 1989; Norton, 1986; MacKinnon; 1994; Rovai, 2001; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Norton (1986) has identified and defined eleven communication styles.

Briefly they are:

1. *Impression-leaving*: I leave a definite impression on people.
2. *Contentious*: I am very argumentative.
3. *Open*: I openly express my feelings and emotions...readily revealing things about myself.
4. *Dramatic*: Regularly I tell jokes, anecdotes, and stories...I frequently use verbal exaggeration.
5. *Dominant*: I tend to come on strong...I try to take charge of things...I am dominant in social situations.
6. *Precise*: I insist people document or present some kind of proof...I like to be strictly accurate...In arguments I insist upon very precise definitions.
7. *Relaxed*: The rhythm or flow of my speech is not affected by nervousness.
8. *Friendly*: I readily express admiration for others...I tend to be encouraging to others.
9. *Attentive*: I really like to listen very carefully to people.
10. *Animated*: I tend to constantly gesture...[and] use a lot of facial expressions when I communicate.
11. *Communicative image*: I always find it very easy to communicate with strangers...and to maintain a conversation with a member of the opposite sex whom I have just met (pp. 38-39).

Less formal and more relaxed communication styles like impression-leaving, open, dramatic, relaxed, attentive, animated and/or friendly, whether spoken or written, researchers determined increase social presence (Billett, 2002; Norton, 1986; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). By contrast, the more negative dominant, contentious, and precise communication styles have been found to be antithetical to increased social presence and therefore detrimental to a quality teaching and learning community as negative communication styles do not invite positive reciprocity or socio-emotional messaging

amongst community participants. When positive communication styles are used to convey socio-emotional, as opposed to strictly task-oriented communications, the likelihood of a collegial interactive community environment being created increases and with it an increased likelihood that learners will achieve their desired goal of learner autonomy also occurs because learners positively reciprocate freely and constructively.

Interactivity: Nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues

Similar to communication styles, nonverbal behaviors that include a person's body language and facial expressions, paralanguage that includes voice intonations and pitch, and various dramaturgical cues like choice of clothing and seating at a communal table all convey affective messages to community participants (Harrigan et al., 2005). Since such nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues can be positive or negative, the socio-emotional meaning of a person's spoken communication is frequently clarified by his/her nonverbal, paralanguage, and dramaturgical behaviors. On the other hand, written words alone can be open to misinterpretation when unaccompanied by facial expressions, vocal intonations, and pitch.

Interactivity: Immediacy

Immediacy, which relates to a sense of proximity which enables participants to feel "access to [the] intelligence, intentions, and sensory impressions of another" (Biocca, 1997, p. 17) whereby participants' perceptions of psychological distance are increased or decreased are generally interpreted as referring to the frequency and duration of discrete communications between participants (Rice & Love, 1987; Tu, 2000). Immediacy was determined to be salient for both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops. According to researchers (Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) increased social

presence is in proportion to increased duration and frequency of communication. In other words, social presence is stronger when dialogic exchanges are frequent and longer in duration than when they are intermittent and individual comments are laconic. The other feature of immediacy, time delays between communications, or the time it takes a respondent to reply, was only mentioned by Graham in one of the computer-mediated workshops as a problem due primarily to differences in international time zones as he was located in Thailand, while other participants in his group were either in various provinces in Canada or in Dubai. However, since he mentioned it only as an inconvenience, not as a major concern, and none of the other participants in either of the computer-mediated workshops, including those residing in the Canada's middle or eastern provinces, in Dubai, or in Africa, voiced a similar concern, discussion of immediacy will be confined to the frequency and duration of comments participants in all three workshops made as an indicator of social presence.

#### Interactivity: Reciprocity

Aligned with Bakhtin's (1986; Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983), Bourdieu's (1993; Hanks, 2005) and Rosenblatt's (2005) contention that individuals interpret spoken and written language on the basis of their social, cultural, historical and educational experiences and background, attribution theorists (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Heise, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; Rice & Love, 1987; Smith-Lovin & Robertson, 2006) similarly propose per affect control theory (Barry & Crant, 2000; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993) that individuals predicate their expectations regarding other people's behaviors and acts based on their personal cultural, historical, social, and educational experiences. Moreover, when such



expectations are not fulfilled individuals cognitively and affectively change their perceptions as well as their own verbal and written reactions based on whether they perceive the individual responsible for the deviant behavior to have acted out of order due to an external or transient reason such as temporary illness, bereavement, etc., or as the result of an internal, permanent change in the person's outlook, philosophy, etc. Manifestations of these behaviors were evident in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops.

#### Interactivity: Organization and program cultures

As discussed earlier, Bourdieu (1993) identified structured disciplines with tiered social positions wherein individuals as agents are juxtaposed based on their varying accrual of *social, cultural, and/or economical capital* as a *field* (Hanks, 2005; Zembylas, 2007). Moreover, according to Bourdieu, every *field* projects specific characteristics particular to itself that are reflected by its agents or constituents. For example, to be an agent in the *field* of law one must be in the trajectory of attending or having had successfully graduated from an accredited law school with a certified degree and/or studying for/or have passed the bar in order to practice law. Consequently the law student is below the law professor. Similarly, a judge is above an associate lawyer in a law firm.

The same principle applies to creative writing programs. An agent's trajectory within the creative writing discipline demonstrates an agent's ranking as an administrator, an instructor who is allowed to teach creative writing by virtue of having published two or more novel-length manuscripts, and/or a student who is studying to write successfully by learning writing craft techniques by participating in creative writing workshops.

According to Bourdieu (1993) and contemporary sociologists and educators (“Advice from the Programs,” 2011; Barry & Crant, 2000; Bell, 1994; Billett, 2002; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a; Gordon, 2004; Hargreaves, 1992; Keegan, 2006, Milstein, 2010; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983) any organization, corporate or educational, demonstrates a distinctive disposition or culture that in turn its members or employees typically, but not categorically, reflect and portray as they are assimilated into their organization’s culture and interact with other members at different points along their trajectory. It is this process of assimilation and interaction that Bourdieu contends shapes each individual’s *habitus* as an aspect of his/her cultural, social, educational, and historical ontogeny.

M.F.A. administrators (Abramson, 2009; “Advice from the Programs,” 2011); creative writing teachers (“Advice from the Programs,” 2011; Bell, 1994; Bly, 2001; Gardner, 1983a; Garrett, 1994; Milstein, 2010; Sarrimo, 2010; Shelnut, 1989a), writers (Keegan, 2006; Shevani, 2010) and M.F.A. students (Andrews, 2009; Keegan, 2006; Turkle et al., 1994) verify that creative writing programs embody very distinct cultures reflected by the writing genres they emphasize, the caliber and interest of the authors they hire as writing teachers, the competitive and task-oriented versus supportive and socio-emotional nature of their workshops, and their programs’ internal student communities. Like other interactivity subordinate components the influence of program culture was apparent in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops as reflected in an overview of EMU’s and NSU’s creative writing programs’ organizational designs and in interviews with participants regarding their satisfaction with their respective workshop experiences.

### EMU's and NSU's Programs

As depicted in Table 4-1 EMU's creative writing program is relatively new, dating from 1983. Operating under the auspices of the English Department, it is a three-year, bifurcated studio-research program. According to the former program director combining writing workshops with literary studies prepares students to be writers as well as teachers. Course work is divided between workshops and literature courses.

Specifically students must take a minimum of twelve workshop related credit hours with the option to take more. Similarly they are required to take a minimum of twelve literature related credit hours, again with the option to fulfill their thirty-hour credit requirement with additional literature courses. The final eighteen hours of their total forty-eight required credit hours can be fulfilled with electives of their choosing. While advanced workshops are available intermittently in screenwriting and novel writing, workshop courses primarily focus on short fiction and poetry.

The former program director indicated the typical M.F.A. student at EMU is in his/her late twenties to early thirties. Additionally, because the program has a grant program, a number of M.F.A. students work as graduate teaching assistants. Most of the participants in the observed workshop were in fact teaching assistants and therefore not employed professionally. Finally, based on appearances they appeared to be within the designated age range.

NSU's comprehensive creative writing program is one of Canada's premier programs dating back to 1946. The optional-residency program began in 2005. The entire program has been autonomous since 2008; prior to that it was under the auspices of the university's English Department (Table 4-1).

A two-year straight studio (workshop) program, NSU's M.F.A. students are required to take thirty-six workshop credit hours. They are also required to take workshops in three discrete genres, but may choose from fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, playwriting, screenwriting, children's literature, and/or young adult literature.

According to the optional-residency's program coordinator, the typical NSU M.F.A. student is an individual in his/her forties who works full time. While none of the participants in the two computer-mediated workshops the researcher observed provided their ages, most indicated either in their initial class introductions or in workshop comments that they worked full-time. Three were teachers, one a civil servant, another a college registrar, one a newspaper editor, and another was a manager employed by a large Canadian telecommunications company.

A comparison of the two programs indicates considerable differences in the institutions' respective cultures as reflected in their independent versus dependent status; the one university's combined literary scholarship and creative writing workshops program design versus the other's strictly writing workshop focus; the one university's broad range of genre course requirements and offerings compared to the other's more narrow range of genre course requirements and offerings; and the differences in the one university's younger students who do not work versus the other university's typical older, employed student.

Such variances are typical of academe; notwithstanding given the almost exclusive dialogic nature of creative writing workshops that is heavily influenced by participants' social, cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds, these differences are particularly salient (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Rosenblatt, 2005;

Smagorinsky, 2001; Wertsch, 1998) as demonstrated by the three workshops observed for this case study.

### Workshop participants

Again, though no specific demographic information was requested, like their respective universities, participants in all three workshops had unique social, cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds as indicated by comments participants made during workshops and in interviews. For example, true to profile, most EMU student participants were in the profile age range. The same appeared true of NSU participants. There were exceptions in both cases. Participants in both computer-mediated workshops were in their second year; matriculating students in the face-to-face mediated workshop were either second- or third-year M.F.A. students.

A strong indicator of each university's culture was evident in comments made by face-to-face workshop participants' responses. With EMU's emphasis on short story workshops this was the first time any participant had taken a novel workshop. Their responses reflected how their previous workshop experiences left them unprepared for the demands of novel writing. According to William, "I came into the room a little wary, honestly, unsure of whether workshopping a novel the way we usually talk about short fiction would work." Roy phrased his comment as a ground rule, "Ground rule: If a writer has submitted something as a novel chapter, or a short story, or a poem, the group must accept that is a chapter, story, or poem. There should be no comments such as 'is this really a novel? should it be a screen play?' etc, as in my experience such comments are not helpful."

Rosie's remark also indicated a lack of familiarity with novel writing:

When the class began, I suppose I expected to write my little submissions, each one tight and in chronological order, to hear about micro concerns, dialogue issues, sentence-level revisions, and then move forward to my next chronological submission. I think I expected that, by the end of it, I'd have a pretty good first draft. In need of much revision, of course but a complete plot, all written out from beginning to end, flawed but formulated. Instead our comments—both given and received—tended towards the macro, and one by one, each of us, I think, began to make radical changes in plot, characters, settings, etc.

Since their M.F.A. educational experiences were shaped by their university's overriding culture, the students' comments indicated they were poised for a different experience than they experienced which could potentially explain the dissatisfaction William especially felt from the outset. Finally, as discussed more fully below, their individual social, cultural, historical, and educational differences further affected all participants' ability to interact collegially with other members. This in turn led to considerable contention and discord and an inability from William's perspective in particular to resolve conflicts concerning differences in their transactional reading and writing interpretations regarding manuscript submissions and critiques. It was also evident by some participants' admission that they neither listened to nor adhered to their peers' recommendations. Roy, for example, said,

In my experience the biggest help workshop provides is the deadlines. The actual meeting of the workshop is tedious and painful...When the novel is finished I will give it to 2-3 long term non-MFA friends, and ask for their opinions. These are people who know me well, and understand what I hope to accomplish with the book.

Jane's response was similar, "I think the overall premise in any graduate workshops I had a [sic] EMU is that everyone has something valid in what they contribute (though of course privately or personally, this doesn't always seem true)."

By contrast, all participants in the computer-mediated workshops, who were also second-year students, were familiar with a range of creative writing genres per their

program's requirement that they take at least three different genres. Paradoxically, this may have led to some of the contention that came up periodically, especially between Charles and his peers. For example, during a discussion of one of Charles's stories the following comments were made.

**Sheila:** So, are you maybe considering a graphic novel approach, then?

**Charles:** Why does it have to be graphic? I honestly don't understand the "very cinematic" criticism, like it's a bad thing? Stories are supposed to be cinematic, they have to thrive in the theatre of the mind.

**Mia:** We're here to help and offer suggestions for improvement.

**Charles:** I know, but I am also seeing a lot of channeling of Randy Jackson ("It's a bit pitchy, dawg. Not my thang") [sic] The challenge I pose is "what would you, the workshop members, do?" In poetry, when you line edit a poem, you get into the nitty gritty. You suggest word changes, deletions, line length adjustments, image alterations. I think that would be also a wonderful way to dig into short story critiquing. Hey guys, thanks for a lovely debate so far. Please post your ripostes and lambastes.

While creative writing teachers (Bell, 1994; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994) expect students to disagree with each others' works and critiques, according to Garrett (1994, p. 109), they indicate only in "rigid systems" do comments become "nasty"

I hope everyone is supportive of the goals of a writer even if you disapprove of them. And it's always possible to have one person—it's like group therapy in that way—who is extremely opinionated and negative and causes a lot of people grief (pp. 109-110.)

Dillard's take was essentially the same:

We have flare-ups and quarrels. But they really bond and get so good at reading each other's work that by the end I almost don't have to say anything...My theory is that most of what you learn as a student comes from talking about other people's work. You can get such a mixed collection of comments on your own work it's sometimes hard to sort it through (pp. 78-79).

Communication styles, nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, immediacy, and reciprocity in the face-to-face mediated workshop

Six of the eight participants who were participating in face-to-face mediated workshop who were interviewed indicated they valued face-to-face workshops because

they preferred the human interaction a face-to-face mediated workshop afforded them.

The majority of these interviewees' comments, however, indicated they wanted workshops to be task-oriented and therefore more specifically geared for instrumental not socio-emotional communications. For example, Roy suggested:

- No submissions over 20 pages long
- Each discussion of each submission should be timed. Could not go over 30 minutes of discussion per submission. 20 minutes minimum for discussion, and 30 minutes max. Also: no more than three student pieces would be discussed per week.
- The writer would turn in 3-5 questions he/she has about his own work with his/her submission, and these writer-submitted questions would provide the focus for the discussion;

While not as specific, comments made by Lynn and Cierra respectively were similar.

For example, Lynn indicated,

I think getting the chance to participate in setting a goal/objective for the class is good practice for any workshop, but especially the novel workshop because there's just so much to be done...I wish we would have been required/asked to set a goal for the semester (whether that was page count or not) as well as being made aware of how many times we'd be able to submit. I would have been able to do the math ahead of time, knowing I wanted to get through 300 pages, I would need to hand in X number of pages each time.

Cierra too was interested in a strictly a task-oriented workshop, "Classes should focus on the work and not on "community building (aka frivolous talk!)."

According to researchers (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Keisler et al., 1984; Rovai, 2001; Tu, 2000) task-oriented communities tend to exemplify decreased social presence which in turn reduces dialogue and reciprocity of information and therefore an overall decreased feeling of social presence amongst community participants (Billett, 2002). Evidence of low social presence, due to a lack of reciprocity amongst participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop, was born out by two measures. First, when questioned about group interaction all of the interviewees commented they anticipated



dialogic exchanges with their peers and instructor to be entirely task-oriented, not socio-emotional in nature. As stated earlier, for example, Lynn said, “in a face-to-face workshop you get you get twelve brains working collectively together about a story instead of twelve individualized brains working separately.” And Lewis commented, “I want to be critiqued in the way I will get it.” Rosie, in a separate interview closely echoed Lynn’s comment, “You hear from twenty voices at once hacking it out, deciding on a solution.”

Secondly, overall there was a general consistent lack of socio-emotional comments made in the face-to-face mediated workshop. As noted earlier, while the instructor frequently referenced family members, friends, former students, even her own experiences in addition to popular television shows, movies, celebrities, and contemporary novels in a socio-emotional context as they related to creative writing (Rex et al., 2002), students rarely reciprocated; instead they steadfastly restricted their comments to remarks about the manuscript being discussed. Even when praising an author’s depiction of character, development of a narrative arc, and/or description of a scene, participants’ verbal messages, paralanguage, and nonverbals, in spite of relaxed communication styles, were invariably task-oriented not socio-emotional with the notable exception mentioned earlier regarding a manuscript discussion about an adolescent girl’s first sexual encounter. As previously indicated, in this incidence several female participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated they empathized with the main character’s disappointment and despair. By contrast, four other participants, Bruce, Lewis, and Roy, whose ages ranged from their late twenties to early fifties, and Jane, who appeared to be in her early thirties, all of whom were seated on the opposite side of the

table from Rosie, the author, Andrea, Cierra, and Lynn who had indicated their agreement, expressed their disapproval of the discussion in strict nonverbal terms by crossing their arms across their chests and leaning as far back from the conference table as possible in their swivel-back chairs.

Social presence expressed as interactivity in the face-to-face mediated workshop

In accord with researchers' findings (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Cutler, 1996; Rovai, 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) that low social presence expressed as decreased interactivity predicates low trust and respect among community members, five of the seven participants interviewed from the face-to-face mediated workshop expressed a general lack of trust and respect (Rovai, 2001) for members of the workshop. For example, Cierra, Andrea, and Roy said respectively:

**Cierra:** I think our group paid too much attention to protecting one another's feelings. Not that critiques need to be unkind—I don't delight in telling someone where their work falters—but I think we ignored some problem writing so to not bruise people.

**Andrea:** I knew four [out of ten] or so people in class who had my best interests and my personal/professional development as a writer at heart and I listened to them. This isn't to say that I just payed [sic] attention to the positive. These people offered constructive critiques, pointing out flaws and offering three or four solutions. Others, whose comments I routinely threw out without reading, would offer the same critique but in a way that made me doubt my abilities and my choice to be in the class—or even to be a writer. So I just found those who wanted me to be better and held onto their comments and revised from their helpful suggestions.

**Roy:** To be honest, I give little or no emphasis to the comments from my peers, mainly b/c [sic] there are too many of these comments, and b/c [sic] they are so often contradictory.

A second reason for this particular face-to-face mediated workshop's lack of social presence in terms of interactivity appeared to be caused in part by William's competitive nature that he displayed through his nonverbal behaviors and paralanguage.

It should also be noted that when interviewed William conceded that he was competitive saying, “I want to be the best. It inspires me. I want a group around, but the group must do it my way. The anonymity of online would not allow competition, which would be negative for me.” When the researcher asked the instructor about this, she indicated that several participants, whose confidentiality she respected by not providing their names, had shared with her that they too had found William’s behaviors disconcerting and detrimental to the workshop’s objective to help all participants become autonomous writers. As a result she indicated that these individuals had indicated they purposely chose not to comment during workshop meetings because of his negative and argumentative attitude.

Another contributing factor to the face-to-face mediated workshop’s reduced social presence in terms of the interactivity component reverts back to individual members’ entire ontogenetic histories (Billett, 2002; Tu, 2000) which affect how participants interpret what they read and write (Bakhtin, 1986; Holquist, 1983, Morson, 1983; Rosenblatt, 2005). Accordingly, although all participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop were engaged in writing novels, their genre choices varied widely. For example, Lynn and Cierra had chosen to write stories that focused on dysfunctional family relationships. Rosie, Sandra, Lewis, Roy, and Andrea were writing young adult novels. Mark was writing an autobiographical memoir; William’s novel was an allegory. Consequently, while the instructor was well versed in each of these genres, not all participants were which further decreased the group’s ability to concur on how different manuscripts could be improved (Rogoff, 1990; Tudge, 1992; Wertsch, 1998). Moreover, if a participant’s transactional writing experience varied considerably from that of his/her

peers' and/or from the instructor's transactional reading of his/her manuscript, the ability of the community to transform the author's zone of development from the proximal to one of accomplishment (Vygotsky, 1978) was similarly diminished. As Roy voiced it, the result was a lot of repetition or worse members "talking just to talk." Or as Andrea indicated, "[T]here was one student whose work received overwhelmingly similar critiques and yet he still argued that we were all wrong at the end of the session."

Social presence expressed as organization and program culture in the face-to-face mediated workshops

A related aspect of any individual's educational ontogeny is shaped by the prevailing pedagogical philosophy or culture relevant to his/her chosen college or university in general and department of study or program in particular (Barry & Crant, 2000; Gordon, 2004; Zevenbergen, 1996). As different researchers ("Advice from the Programs," 2011; Bell, 1994; Dillard, 1994; Gordon, 2004; Lish, 1994; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Zevenbergen, 1996) point out, communities, like schools, including university departments and specialized departmental programs like an M.F.A. program, over time tend to tenure writers with similar preferred styles which may or may not be beneficial to students depending on students' particular preferred writing genre and writing style. This is what Gardner (1983a) refers to when he wrote of possible sources of conflict that can hinder intersubjectivity between a creative writing student and his/her creative writing teacher no matter how well-intentioned or competent they both may be. Moreover, as Gardner (1983a), Garrett (1994), and Delbanco (1994) point out, it is a situation that can occur in any workshop at any university, which is why they exhort students to choose their creative writing program carefully to ensure their instructors are likely to be in tune with the student as a novice writer. Otherwise, as they point out the

result can be disastrous for both the teacher and the student, a point Gardner in particular points out in his seminal work, *On Becoming a Novelist*.

[W]hat makes a good workshop for one writer may be disaster for another. I myself am not very interested in so-called experimental writing...When I have in one of my writing classes a student who has no interest in the more or less traditional kind of fiction I favor, I know that both the student and I are in trouble. As much as I want to help him, I am the wrong kind of doctor (p. 78).

Current creative writing program administrators and teachers recently interviewed by *Poets & Writers* (Abramson, 2009; “Advice from the Programs,” 2011) completely concur with his assessment. They too exhort M.F.A. applicants to examine a program, to interview faculty, past as well as present students to ensure a creative writing program meets their needs, as opposed to just applying to an M.F.A. program for its name value. Advice given by Corless-Smith (2011), director of Boise State University’s creative writing program, is representative of what many creative program administrators and instructors tell prospective students:

Prospective students tend to sweat too much over the status of the program, but the important thing is to find a place where you can write and learn how to live as a writer. This is a time to dedicate yourself to the art, so you need to think about what will allow you to do that, and what will get in the way. Some writers thrive on competition and big communities; other need peace and quiet. Not every program suits every writer. Pay attention to how faculty and students strike you. This is a relationship, not a buffet (p. 86).

One final reason participants in the face-to-face workshop who were interviewed cited as their reasons for decreased participation in the face-to-face mediated workshop was its size. Accordingly, even though face-to-face mediated workshops typically have from ten to twelve members, some participants were concerned that eleven contributing members were too many. Lewis was one such participant indicating, “[I] did want to be in a smaller group—say about five people to get more personal tutelage.” Roy was

chagrined that two non-M.F.A. students were enrolled: “Workshops opened to non MFA students should be offered separately. This to keep the graduate workshops smaller in number, and to help build a sense of community among MFA students.”

As a result of this decreased participation, participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop appeared to experience an absence of social presence that was further reflected in the deficiency of socio-emotional messaging and some students’ disinclination to volunteer comments in class, having to be called on repeatedly for their input.

While in no way representative of all face-to-face mediated workshops, the above situations do represent potential workshop dynamics as delineated by creative writing teachers and critics alike (Bell, 1994, 1997; Bly, 2001; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Gioia, 1986; Shelnutt 1989a) which specifically explains what EMU’s former director, who is also a creative writing instructor, meant when he said, “Some workshops just never gel,” indicating that some workshops just never unite affectively or intellectually as a teaching and learning community no matter what he as the instructor did to facilitate a sense of social presence. His observation is in accord with Tu’s (2000) and Rovai’s (2001) findings that a community’s perception of social presence based on trust and respect determines whether community members view their relationship as strictly task-oriented, strictly socio-emotional, or a blending of both. As previously stated, participants’ perception of purpose can substantially facilitate or reduce social presence as it dictates participants’ overriding attitudes. This perception therefore tends to determine whether as individual participants they maximize or minimize their

participation in a workshop, which in turn affects their progress in becoming autonomous writers.

Researchers (Anderson et al., 2001; Gunawardena, 1995; Moore, 1997; Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Rovia et al., 2008; Walther, 1992, 1995) concur that the same features that exemplify face-to-face mediated learning community interactivity apply equally to asynchronous computer-mediated teaching and learning communities in spite of their lack of visual and auditory stimuli. The question of how interactive the computer-mediated workshops were therefore pivoted on an assessment of how well the instructor and students participating in the computer-mediated workshops did or did not successfully establish and maintain the critical features of interactivity typified by immediacy, reciprocity, and communication styles, and how well they compensated for a lack of nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues in an asynchronous computer-mediated environment.

#### Communication styles in the computer-mediated workshops

As previously indicated, most participants in the computer-mediated workshops employed positive communication styles from the outset. Their responses were also self-revelatory. For example, in their initial introductions to each other in response to what they did when they were not writing, what they are writing, and what one object they would want on a desert item Mia responded:

Working, I manage a coffee shop. Reading. Going to the gym. Watching Mad Men (Just got turned onto the show and <3 it!) I write short fiction and lots of it. The last four short stories: one magic realism story, one metafictional story, one story about Great White Sharks (Power animal and topic of a lot of my writing) and one story mimicking the style of Hunter S. Thompson...Lifetime supply of Crispy Reese Peanut Butter Cups.

Charles, on the other hand wrote,

When am I writing? The past couple of years, I can't remember, really. The three little ones pretty much rule out long, medium, and (usually) even short stretches of concentration and quiet. In the time it takes to think through a sentence, the wife has already made her displeasure clear about how I am leaving her to take care of everything while I play on the computer...Dunno. I write non-fiction, poetry, short fiction, and novel length fiction...A loaded gun. If a passing vessel ignores you, you can hijack it! If you run out of food and water, you won't have to live a living death. If nasty types stumble across your little patch of oceanic desert...well, at least you'll have a fighting chance! But if I can't have that...I'll take a hypoallergenic pillow encased in plastic so I can get a comfy night's sleep, and I won't have to worry about sand or water getting into the inner fluff and ruining it!

On a different note, Sheila responded:

I try to write most weekday mornings. Now that our kids have left the nest, it looks like I may have time to write some afternoons. When I'm not writing, I'm often running around doing errands or cleaning my house :(-- the usual stuff of life. I like to quilt, read, walk, and spend time with my hubby and friends, so I do all of these things whenever possible...Short fiction. I would like to write a novel at some point, but I'm not sure that I have the stamina. I really enjoyed the poetry course that I took this summer, though, and I have dabbled a bit in non-fiction...Aladdin's Lamp, and three prudent wishes.

Most participants maintained similar positive communication styles when receiving and giving critiques. For example, the following is an exchange between the instructor, Bea, Christopher, Lois, and Carolyn about one of Carolyn's stories:

**Instructor:** I'm curious how this might look for you guys. Would the Dean be cut out of the picture totally? Would we be left with something like Delaney dropping an envelope in a mailbox, as Christopher suggested?

**Bea:** I think the Dean should be cut out entirely. I don't even want a scene of Delaney dropping the envelope—I want the document to stand on its own, I should admit here that I am the recipient of exactly this kind of letter (I work at a College) and I am left many times to make serious judgments about a persons [sic] future, at least as far as school is concerned, based solely on the letter I have in front of me. This is a powerful document—at least can be. As such I am interested to see this stand alone in a story. I am biased. Perhaps not the best judge here.

**Christopher:** For me, the ending would work better if we see Del mailing (or even dropping off) the essay, so that we transition to this new character a bit more smoothly. It is a drastic POV shift already, but it also introduces new characters. I think Delaney in the room with him might ease that transition.



**Lois:** I agree, I think it's difficult to care about a new character at the very end of the story. Also Del's voice is so authentic, and then it collides with the admissions committee guy and his prissy note, and then the Dean who felt far less authentic and original than Del. For me it wasn't the format—the reveal—that I had trouble with, it was the characters themselves who are in the reveal that felt a bit flat. I'd like to see an interaction between Del and the Dean, this is an interesting idea Christopher.

**Carolyn:** Overall for the story, my goal was to create a strong 'voice' and a character that readers could care about and root for, crassness and all. I hope I have accomplished that. If not, your suggestions are most welcome. In terms of structure, the twist near the end of the story turning out to be an admissions essay was a perhaps a bit of a gimmick. I was conscious of the ending of my last stories being formulaic or cliché and I was looking for something different. Guess it didn't work. I did originally think of having it be clear from the beginning what it was and having it a stand alone piece as Bea suggests, but that seemed a little predictable. In the song I wrote that served as the inspiration for this, she never leaves. Okay, the dean needs to go. I was trying to provide a bookend that would offer juxtaposition for Del. That person deciding her fate is also in an empty house, alone (except for a dog), on the other end of his career. I didn't want to be obvious that he would accept her into the university, but that she had an impact on him. I imagined them meeting, etc. Should I cut him loose?

However, as indicated earlier, there were exceptions, especially on the part of Charles, who preferred a more experimental style of writing which led to contention with his peers. In response to how he felt about his peers' critiques Charles explained why he so strongly disagreed with them:

In my poetry workshop I put heavy emphasis on my peers [sic] comments because as the workshop progressed, I kept gaining respect for their perceptiveness, thoughtfulness, and talent. In this workshop, I did not end up with that same level of respect, and by the end of the course, there was only one other student who I looked at as a "peer" in that regard. I apologize if that sounds arrogant, but at the end of creative writing, and the NSU Masters Program is literally the highest level of any such program in the country, and one of a handful of the most elite programs in North America, there has to be "there" there. There has to be talent for story, and the ability to write, and of the stories workshopped for this course, the majority were not what I would call well written...My work, I freely admit was all over the place tonally, but mostly because I was attempting different modes and styles in almost every single work....The reason for this is because the workshop is a place where you experiment and tinker, and attempt to grow as a writer.

### Nonverbal behaviors and paralanguage in the computer-mediated workshops

Participants in the computer-mediated workshops did not consider the absence of nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage and/or dramaturgical cues to be an issue. Participants unanimously concurred with Gunawardena's (1995), Rashotte's (2002a, b), and Walther's (1992) findings that while such linguistic enhancements are useful, they are neither cognitively nor affectively necessary to express either task-oriented or socio-emotional messages. Participants in the computer-mediated workshops indicated the absence of nonverbals in particular was advantageous in helping them obtain their ultimate goal of learner autonomy. For example, Charles stated:

Nonverbals are really useless when it comes to writing. What do they communicate: A reader's actual feelings about a work? Or a reader's feelings about that writer? Their thoughts about a disagreed with criticism from the week before? When it comes to writing, there are the words and the pages. That's all. Unless you are writing humor and need to see how the readers react to a fresh piece (do they laugh? Snicker? look confused?) non-verbals are a distraction.

### Immediacy in the computer-mediated workshops

As indicated earlier the instructor for the computer-mediated workshops in part ensured her students practiced immediacy by requiring their initial critiques to be three to four paragraphs long in addition to a minimum of three additional comments of similar length which accords with Rovai's findings (2001) that such requirements enhance social presence as they mandate a minimum of immediacy amongst computer-mediated participants.

Based on the instructor's requirements, at a minimum, the students in the computer-mediated workshop with five students would have had to have written a combined minimum of twenty responses. In the computer-mediated workshop with six students, again at a minimum, the students would have had to have written a combined

minimum of twenty-four responses. In actuality, participants in the smaller computer-mediated workshop wrote an average of 89 critiques; participants in the larger group wrote an average of 57. While not all participants contributed an equal number of comments, nor was every comment equal in length, the volume is clear evidence of strong immediacy and reciprocity within the computer-mediated workshops on the part of the students and the instructor.

#### Reciprocity in the computer-mediated workshops

Finally, as researchers indicate (Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) an effective cognitive and socio-emotional teaching and learning community's levels of interactivity and intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990; Tudge, 1992; Wertsch, 1998) are dependent on its participants' willingness to be active participants. This in turn depends on each member's sense of reciprocity as demonstrated by his/her use of open, friendly, and/or attentive communication styles, frequent and reasonably lengthy comments that demonstrate individuals' trust and respect for other members of the community. While researchers agree this can be more difficult to obtain in an asynchronous computer-mediated teaching and learning environment, their findings show that it is entirely possible if teachers convey a strong and continuous teaching presence through effective instructional design and organization, they consistently facilitate discourse, and they provide sound direct instruction as these three components of teaching presence initiate, promote, and support the equally important components of social presence, especially social context and interactivity (Figure 2-3).

Social context (Figure 2-3) is established by teachers assigning authentic problems to be solved; inviting students to provide self-revelatory details which range

from self-disclosure to empathetic (Cutler, 1996; McMahon, 1997; Rovai, 2001; Rex et al., 2002); by teachers sharing such information of their own; by teachers frequently interacting with students using informal written communication styles; teachers stating their high expectations for their students; and teachers respecting their students' diverse needs as learners (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

Combined, these components enhance reciprocity and reduce psychological distance thereby helping participants to establish a mutual sense of trust and respect amongst themselves within the teaching and learning community. The following statement from Christopher, a participant in one of the computer-mediated workshop supports this contention.

I'm not sure is this is unique to NSU's program, or to online workshopping, but I find the competitive nature of some degree cohorts to be non-existent (I have a feeling it has to do with both). As a result, I feel genuinely excited for the success of my fellow participants, and I feel like they are in mine, as well. That has to be good for my growth and development—in terms of improving my writing, submitting to publishers/contests, and general support of my art.

Many of my colleagues have MFA degrees from f2f [sic] programs, and they talk of much jealousy and resentment among their cohorts. If someone isn't truly happy if I succeed, how can I trust them to offer me the best critique of my work?

Although, as discussed below, even when teachers invoke a strong teaching presence, individual participants in any teaching and learning community remain individuals with distinctly unique social, cultural, educational, and historical ontogenies that mediate their responses and reactions to others (Barry & Crant, 2000; Billett, 2002; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993; Marsh, 2006; Mehan, 1992; Smagorinsky, 2001). Therefore, because the constructs of social presence are especially difficult to establish initially in a computer-mediated social constructivist teaching and learning environment, a comparison of what researchers have

found to be effective was useful. Once more the crucial factor was to what extent participants construe social presence as group members' learning is in proportion to the level and nature of their participation which are governed by the subordinate components that exemplify social presence and teaching presence (Figure 2-3). A crucial question therefore was whether the computer-mediated creative writing workshops were able to establish and maintain high rates of task-oriented as well as socio-emotional dialogue that support constructive reciprocity and intersubjectivity that lead to learner autonomy?

The instructor for the computer-mediated workshops strove to reduce the psychological distance between her and her students at the beginning of the workshop by introducing herself and having them introduce themselves by employing a socio-emotional messaging strategy styled as a Proust-like questionnaire<sup>12</sup>. For example, in addition to the earlier examples from students, the instructor wrote in response to the same request for self-revelatory information about her own preferred genres of writing, what she did when not writing, and what she'd want if stranded on a desert island with the following answers maintaining the same open and friendly communication styles (Norton, 1986) she used to phrase the questions:

I ride my bike almost everywhere. I live with my husband and a borrowed dog. I used to be a tree-planter, so now I am a borderline cripple. Hence, I do yoga. I am

---

<sup>12</sup> The "Proust Questionnaire" still widely used by contemporary reporters began as a parlor game. Marcel Proust first took it when he was 13 or 14 years old at a friend's party; he responded to a second version for a final time when he was 20. This latter version was published shortly thereafter in "Salon Confidences written by Marcel" and published in 1892 in *La Revue illustrée XV* from which it gained its name and subsequent fame. Then as now the "Proust Questionnaire" has been used to disclose to the public unfamiliar aspects of celebrities' psychology by asking probing questions like "What trait do you most deplore in yourself?" "What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?" "Who are your favorite writers; poets; hero and heroine of fiction; composers; and painters?" along with "How would you like to die?" While none of the participants in computer-mediated workshop were celebrities and the instructor did not use but one of these specific questions, her Proust-like questionnaire appeared to reduce students' mutual feelings of uncertainty and risk and replace them with trust and commitment by similarly efficiently and effectively giving participants an impression of their peers' possible writing credentials, literary tastes, even their personal philosophies with response to questions that asked about what they were reading, what they would take if stranded on a desert island, etc.

an adventurous cook. My kitchen is like a domestic science lab. The other day I found fish scales stuck to the ceiling. I'm equally good at drinking beer and coffee. I am also a master procrastinator...I just finished a narrative non-fiction book about trees and forests (see tree-planting above). But my main love will always be fiction. Next is a novel. I don't get great ideas very often, so I have no clue what it will be about...Brown rice. Bland, comforting, nutritious.

Like her students' responses cited earlier, the instructor's initial contact message was socio-emotional in nature. To ensure continued viable dialogic exchanges in accord with the social constructivist paradigm, the instructor also clearly delineated in her syllabus how each student was responsible for not only writing a set number of words for each semester in terms of their manuscripts, but that they were also responsible for contributing a definitive number of comments of an explicit length. In this way she strove to achieve a balance between the task-oriented purpose of the workshop and a beneficial socio-emotional relationship with her students (Barry & Crant, 2000; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gunawardena, 1995; Harris, 2001; Rex et al., 2002; Walther, 1992, 1995) which she successfully maintained for the duration of the class by frequently interjecting self-revelatory information about her own writing in response to her students' remarks.

For example:

**Renata:** I have to write a whole scene to realize I can say something with a sentence but I had to write it to get to that point.

**Instructor:** Oh god, that happens to me all the time.

Based on a review of the comments made by all eleven students in the computer-mediated workshop, first in response to the introductory questionnaire, and secondly of their critiques, comments, and questions written with regard to each others' manuscripts, the balance the instructor sought was established and maintained throughout both semesters. Consequently when two subsequent conflicts in story interpretations occurred they apparently were attributable to participants' varying perspectives as transactional

readers and writers (Rosenblatt, 2005), and to a reflection of their individual disparate respective social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogenies (Billett, 2002; Bakhtin, 1986; Bourdieu, 1993; Hanks, 2005; Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983; Rosenblatt, 2005). However, so pervasive had a strong feeling of social presence been established prior to this point that even when the author's tone became somewhat contentious, other participants responded in their written dialogic exchanges with a blend of task and socio-emotional messages as indicated below.

**Charles:** How am I alienating readership by writing an action oriented scene with a quirky protagonist? Is there no market for something like this? People who catch the reference will appreciate it, and those who don't can still access the story on the literal level.

**Mia:** We're not attacking you good buddy. We're here to help and offer suggestions for improvement. None of us are in danger of winning the Giller anytime soon, so you can take our advice with a grain of salt.

I'm not saying that there is not market for this. But I am saying that you need to get the main story, the street level story on even keel before you head for the sewers and throw in the references for those in the know. Terrible analogy, I know. I think we are saying that action, action type stories don't transfer in fiction. One car crash is interesting but after a couple of pages, it can get to be a little much. I'm not saying slow the story down, but in between the action throw in some great characterization or dialogue and we'll sit through all the car crashes you can throw at us.

Moreover, neither in this particular situation nor for the computer-mediated workshop in general did the absence of paralinguistic or nonverbal behaviors that individuals typically rely on to better interpret a person's interpretation of others' meaning substantially impact participants' perspectives or interpretation of others' responses. Participants from the computer-mediated workshops supported this contention in their interviews. For example, Lois said,

Because I can't see my other classmates rolling their eyes, I am more likely to pursue different avenues of thinking both in my own writing (in the way I interpret the comments on my writing) and in my commenting too.

### **Research Question Four: Becoming an Autonomous Writer**

Naturally the objective for any educational enterprise, including social constructivism, is cognitive presence or learner autonomy. Thus the impetus of Research Question Number Four is again to compare the likelihood a computer-mediated workshop comparably advances learner autonomy as well as face-to-face workshops have historically done (Bell, 1994; Bell, 1977; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994). Since such knowledge is critical as a basis for informed decision-making, the second purpose of the case study is also addressed in Research Question Four which asks: How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated workshops enhance students' prose fiction writing development and potential to write prose fiction of sufficient quality to be seriously considered for publication by real world publishing houses compared to participation in face-to-face mediated workshops? With this in mind the following sections examine qualitatively how participants in all three workshops felt about how well the respective mediated workshops helped them appropriate the necessary skill of applying writing craft techniques to become autonomous writers whether the ultimate outcome was partial completion of a novel as a work-in-progress, or possibly a sufficiently completed short story ready for publication.

#### **Mastery versus appropriation**

According to researchers (Bransford et al., 2005; Moore, 1972; Shepard et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 1978) cognitive presence or learner autonomy equates with a formative and a summative assessment of the extent to which students have constructed meaning from their learning experience. According to Wertsch (1998) attainment can be differentiated between mere "mastery," or knowing how to do a task, and



“appropriation,” an actual internalization of knowledge whereby the student demonstrates he/she can transfer and apply new knowledge to learn more. As indicated before, such a dyad is analogous to playing music. The piano student demonstrates mastery of a composition when he/she correctly plays all the notes. On the other hand, the student displays appropriation when he/she plays the same composition with the dynamic and vivid expression one associates with a virtuoso pianist’s performance. In the latter case, the student has truly transferred what he/she has learned because he/she has so connected with his/her music education that he/she has taken ownership of it and is now capable of using that knowledge independently or autonomously in a new and original performance as opposed to mechanically producing music.

According to writing teachers (Bell, 1977; Gardner, 1983b) the greatest benefit novice writers get from creative writing workshops is the social and psychological support of fellow students in order “to figure out (or if necessary ask) the purpose and meaning of the piece and only then to suggest carefully, thoughtfully, why the purpose and meaning did not come through” (Gardner, 1983b, p. 82). Such a purpose accords with Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of interpsychological to intrapsychological wherein the learner internalizes new knowledge. It also aligns with Moore’s (1972) perception of the autonomous learner as a learner who he says does

not give up overall control of the learning processes. He therefore seeks a particular kind of teaching which is, in Maslow’s words “receptive rather than intrusive,” doesn’t “condition, reinforce, or boss,” but helps him discover his own problems, his own aptitudes, and his own answers (p. 81).

Ultimately, however, as indicated by Research Questions Two and Three, precisely what and how much learners derive from any educational environment, in particular a social constructivist teaching and learning environment, is largely dependent

on teaching presence and social presence as these factors primarily determine the likelihood participants will appropriate knowledge from reciprocated dialogic exchanges focused on authentic problem-solving. Therefore, the extent to which learners progress depends on their internalization of the information (Bakhtin, 1986; Barry & Crant, 2000; Marsh, 2005; Moore, 1972; Rosenblatt, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002), which is influenced by teaching presence (Gardner, 1983b; Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Moore, 1972; Petraglia, 1998; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001). as well as consistent social presence (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Gardner, 1983b; Marsh & Ketterer, 2005; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Swan & Shih, 2005; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Walther, 1992, 1995). Social presence especially facilitates internalization or appropriation of knowledge as social presence helps ensure participants in a teaching and learning community, like a creative writing workshop, decrease psychological distance by establishing and maintaining a sense of mutual trust and respect for each other so that all participants are likely to benefit from the community's dialogic discourses whether carried out through face-to-face mediated or via computer-mediated communication.

The paradox, however, for creative writing workshops, as Bell (1994, 1997) points out, and as many workshop participants' responses indicated, is that creative writing is inherently an autonomous activity. Rooted thoroughly and completely in their individual social, cultural, educational, and historical experiences creative writing workshop participants engage in unique dialogic exchanges. For while workshops provide "social and psychological support" (Bell, 1977; Gardner, 1983b; Garrett, 1994), such support is typically tempered by each writer's ability and determination to write as

well as by what others in the workshop perceive to be that person's ability. Participants' responses reflected such subjectivity. For example, Graham indicated,

The participants' comments tell me how people are reading/receiving my work. Mostly, my intention doesn't change, so the question is just how to make sure that what I am intending is what's coming across. I also think that within the workshop that you find people whose sensibility you respect, who you think get what you're about as a writer. I value those opinions more highly than others. I think not everyone is going to love what you write, so you listen most closely to the people who you think are closest to your target audience.

Charles said,

I found this workshop quite often the majority of advice or the thoughts or peers to be less than useful, and lacking in insight. This was a particularly frustrating aspect of the course for me, in that I often felt like I had to hold their hands and guide them through their critiques. The lack of imagination, the lack of breadth of reading, and the inability to back up critiques with statements about what would be better (as in...paragraph A does not work, but if you write it like so...) made the advice often less than useful.

Sophie wrote,

I gave a lot of emphasis to some classmates (Graham and Sheila) and a lot less to others (Mia and Charles). I found the first two gave a lot of constructive and encouraging ideas and the last two had more negative comments [sic] or were less clear or off the mark for me. I find this often happens in classes—some people 'get' your writing and you get theirs [sic] and others don't click as well.

Cierra, like several other face-to-face mediated workshop participants indicated she appreciated that not everyone agreed with her perceptions of what works, "I valued everyone's comments...Usually, though, I just do what I think is best and follow my own instinct."

William's comment was similar. "I've learned to ignore a piece of advice if it goes against my instinct. That can be tricky since I am inherently confrontational. Still the value of writing is not to lose your own sense of what works. I do not want to lose my vision."

This is why creative writing teachers are adamant that writing is not a discipline that is conceived of either pedagogically or affectively the way composition and literary theory are. Rather creative writing teachers, insist they hone students' innate writing ability and determination by teaching salient craft writing techniques. Hence, when considering if creative writing can be taught, and if so who, what, and how it should be taught, Bell (1997) emphasizes it is a student's ability to apply writing craft techniques that needs to be addressed, not an examination of a writer's talent. Otherwise as Bell (1997) adamantly contends, the teacher violates the writer's talent, what he refers to as a writer's "black box."

Critical analysis is perfectly safe and acceptable group activity. Creative process, on the other hand, is by nature private and solitary. The writer must maintain psychological privacy in order to remain capable of imaging the work. The strange paradox of all imaginative writing is that it is an isolated and secretive project that one undertakes in order to communicate (in most cases, for the desire of your private writer for public recognition is usually quite insatiable) with the greatest possible number of other people...But one must never forget that the inner process is not only where all ideas begin but also where final recognitions are made. Everything of *primary* importance happens inside the black box. Difficult and dangerous as it is to talk about it, it is the most important thing of all (p. 11).

Both writing teachers concurred. For example the instructor for the computer-mediated workshops stated:

It's my preference not to dwell on talent, but to focus on the writing. It's always possible to make writing better. Not really possible to grow talent. NSU has no one definition of talent, I don't think. But when manuscripts are assessed, instructors look for a strong voice, good writing, and the ability to tell a story. All these things improve as one becomes a more experienced writer. Audiences look for the same thing, really.

And the instructor for the face-to-face mediated workshop said, "Talent is hard to define. It is ineffable. It is cultivated by reading. It is something that sparks the heart and mind of the reader, but needs discipline to be successful."

Pursuant to this distinction, of the eight participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop that responded in interviews, six of the eight concurred their workshop experiences met their criteria for creative writing workshops in general which was to produce or write a given number of pages in this case for a novel as a first draft, a work-in-progress, and to learn the craft of novel writing as opposed to writing short fiction. Since these were strictly task-oriented goals each participant indicated he/she accomplished his/her objectives compared to their prior experiences in other workshops.

However, in response to how they felt face-to-face mediated workshops could be improved, six of the participants identified the need to discuss more craft and to manage workshop time better. For example, Cierra stated: “My suggestion for all workshops—for all classrooms, really—is to stick to a time structure for class discussion. If three people are slated for workshop, then each writer’s work should be allotted a certain amount of time.” Jane recommended, “having time management more organized. Less time spent on workshopping, more on outside reading, more craft discussion time.”

In addition to Cierra’s and Jane’s desire for better time management, a recommendation Roy and Andrea agreed with, they too added they wanted more direct craft instruction. For example, Andrea commented,

I wish I had some more craft instruction. The meetings with [the instructor], privately were marvelous, but in class some students’ comments were in direct contradiction to her advice and my original plan. That’s to be expected, I know, but I wish we could have had some kind of cohesive framework or philosophy that we could have had presented at the beginning of class...I would have liked a craft philosophy or “these are some various ways that you could go about this” sessions.

Roy went even further and indicated how he would structure a workshop:

As a facilitator, I would have short stories, novel excerpts, and essays about writing on hand, perhaps in a course packet, and we would use our last hour each

week to discuss something from the packet in terms of craft, or in regards to general issues about writing. “How does this story use non-linear time to its advantage?” for example, or “Is this humor in this piece helping or hurting the work overall?” Or “What do you think of this essayist’s claim about writers who graduate from MFA programs?”

Like their counterparts in the face-to-face mediated workshop, all six participants in the two computer-mediated workshops that responded to this question concurred that their computer-mediated workshop experiences to date had met or exceeded their general expectations. However, they, like the participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop qualified their statements when asked for suggestions in general on how workshops could be improved. Sheila said she would have preferred more craft discussion in terms of an outside reading list; Christopher had a clerical suggestion to facilitate teaching. Lois suggested expanded use of technology with the use of Skype. Three other participants commented directly on affective-related difficulties they had had with one or more peers due to a lack of respect and/or trust in one or more student participants. For example, Graham wrote:

I would say that the workshop met my expectations, and in ways exceeded them. I think the requirements of the course were clearly laid out, so my expectations were appropriately cultivated by the instructor, and also by my previous experience in workshops. The variables usually involve the individual participants in the workshop and your own ability to commit to it...The only way in which the workshop fell short of my expectations, again, wasn't about the workshop itself, but about one of the participants in it. I found one of the participants very difficult to work with, bordering on antagonistic, and that was a disappointment.

Charles on the other hand wrote:

It met my expectations, but did not exceed them...The level and success of a workshop depends a great deal on the caliber of the students enrolled. In this particular workshop, there was only one other writer whose work I consistently found to be of higher quality, who was thoughtful and helpful in their remarks and critiques and who approached the workshop process in the proper manner...Last year I began a workshop that I had to drop out from, as the instructor had reacted in a hostile manner towards my workshop approach.

Sophie wrote:

I learned a lot about form and structure, had examples of short stories of all kinds, continued to learn about key parts of writing (point of view, dialogue, etc.) and had people from diverse backgrounds. I also had a lot of opportunities to write and share stories (more than in other workshops...) and I was surprised that [the instructor] reread the final submissions and provided feedback which I've never had before...The only way it fell short for me was in the remarks and responses of some of my classmates. I've only ever had one defensive/negative classmate before...possible step from the instructor 'publicly' [sic] to make the sessions informative and opinionated, but also mature—I think this happened out of class with the instructor e-mailing some people privately.

The emphasis on time management and craft discussion made by participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop suggests deficiencies in face-to-face mediated course designs in general due to inherent time constraints that deter socio-emotional discourse as well as additional direct instruction. Conversely, computer-mediated workshops' course design allowed adequate time to incorporate more direct instruction without sacrificing community discourse. Based on comments from participants in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops, the challenge of decreasing psychological distance, establishing and maintaining trust and respect though recognized as being requisite for useful dialogic discourse that focuses on craft application remains tenuous regardless of whether the mediating tool is face-to-face mediated communication or computer-mediated communication as the affective elements of psychological distance, trust, and respect are so completely dependent on individual participants' social, historical, cultural, and educational ontogenies, which in the creative writing workshops are strongly influenced by participants' own internalized or intrapsychological perspectives of their own and others' ability and desire to write creatively. How these and other factors impact a comparison of each of the mediated workshops is the focus of Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6

### Introduction

Contemporary post-secondary creative writing programs range from small intimate programs that specialize in limited genres like fiction and poetry to expansive programs that cater to the student seeking to experiment with multiple genres that frequently include, but are not limited to, screenwriting, drama, children's literature, novels, short fiction, and poetry. For this reason program administrators and teachers strongly urge potential M.F.A. candidates to carefully examine programs to match their interests with those of the instructors of the program of their choice and to interview past and current alumni to find the program whose community culture is most amenable to them as writers (Abramson, 2009; "Advice from the Programs," 2011; Gardner, 1983b; Kealey, 2011; May, 2011). Additionally, as more and more creative writing programs and classes are now available for students through both high-residency programs where all classes meet face-to-face, hybrid programs where classes meet face-to-face and via computer-mediated virtual learning environments, and low-residency programs where classes are conducted online via computer-mediated distance education with one- to two-week long residencies per year or an option of no residencies, students have even more options to choose from.

It was in light of the increasing availability of these latter options that the current case study was undertaken. For while the current trend in industry, marketing, and education (Clegg et al., 2003) is to incorporate e-learning, critics and supporters do not



necessarily agree on its value (Clegg et al., 2003; Teachout, 2009; Twigg, 2001).

Therefore, in order to better understand from the primary users' perspective whether the pedagogical and affective features of a conventionally taught face-to-face mediated workshop are transferable a computer-mediated workshop in order to help creative writing administrators decide if offering an optional-residency program in concert with their high-residency program would be beneficial, a comparison study of face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops was conducted. Chapter 5 reviewed the data obtained from a year-long observation of a face-to-face workshop and two computer-mediated workshops in addition to interviews with three instructors, current and former program administrators, and fourteen students. Chapter 6 summarizes the researcher's findings.

Based on a literature search, the first issue to be addressed in understanding creative writing programs in general was to assess critics' complaints regarding creative writing programs' general pedagogical lack of incorporation of writing craft mechanics and theoretical instruction as substantial features of their comprehensive program designs. Since such arguments were relevant to the key pedagogical questions of can creative writing can be taught, and if so who, what, and how it should be taught, these issues were addressed in Research Question Number One. Research Question Number Two addressed specific operational pedagogical issues in terms of teaching presence. Research Question Number Three examined affective issues in terms of communication issues and social presence. Research Question Number Four completed the study by examining how the respective delivery systems advanced learner autonomy.

## **Research Question Number One**

Will transposing a collaborative, interactive face-to-face workshops into a virtual computer-mediated distance education prose fiction writing workshops ameliorate or exacerbate existing issues currently identified with creative writing programs regarding if creative writing can be taught, and if so who, what, and how should it be taught?

A number of contemporary critics of creative writing programs have voiced concerns about various aspects of creative writing programs in general and creative writing workshops in particular. With regard to entire creative writing programs their main concerns are a) creative writing programs are too insular and independent from the literary scholarship and composition branches of oversight English departments; b) creative writing programs fail to integrate literary scholarship, craft instruction, and compositional writing; and c) creative writing programs do not implement standard curricula to ensure uniformity and consistency among instructors.

Specific complaints lodged against creative writing workshops have focused on a) the gag rule that precludes students from commenting either to explain their manuscripts, or to ask questions of their peers regarding their peers' and instructors' critiques of student manuscripts during a workshop discussion; b) whether peers' comments can be so harsh as to be sadistic in nature (Bly, 2001); and c) whether students as inexperienced and untrained writers are knowledgeable enough to critique another peer's writing.

### Program insularity

None of the creative writing students, instructors, or program administrators interviewed concurred with critics' complaints regarding creative writing programs remaining distinct from composition and literary studies. To the contrary, program

administrators and instructors indicated there would be no advantage to having creative writing programs under the supervision of an English department's dominant literary scholarship branch. Since creative writing workshops focus on teaching the craft of writing regarding the delineation of character, the development of an effective narrative arc, embedding not explaining thematic purposes in a story, choosing first, second, or third person point of view effectively for thematic and storytelling purposes those interviewed indicated emphasizing literary analysis, literary scholarship, and/or disquisitional composition writing would be counterproductive. Specifically, all interviewees reiterated that the purpose of teaching creative writing is not to teach literary analysis or composition. That, they said, is the responsibility of classes in English studies and composition and rhetoric. Rather they concurred with the director of AWP (Fenza, 2009) who has stated:

By offering classes in creative writing, academe has, ironically, reclaimed an aspect of literary study that it had divested when its humanities departments became specialized. In a classical education, students once studied Greek, Latin, rhetoric, and composition by writing stories and poems in Greek or Latin, often in imitation of past masters. Students studied the accomplishments of the past by entering personally engaging practicums that emphasized the creative act. With the acceptance of creative writing programs, departments of literature have restored their original, enabling scope: the study and practice of both the creative and critical literary acts (p. 2).

#### Standardized curricula

In accord with their concurrence that creative writing programs are not intended to teach either theory or disquisitional essay writing, interviewees maintained the same position regarding the use of standardized curricula. Both of the creative writing program administrators, the two observed instructors, and students in all three workshops who commented contended a standardized curriculum requiring instructors to teach sanctioned

department lessons using department assigned texts and supplemental readings would severely limit an instructor's ability to teach a creative writing workshop effectively and/or efficiently. Participants unanimously stated in their respective interviews that every creative writing teacher has unique talents and perspectives regarding genre and the effective use of craft that enhances their students' exposure to a spectrum of craft applications whereas a standardized curriculum would severely limit a teacher's creativity and instructional latitude.

### Workshops

Nor did any of the M.F.A. students interviewed condemn workshops' traditional discourse structure including the "gag rule" that precludes an author from responding to peer critics during a constructive discussion of a manuscript's weaknesses and strengths. Rather they concurred with Grimes (1999) that the workshop mimics real life as a manuscript submitted for publication must be able to withstand the scrutiny of a publisher or literary agent without an author being present to explain it. They said manuscripts need to be reviewed in a workshop with the same careful scrutiny without the author interjecting explanations or answers to questions. For in reality, they asked, what better preparation is there for real-life than to have your peers objectively read and critique manuscripts and provide constructive criticism to help identify craft weaknesses? For example, Cierra, a participant in the face-to-face mediated workshop said:

As a writer being discussed, I like to sit back and listen to the reader's responses; as a reader, I find it a annoying, frankly, when the writer talks too much and over-directs his or her critique. As authors we won't be there to defend or explain our work to every reader. I think it's reasonable for a writer to ask a few questions in the manuscript or at the start of the discussion so the conversation can be fruitful for him or her, but to step aside and let the workshop do its work after that.

Rosie, another participant in the face-to-face mediated workshop concurred:

[T]here is always a tendency to want to simply defend one's work, and that defeats the purpose of the workshop, really. The tendency to want to defend is natural, I think, but it's important to suspend those defenses in order to really hear what's being communicated from the reader's perspective.

Lynn, also a participant in the face-to-face mediated workshop was even more specific in her response:

I think the reason we are asked to wait until our readers are finished is to limit the temptation to explain away their comments with what our intentions as writers had been. It's important to value the reader's experience; you really can't change the encounter they had with your writing—it's like trying to convince a reader to qualify his or her response (I'm guilty of doing it myself), but in the end, it's better to shut up and accept the fact that you haven't done your job yet.

Students in the computer-mediated workshop agreed. For instance, Sheila wrote:

I enjoyed the way that it was set up...I particularly liked following the comments on the first day and not being able to respond, kind of like being a fly on the wall—which is what I always wanted to be whenever I imagined magazine editors looking over a story I had sent them and they were trying to decide whether or not to go with it...I think first responses, unfiltered in this way, are really valuable to an author because the other participants are free to voice what they don't understand, what they think is confusing or awkwardly worded, what they liked, didn't like, etc. I looked forward to the first responses and the interaction between the other students and [the instructor] before I was permitted to jump in. I think I mentioned this in one of the workshops, but it almost felt like being at my own wake, without a death, if you know what I mean—hovering, not able to respond, but enjoying the party.

Students in all three workshops that were interviewed agreed that some peers can and do get defensive to the point of being overly assertive when other workshop participants' recommendations run counter to their opinions. They indicated that allowing such individuals to participate throughout the discussion would negate the learning process by subverting the purpose of objectively critiquing a manuscript in order to make appropriate recommendations for changes that the author may or may not accept.

Otherwise they claimed what should be a productive discourse would degenerate into a confrontational defensive argument on the part of the writer as Lynn, Rosie, and Cierra

indicated. Their observations, although made with regard to face-to-face mediated workshops, were supported by the events in one of the computer-mediated workshop discussions. After initial comments had been posted the following exchange, part of a larger discussion, ensued regarding a story Charles, a participant in one of the computer-mediated workshops, had submitted for critiquing.

**Instructor:** The only criterion is that the story works for the reader.

**Charles:** You also have to consider what type of reader. This group, being MFA students is quite unrepresentative of the average reader.

**Graham:** You know, Charles, I like a good action movie. I don't think being an MFA student makes me like things average readers don't. I think it makes me pay closer attention to why I like what I like. And when I like an action story, it's because the action helps to tell the story, but isn't the story itself.

Concerning students' inability to critique peers' manuscripts, those interviewed indicated that as readers of a wide array of genres and styles they were typical consumers and as such were as well suited to critique a peer's manuscript as they were a published author's. For example, Lynn, in accord with Graham's comment above stated:

I place a high value on my instructor's and peers' comments. Any reader response saves a writer from having to imagine what questions the audience might have by giving an actual voice to those questions. And comments from writers are even better because writers have an understanding of rhetoric, language, and story, which enables them to not only point to a particular weakness, but to suggest ways to strengthen it as well.

While these findings do not discount critics' issues and recommendations, they do indicate a lack of support to change creative writing programs' independent departmental standing, procedures, or stated objective of honing novice writers' innate talent, determination, and desire. To reiterate, the former director of the face-to-face mediated writing program, the program coordinator for the optional-residency program, the instructor for the face-to-face mediated workshop, and the instructor for the computer-mediated workshop who has also taught several face-to-face mediated workshops, in

addition all of the students interviewed enrolled in the face-to-face mediated workshop and in the computer-mediated workshops disagreed with critics' complaints. Nor did any of those interviewed endorse any of the critics' recommendations for change.

#### Recapitulation of findings regarding Research Question Number One

In spite of substantial criticism in the literature regarding the need to integrate creative writing studies with English and/or composition studies into more comprehensive programs; to institute standardized creative writing curricula; and to alter the popular University of Iowa workshop approach (Andrews, 2009; Bly, 2001; Cain, 1999a, b; Garrett, 1989; Gouge, 2009; Green, 2001; Guevara, 1998; Holtman & Lent, 1995; Houston et al., 2001; Kalamaras, 1999; Lardner, 1999; Mayers, 1999, 2009; Ritter, 2001; Ritter & Vanderslice, 2005; Shelnut, 1989 b, 1994; Smiley, 1994), none of the creative writing administrators, teachers, or M.F.A. students interviewed concurred. Rather they agreed with those in the literature reviewed (Bell, 1994, 1997; Bell, 1977; Bourjaily, 1977; Carver, 1983; Fenza, 2000; Gardner, 1983a, b; Grimes 1999; Justice, 1977; LaFemina, 2008, 2011; MacDonald, 1989; McGurl, 2009; Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996, 2008) that support creative writing programs' independent status, maintaining teacher discretion regarding curricula, and adhering to the standard workshop model. This preponderance of consent by all case study participants led to the following findings in support of the literature regarding Research Question Number One.

- Integration with English studies and/or composition and rhetoric studies into a combined program would unnecessarily dilute the overriding objective of a creative writing M.F.A. degree which is to hone a writer's raw narrative talent and determination (Bell, 1994, 1997; Blythe & Sweet,

2008; Carver, 1983; Dillard, 1994; Fenza, 2000, 2009; Gardner, 1983a, b; Garrett, 1994; LaFemina, 2008; Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996, 2008).

- By the same token, imposing standardized curricula would unnecessarily restrict teachers' individual innovative ability to teach writing craft techniques (Bell, 1997; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Carver, 1983; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a, b; Garrett, 1994; LaFemina, 2008; Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996, 2008).
- Nor was there any support for altering the pervasive dialogic workshop model most closely associated with the University of Iowa and considered to be the gold standard of creative writing workshop approaches (Bell, 1997; Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Carver, 1983; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a, b; Garrett, 1994; LaFemina, 2008; Morley, 2007; Myers, 1996, 2008).

### **Research Question Number Two**

How effectively and efficiently do creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors utilize collaborative social constructivist, interactive, and activity educational theories, and account for transactional distance education to meet their teaching objectives for creative prose fiction writing workshops when teaching a workshop as a computer-mediated distance education class compared to how effectively and efficiently creative prose fiction writing workshop instructors use social constructivism, interactive learning and activity theory to meet their teaching objectives when teaching creative prose fiction writing workshops face-to-face?

Based on the success of long-standing high-residency creative writing programs like the ones offered at the University of Iowa, SWU, and NSU that have reputations for employing highly successful literary writers who have also proven to be adept teachers as these schools have graduated numerous well-known alumni, social constructivist creative



writing workshops efficiently and effectively hone novice and inexperienced M.F.A. students' talent and determination enabling them to become successful autonomous writers. By the same token, the same would appear to be true for computer-mediated workshops as demonstrated by an alumna of NSU's Optional-Residency Program who was distinguished by being long-listed for Canada's prestigious Giller Prize which is presented annually to the author of the best Canadian novel or short story collections (Scotiabank Giller Prize, 2011).

### Teaching presence

As numerous researchers (Bransford et al., 2000; Gunawardena, 1995; Garrison et al., 2001; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Tu, 2000, Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Wilhelm et al., 2001) have indicated, effective and efficient face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated classrooms demonstrate a strong teaching presence. The current research supported this contention. The instructors for both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops had well designed and organized classes that provided structure with set guidelines or rubrics in their respective syllabi that clearly indicated the high expectations they as teachers had regarding the quality and quantity of work students were expected to produce. Additionally both instructors fully and frequently participated in workshop discussions as peer critics. Finally, as instructors they both fluidly integrated direct instruction when and as needed to provide as well as to correct students' poor or misunderstood application of craft techniques such as unintentional or unnecessary shifts in point of view, failure to fully develop or explain a character's motives, the presence of too much or not enough backstory to explain a character's actions and motives, etc. Moreover, both instructors utilized personal experiences to

facilitate discourse and to maintain a strong social presence in the workshop by demonstrating through reciprocity and immediacy their commitment to their students' success. Finally, both instructors clearly respected their individual students' learning styles and personality traits.

For example, the computer-mediated instructor not only provided direct instruction, but also reinforced a sense of social presence by referencing an aspect of one of her own short stories in which she had described a car crash. To assist the student writing a similar car crash scene she wrote:

When we have heavy action, we need to take twice as long to execute it. More description. Quick, simple sentences. Factual, accurate sensory detail. The effect in the reader's mind is one of speed, but the writing itself is often painstakingly high-definition. The action must also marry itself to a character who is deeply invested in the outcome. We can see a car crash objectively from on high, but it's even better if we see it through the eyes of the driver.

The instructor for the face-to-face workshop similarly used her wide reading knowledge and past experiences living in California to help a student better craft his story's main character.

Mark's story invokes a metaphor between love and sickness so that we are asking ourselves is love a disease? Stephen's illness is other than physical. The illness builds gradually taking on other traits so that it becomes more than just a literal illness, his relationships are in sync with his illness. As a result as his illness increases so too does his intensity with a new love interest.

It is difficult to equate our own pain with another's. Elaine Scarry has accomplished this in her book, *The Body in Pain*. Everything Stephen experiences is a metaphor—a substitution. How does a person look, sound, or smell? Use these to depict pain. You need to convey what pain looks like to let your reader know what it feels like. Visual language makes it tangible to others. Use love as a counterpoint and as a contagion. See love as a disease—the heart break, etc. This is the heart of what your novel is doing. The deeper Stephen gets into love the sicker he becomes. Love and sex are an affirmation of life. People get lustier when they lose someone. It is the willing of life...

Consider making the setting Pal Alto instead of Mississippi. These places have different attitudes. Different vibes in different towns. The Bay area is more

fluid, with more possibilities. Mississippi is more claustrophobic. It makes for a strong contrast. Bring the two together with your characters.

All participants interviewed from the computer-mediated workshop praised their instructor's instructional design and organization in addition to the quality, quantity, and diversity of discourse. They indicated she deftly facilitated their weekly discourse by interspersing task and socio-emotional self-revelatory remarks indicating she demonstrated Chickering's and Gamson's (1987) seven principles of good teaching.

For example, Christopher said, "[T]he instructor was great at being able to synthesize and restate others' comments in a way that made them digestible and immediately helpful in pushing the discussion/revision." Sophie wrote of her instructor, "I gave a lot of attention to [the instructor's] comments in all versions. And Graham said, "In her feedback on the rewrite, [the instructor] wrote: "Well, I really like it when it's as if the author has been alerted to the fact that something is not quite right, yet they find their own original solution."

Students in the face-to-face mediated workshop had similar praise for their instructor. For example, Cierra said, "I expected [the instructor's] feedback to be especially constructive and it was...I valued [her] comments most of all." Lynn stated, "I place a high value on my instructor's comments." And Andrea stated, "The meetings with [the instructor] privately were marvelous."

Based on these students' comments, it can be concluded that the instructor for the computer-mediated workshop demonstrated in her computer-mediated workshops the same teacher-related elements associated with any exemplary face-to-face mediated workshop as the face-to-face mediated instructor demonstrated. Moreover, also based on computer-mediated students' comments, teaching presence was as equally critical for the

operational effective and efficient pedagogy of the computer-mediated workshops as it was for the face-to-face mediated workshops.

### Recapitulation of findings with regard to Research Question Number Two

The case study provided support for other researchers' findings regarding the pedagogical efficiency and effectiveness of social constructivism for face-to-face workshops (Bell, 1994, 1997; Bell, 1977; Bourjaily, 1977; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994). Additionally, the case study indicated when a computer-mediated teacher applied social constructivist practices as outlined by Bransford et al. (2000), Chickering and Gamson (1987), Garrison et al. (2001), and Shea et al. (2003), the computer-mediated workshops were as equally effective and efficient pedagogically and affectively satisfying as those interviewed found their face-to-face mediated workshops to have been.

### Research Question Number Three

How effectively and efficiently do computer online distance education creative prose fiction writing workshops meet students' social, psychological, and educational needs and expectations for social collaboration, psychological support, and educational content necessary to foster students' prose fiction writing development from their writer-teachers and peers compared to the spontaneous and robust social and psychological interactions accredited to face-to-face creative prose fiction writing workshops?

While student comments from participants in the both the face-to-face workshop and the computer-mediated workshops indicated their respective instructors demonstrated strong teaching presence elements by having well organized and thought out course design, that they were strong discourse facilitators, and provided sound direct instruction, there were nevertheless some participants in both the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops who faulted their respective workshop's effectiveness and efficiency due to some peers' attitudes and actions. For this reason, they indicated they

did not achieve the same level of satisfaction with their respective workshop as other participants indicated they had. Their comments suggest that teaching presence alone is insufficient for cognitive presence or learner autonomy to be achieved. To determine if this was the case, social presence was examined to assess how and to what extent affective features impact cognitive presence.

### Social presence

In its broadest pedagogical context, social presence is defined as two individuals interacting cognitively and affectively (Biocca, 1997; Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Short et al., 1976; Tu, 2000; Walther, 1992). Based on this premise, computer-mediated communication researchers (Rourke et al., 2001; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Rovai, 2001) identified social context; online communication; and interactivity (Figure 2-3) to examine the cognitive and affective nature of social presence. While these researchers' focus was computer-mediated teaching and learning communities, research conducted by Gunawardena (1995) and Walther (1992) has proven that social context and interactivity are equally applicable to computer-mediated teaching and learning communities as they are to face-to-face mediated teaching and learning communities. The current case study found evidence to support Gunawardena's and Walther's contentions. There was, however, a noticeable difference in the degree and extent of socio-messaging demonstrated between face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshop participants.

### Social context: Task authenticity

Researchers (Jonaseen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia, 1998) determined that authentic tasks reflect complex real-world, real-life problems as they are characterized by ill-

defined parameters, they do not provide sufficient data requisite to solve the problem, they frequently have multiple satisfactory solutions, and that such multiple satisfactory solutions can and frequently do spark contention between participants if one of more of the participants prefers one solution over another. Researchers indicate these traits tend to hinder problem-solving processes (Duncan, 2005; Keisler et al., 1984). Based on these researchers' criteria, creative writing workshops, whether taught as face-to-face mediated classes or as computer-mediated classes, present students with four authentic tasks: a) writing original prose fiction; b) critiquing peers' original prose fiction; c) discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' original prose fiction; and d) making recommendations for changes to their peers' original prose fiction. These are authentic tasks because they do not include well-defined parameters or facile solutions; can have multiple answers; and can create dissent between participants. Moreover this latter aspect tends to be inherent in workshops due to variances in participants' transactional reading and writing which are easily exacerbated by the likelihood that each reader, including the author, views the purpose and intent of his/her manuscript differently (Bell, 1994; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994).

#### Social context: Goal-direction

The object of a creative writing workshop per activity theory, whether taught as a face-to-face mediated or as a computer-mediated class, is to hone a novice writer's raw ability and desire to write quality literary fiction that a commercial publisher would be likely to publish. Again, per researchers' criteria (Jonaseen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia, 1998; Wilhelm et al., 2001) regarding what constitutes a self-directed versus a teacher-imposed goal, a creative writing workshop's object is self-directed as participants enroll

in creative writing workshops based on their self-interest to hone their raw writing skills and desires to the point they are capable of writing polished manuscripts that will be of interest to real-world readers and publishers.

#### Social context: Self-revelation

Self-revelation is defined as participants' willingness or reticence to share personal information of a socio-emotional nature with other workshop participants. Researchers (Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Harris, 2001; McMahon, 1997; Rovai, 2001; Rex et al., 2002; Walther, 1992) have shown that increased sharing of socio-emotional messages of a personal and/or empathetic nature equates with increased social presence as proof that participants trust and respect each other thereby reducing the psychological distance they feel towards each other. In this context, as previously discussed, only the instructor of the face-to-face mediated workshop consistently revealed any personal information in the face-to-face mediated workshop. Conversely, both students and the instructor participating in the two computer-mediated workshops did so. Moreover they did so frequently.

There are three possible explanations for this variance. The first concerns the various features that constitute an institution's culture (Barry & Crant, 2000; Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Gordon, 2004; Hanks, 2005; Hargreaves, 1992; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Zembylas, 2007; Zevenbergen, 1996). The second concerns the distinctive influence every individual's intrapsychological historical, educational, cultural, and social ontogeny (Bakhtin, 1986; Bourdieu, 1993; Hanks, 2005; Rosenblatt, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) exerts that affects how individuals cognitively and affectively interact with each other as part of their dialogic

exchanges. A third possible explanation is that as second- and third-year M.F.A. high-residency program students, the students observed were so well acquainted with each other and conversed so frequently outside of class that sharing information, even empathetic messages, was deemed superfluous in the workshop proper (T. De Haven, personal communication, December 8, 2011).

#### Online communication: Privacy and electronic literacy

Both subordinate components of online communication, privacy and electronic literacy, had the potential to impact face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshop participants as students and instructors were heavily dependent on computers for access to Microsoft Word for writing manuscripts. They were also dependent on the Internet for writing, sending, and receiving emails and accessing their university's virtual learning environment for communications related to their workshop.

However, as was demonstrated in part by this case study, in a growing technically savvy age concerns about electronic literacy are a decreasingly important issue as neither privacy nor electronic literacy proved to be particularly problematic for any of the workshops participants. Instead, meteorological issues and equipment malfunctions rather than concerns about privacy or personal computer know-how affected participants regarding any computer-mediated communications. While electronic literacy cannot be totally ignored, participants in all three workshops indicated it was not an issue of concern for them. Rather, as indicated above, foul weather and equipment breakdowns were greater areas of concern due to participants in all three workshops needing access to the Internet in order to access the two virtual learning environments Blackboard and eBulletin and to send emails as these were the primary means of communication to



facilitate discourse, increase and enhance student-to-student and student-to-instructor contacts, provide prompt feedback, and increase time on task as a way to disseminate critiques, questions, and manuscripts prior to workshop meeting times. It also served as a way to privately and respectfully deal with personality conflicts that occurred between participants in the face-to-face mediated and in one of the two computer-mediated workshops.

Notwithstanding, recent research (Clegg et al., 2003; Hawisher et al., 2004; Neuman & Celano, 2006) indicates there continues to be sufficient disparity in user groups, especially those from lower SES brackets, to consider this to be an on-going issue for educators. Therefore, since this latter aspect could impact computer-mediated applicants and program administrators responsible for assessing those applicants, a potential student's electronic literacy should be considered to ensure it is not a potential detriment to successful program completion of an optional-residency creative writing program.

### Interactivity

As indicated earlier, interactivity subdivides into immediacy or the frequency and duration of dialogue; communication styles including nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues; reciprocity; and organization and program cultures.

### Interactivity: Communication styles, paralanguage, dramaturgical cues, and reciprocity

While some researchers have found gender strongly affects communication styles (Clegg et al., 2003; Rovai, 2001), only minimal evidence from the current case study supported this contention as in the face-to-face mediated and in one of the computer-mediated workshops the two individuals that demonstrated the most dissatisfaction were

both men. These individuals employed at various times a contentious, dominant, and/or precise (Norton, 1986) communication style while other participants, whether male or female, consistently used open, relaxed, friendly, attentive, and for some participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop, animated communication styles (Norton, 1986). In the face-to-face mediated workshop, one participant in particular used a dominant, precise, and at times contentious communication style. Accentuating his negative communication styles were his nonverbal behaviors expressed via his body language and facial expressions, and his dramaturgical choice of persistently sitting at the end of the conference table, a position traditionally associated with authority. As a result, based on interview comments from the instructor and some of the other students, his behaviors when receiving and giving criticism discouraged extended reciprocal dialogue which further diminished social presence within the group. As this curtailed discussion, less learner autonomy was achieved as participants from the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated in their interviews.

The same viewpoint was voiced by some of the participants in the one of the computer-mediated workshops who indicated they were uncertain of some peers' meanings in their comments. For example, Sophie stated in her interview: "I gave...less emphasis to Charles and Mia as their critiques had more negative comments or were less clear or off the mark for me. This I find often happens in classes—some people 'get' your writing and you get theirs and others don't click as well."

Although participants from the face-to-face mediated workshop who were interviewed indicated they were accustomed to a class getting side-tracked into tangential issues, this was not the case in the face-to-face workshop that was observed. Discourse

remained firmly task-oriented as no one except for the instructor ever integrated any self-revelatory information, and even then it was directly related to the discussion of a manuscript and was provided as a demonstrative point in conjunction with direct instruction (Rex et al., 2002). By contrast, participants in the computer-mediated workshop did occasionally take the time to share personal anecdotal information, which given their heightened levels of immediacy due to their course requirements and the fact that they had a three-day time frame in which to respond, tended to increase overall reciprocity and self-revelation, and therefore social presence leading to reduced psychological distance (Cutler, 1996; Moore, 1997). Consequently, while their discourse was primarily instrumental, throughout the year, participants in the computer-mediated workshop frequently and consistently interjected personal, sometimes quite revealing information about themselves, their families, their quirks and fears, their successes and triumphs, sharing everything from idiosyncratic phobias to vacation plans.

Since socio-emotional messages whether of an empathetic or a self-revelatory nature invite reciprocity which in turn increases social presence, when Charles, in one of the computer-mediated workshops, argued with his peers regarding some of his stories' intent. His peers remonstrated with a mixture of socio-emotional and task-oriented messages. Using friendly, not contentious, communication styles, other participants deflected what threatened to be a polemic confrontation when responding to Charles' sardonic responses. For example,

**Charles:** Please let the conversation flow, and be both cutting and incisive!

**Graham:** Sounds hostile. Not my kind of playground. How about honest and collaborative?

**Sheila:** I like this playground better, too :)

In contrast, as previously noted, because the face-to-face mediated workshop maintained a relatively low social presence, the group was still experiencing limited reciprocal dialogue in response to William's similar negative attitude at the end of the first semester. Such low levels of social presence resulted in increased psychological distance manifested as a lack of trust and respect that some participants indicated negatively affected their learner autonomy.

#### Interactivity: Immediacy

In the face-to-face mediated workshop immediacy was also less robust due to logistical issues. The course met once a week for two hours and forty minutes. With time designated for a brief break mid-way through class, the actual meeting time was on an average reduced to an average of two and one-half hours as some nights students took longer to return to class at break times or the class ran over five to ten minutes. Moreover, time for discourse and instruction time was further reduced due to the need to address necessary clerical and logistical issues like scheduling students for upcoming workshops, discussing book title choices for supplemental readings, announcing and encouraging participants to read First Novelists' entries, discussing highlights of the AWP conference, disseminating critiques after each manuscript discussion, and passing out manuscripts for the following week's workshop. While these were normal and appropriate occurrences for any face-to-face mediated workshop, they nevertheless were substantial time consumers. Additionally, the class consisted of eleven students, which though considered the median number for workshops (Bell, 1997; Gardner, 1983b) some participants, Roy and Lewis in particular, felt was too big and therefore time restrictive. Also, because it was a novel workshop manuscript submissions were necessarily quite

lengthy (35 to 40 pages). Combined, these factors curtailed the number of comments and the amount of time that could be spent on each manuscript as three manuscripts were typically discussed per workshop to ensure every individual's manuscript of thirty-five to forty pages was the focus of peer review seven times over the year in addition to time allotted for craft-related discussions of published works. In spite of the teacher's instructions and frequent reminders to be respectful of time when speaking and her high expectations for quality input, there invariably were times one or more speakers tended to be prolix and when several speakers reiterated points already discussed without adding new insight. Naturally reticent students repeatedly had to be called on as they rarely volunteered to speak on their own. This latter group of students spoke less and of shorter duration which also led to decreased social presence and therefore an overall decreased sense of community and learning due to increased psychological distance between participants. Finally, though critical, specific craft-related direct instruction pertaining to students' manuscripts and discussion of supplemental readings further decreased students' individual opportunities to reciprocate. Though again this was due primarily to restricted class time that was available as the class met once each weekly for an average of two and one-half hours per class. Combined, these factors reduced immediacy and increased psychological distance.

Participants in the computer-mediated workshop demonstrated heightened immediacy due in part to the instructor's high expectations built into the course design by specifically requiring students to write a minimum number of paragraphs for their initial responses in addition to a set number of critical responses also of a set length. Her own prompt feedback wherein she interwove direct instruction and comments further enabled

her to demonstrate and encourage reciprocity and immediacy. Computer-mediated communication also gave the instructor and students the advantage of making it impossible for participants to interrupt, over-speak, or monopolize time. Moreover, the three-day time frame of the workshop further supported immediacy and reciprocity by simply allowing participants more time to respond when discussing manuscripts in addition to craft-related discussions compared to the weekly two hours and forty minutes set aside for the face-to-face mediated workshop. While participants in the computer-mediated workshops admitted that computer-mediated communication is time-consuming, they indicated they found they preferred it as it enabled them to be more articulate in their comments and allowed them greater flexibility as they could “dip in and out” of dialogic exchanges as their time and schedules allowed during the three days allotted for each weekly workshop. Moreover, computer-mediated participants stated they could always “catch up” even if they were ill, had work-related delays, or equipment problems as they had three days to respond. Paradoxically, while Graham was somewhat exacerbated by considerable differences in time zones that delayed responses, other computer-mediated workshop participants indicated they like having extra time to respond as it allowed them time to think more deeply and carefully about their answers and questions to others’ comments. This latter feature of being able to consider and edit their comments was thus another feature computer-mediated workshops participants indicated they highly valued, a finding McMahon (1997) found in her computer-mediated research.

### Interactivity: Organization and program cultures

While it was beyond the scope of this case study to explore the specific program cultures of EMU's and NSU's creative writing programs, sufficient research on institutional-styled cultures and the trickle down effects such cultural philosophies and attitudes project onto employees and students has been conducted to substantiate the validity of its existence for the researcher's current purposes (Abramson, 2009; "Advice from the Programs," 2011; Bourdieu, 1993; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Gordon, 2004; Hanks, 2005; Hargreaves, 1992; Lish, 1994; Marsh, 2006; Schein, 1984; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Zevenbergen, 1996).

Evidence of such influence was illustrated in the face-to-face mediated and the computer-mediated workshops' students' comments regarding their overall satisfaction with their workshop discussions and production of their individual manuscripts. Students in the face-to-face mediated workshop whose prior workshop experience had been more or less restricted to short fiction therefore indicated as William did that the format was inadequate for novel writing. Since there is no indication in the literature that the workshop approach differs based on genre, it appears that William's perception that his peers were unable to critique his work appropriately was based on his opinion that since his peers' previous prose fiction workshop experiences had been limited to critiquing short fiction they were incapable of properly critiquing novel manuscripts. By contrast, because the majority students in the computer-mediated workshops had already taken workshops in multiple genres and therefore had more expansive experiential workshop histories, they indicated they were very satisfied. William's negative perception therefore reiterates and supports the idea that it is cultural, social, educational, and historical

experiential factors, not the mediating nature of the workshop, which largely determines affective efficiency and efficacy of a creative writing workshop. Additional supporting evidence is the fact that even when some students in the computer-mediated class integrated their knowledge of screenwriting techniques into their short narratives that others disagreed with the discussion was lively, at times contentious, but never curtailed.

The other influencing factor that appears to have influenced individual behaviors is the fact that most of the participants in the face-to-face workshop as second- and third-year M.F.A. students knew each other relatively well. At the same time it was evident that certain members had closer friendships with certain members than with others. While not unusual, this too affected participants' interactivity which based on students' comments and observations resulted in psychological distancing. Conversely, participants in the computer-mediated workshops replicated the subjects in Cutler's (1996) study who also decreased psychological distancing by exchanging socio-emotional messages simply because they did not know each other. Thus by the end of the first semester, while participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop were responding with reticence and diffidence to William's negative verbal and nonverbal communications, participants in the computer-mediated workshop had sufficiently increased their socio-emotional messaging to reveal personal information. Over time this appeared to lead to increased satisfaction with the comments they received from each other regarding their stories as they had greater trust and respect for one another.

Combined, these findings indicate four factors. First, a program's culture can affect learning autonomy which in part governs learners' experiential writing experiences. Second, participants' cultural, social, educational, and historical ontogenies



impact students' willingness to interact with other group members which in turn affects psychological distance. Third, the relative anonymity of computer-mediated communication can lead to increased interactivity, reciprocity, and socio-emotional messaging. This in turn tends to reduce psychological distancing which increases increased learner autonomy as expressed by more convivial manuscript discussion. Fourth, computer-mediated workshops' extended meeting times allow more time for discourse facilitation, direct instruction, and reciprocity amongst members, which prompts an increased exchange of socio-emotional messages. Combined, these factors enhance the pedagogical and affective features of the social constructivist designed writing workshop which in turn leads to increased learner autonomy.

#### Recapitulation of Findings with regard to Research Question Number Three

These divergent outcomes regarding social presence in the face-to-face mediated workshop and the computer-mediated workshop support previous researchers' (Duncan, 2005; Gunawardena, 1995; Keisler et al., 1984; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Stodel et al., 2006; Tu, 2000; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Walther, 1992, 1995) findings that strictly task-oriented participants who fail to integrate socio-emotional messaging result in decreased social presence that indicate a group lacks mutual trust and respect in and for each other. These deficiencies increase a group's sense of psychological distance. Concerning the three workshops observed for this case study there was evidence from the outset of dissatisfaction on the part of two male participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop and one male member in one of the computer-mediated workshops. Their dissatisfaction supports the findings of previous research regarding how participants' attitudes and actions affect other participants.

- Negative nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and other dramaturgical cues can deter interaction in a face-to-face mediated workshop in spite of a strong teaching presence and previously established familiarity amongst participants (Bourdieu, 1993; Fleckenstein, 1999; Gunawardena, 1995; Mehan, 1992; Short et al., 1976; Smagorinsky, 2001; Walther, 1992).
- Conversely, the absence of visual nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues can counter negative written communication styles if a strong enough social presence has been established due to an adept and robust teaching presence (Gunawardena, 1995; Rachotte, 2002a,b; Walther, 1992).
- Strictly task-oriented workshops lead to decreased social presence (Duncan, 2005; Keisler et al., 1984; Stodel et al., 2006; Rovai et al., 2008) even when participants know each other well.
- A strong teaching presence alone is insufficient to establish social presence if participants' social, cultural, educational, and historical ontogeny, their respective *habitués*, are substantially divergent (Mehan, 1992; Smagorinsky, 2001).
- Variations in expected behaviors on the part of participants lead to decreased social presence due to decreased immediacy, reciprocity, and self-revelation which adversely affects cognitive presence or learner autonomy (Barry & Crant, 2000; Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993; Smith-Lovin & Robinson, 2006).
- Prior cultural, social, educational, and historical experiences as influenced and shaped by a creative writing program's culture exert a strong influence on individuals' transactional reading and writing that can negatively affect a writing

group's cohesive and successful establishment of a pedagogically supportive social presence (Garrett, 1994).

- A strong teaching presence that incorporates a clear rubric and high expectations, on-going teacher immediacy, reciprocity, and socio-emotional messaging are necessary components for facilitated discourse that increases reciprocity and immediacy between students and encourages students' socio-emotional messaging. Combined, these factors diminish possible affective disadvantages associated with spatial and temporal differences.
- Combined, they also help establish a strong social presence due to reduced psychological distance which in turn increases cognitive presence (Gunawardena, 1995; Stodel et al., 2006; Swan & Shih, 2005; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Tu & McIsaac, 2002; Walther, 1992, 1995).

#### **Research Question Number Four**

How effectively and efficiently do computer-mediated workshops enhance students' prose fiction writing development and potential to write prose fiction of sufficient quality to be seriously considered for publication by real world publishing houses compared to participation in face-to-face workshops?

According to Vygotsky (1978) intellectual and cognitive development is defined as a learner's ability to construe meaning from information provided through socialization. It follows therefore that cognitive development which leads to learner autonomy is in proportion to social presence (DeVries, 1997; Dewey, 1964; Garrison et al., 2001; Moore, 1997; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Tudge, 1992; Vygotsky, 1978; Wilhelm, 2002). In other words, demonstration of a high social presence in a teaching and learning community leads to increased learner autonomy because community members participate in robust dialogic exchanges focused on real-world problems that

purposely do not have facile solutions. Furthermore, when communities are focused on solving authentic or real-life problems (Jonaseen & Kwon, 2001; Petraglia, 1998) participants are likely to propose multiple solutions that frequently cause participants to disagree. Since conflict is a natural and anticipated component of the problem-solving process, learners are expected to confront, resolve, and proceed from conflict to resolution (DeVries, 1997; Dillard, 1994).

Paradoxically, the more diverse and unique community members' social, historical, cultural, and educational backgrounds are the more likely the community will develop richer, albeit more diverse and complex solutions, and subsequently experience greater difficulty reaching agreement (Rovai, 2001; Petraglia, 1998). Equally paradoxical is the fact that while differences lead to conflict, they also contribute to the community's dynamic discourse that ultimately results in the most innovative resolutions assuming community members have established sufficient trust and respect, perceived as reduced psychological distance, in each other to resolve conflicts amicably as mutual trust and respect enable participants to consider alternative solutions instead of automatically dismissing them (Garrett, 1994; Rovai, 2001; Schein, 1984; Smagorinsky, 2001; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

Establishing such trust and respect, however, researchers indicate depends in part on teaching presence as conveyed through an instructor's ability to design and organize instruction that ensures students participate in active self-directed authentic tasks that include opportunities for participants to decrease psychological distance between themselves by providing opportunities for them to exchange socio-emotional messages.

Teachers also need to promote diversity, encourage discourse by providing and offering feedback and cogent direct instruction (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

The second determining factor of successful problem-solving lies with the participants themselves. Every adult participant enters a community's discourse with well-developed pre-conceived concepts and precepts based on his/her already extensive social, historical, cultural, and educational ontogeny. For this reason, as creative writing teachers and other educators (Bell, 1994, 1997; Dillard, 1994; Gardner, 1983a; Mehan, 1992; Smagorinsky, 2001) have indicated creative workshops' cohesion, like other teaching and learning communities, are affected by the social, cultural, historical, and educational capital their participants have accumulated prior to participating in the workshop as those elements strongly affect their transactional reading and writing and their dialogic exchanges (Bakhtin, 1986; Cole, 1999; Cutler, 1996; Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983; Rosenblatt, 2005).

Consequently, factors like age, work habits, even travel experiences impact whatever *social* and *cultural* capital an individual utilizes when reading and writing his/her own manuscripts as well as when critiquing others' manuscripts as these factors expose him/her to as much variance as what participants read outside of their workshops, where they live, how and where they worship, whom their families are, what their past education has been, and what they do for a living.

These critical elements have considerable impact regarding any teaching and learning community, especially a creative writing workshop. For this case study three workshops taught by two instructors were observed. Both instructors were published writers and veteran creative writing workshop instructors. Both utilized well designed

and organized instructional techniques. Both instructors maintained frequent contact with students, provided prompt feedback, expressed in their syllabi high expectations, maintained fluid and dynamic discourses, and as necessary provided direct instruction both in and out of designated workshop meeting times.

There was, however, considerable disparity in students' cultural, social, educational, and historical ontogenies. As previously indicated, while no specific demographics were requested from participants, comments students made in class introductions and during class in addition to information including photos posted on eBulletin by computer-mediated participants and visual observations of students in the face-to-face mediated workshop indicated substantial variances among participants.

Proof of such differences were evident from the outset in participants' chosen genres and fiction writing styles as some participants repeatedly preferred to experiment with a variety of writing styles ranging from parody to allegory while others just as repeatedly tended to employ more traditional literary styles. Similarly while some participants wrote exclusively about familial conflicts, others chose to write about international issues. Critical comments similarly reflected divergent ontogenies as again it was clear from such comments made in both the face-to-face mediated workshop and in the computer-mediated workshops that different participants clearly understood and related to certain types of writing, while others felt alienated and confused by some writers' genre choices and writing styles. As a result, the tone of both written and spoken critiques was illustrative of individuals' established social, cultural, historical, and educational histories. For example, Charles's peers criticized him for attempting to transfer screenwriting techniques to narrative fiction. William felt because he and his

peers had primarily been exposed to prose writing and critiquing just short stories they were not able to successfully critique novel manuscripts.

#### Recapitulation of findings with regard to Research Question Number Four

Based on data gathered from participants' responses to interview questions at the end of the year-long workshop courses, the researcher found the present case study supported other researchers' findings (Gunawardena, 1995; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Walther, 1992). As these researchers have indicated, attainment of cognitive presence or learner autonomy does not depend on the mediating communication tool, but on other dynamic factors. With specific regard to creative writing teaching and learning communities the researcher determined the following.

- Cognitive presence or learner autonomy is especially difficult to obtain in a creative writing workshop due in large part to the extremely subjective nature of individuals' transactional reading and writing (Bell, 1994; Fleckenstein, 1999; Roberts, 1993; Rosenblatt, 2005) and interpretation of discursive dialogue per interactive theory (Bakhtin, 1986; Holoquist, 1983; Morson, 1983; Sperling, 1996).
- Learner type, which is largely shaped by a person's *habitus*, similarly affects a participant's attainment of learner autonomy in either a face-to-face mediated or in a computer-mediated workshop.
- Individuals' discrete social, cultural, educational, and historical ontogenies in general affect how they interact with other workshop participants affectively per affect control theory (Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon,

1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993). This in turn affects attainment of cognitive presence or learner autonomy.

### **Final Conclusions**

From this information the following generalized conclusions were reached. First, as demonstrated by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the data compiled and analyzed in Chapter 5, the traditional creative writing workshop as initiated by Foerster and refined by Engle at the University of Iowa remains the dominant creative writing paradigm utilized by face-to-face mediated writing instructors. This creative writing workshop design, which corresponds with the constructs of activity theory and the principles of social constructivism, has been proven time and again to be an effective and efficient teaching and learning paradigm as a way for novice writers to learn to hone their raw ability and desire to write. That both the computer-mediated workshops studied adhered to the same pedagogical design is important since the logistical delivery of instruction and maintenance of discourse are complicated for instructors and students in any asynchronous computer-mediated workshop by the spatial and temporal differences inherent in all asynchronous computer-mediated distance education classes (Gunwardena, 1995; Moore, 1997; Short et al., 1976; Walther, 1992). Thus it is important that the current research demonstrated that a social constructivist paradigm, heavily dependent on dialogic exchange, was as operationally and affectively efficient and effective for the computer-mediated workshops observed as it was for the face-to-face mediated workshop observed.

Second, as indicated by Bransford and his colleagues (2000; 2005), Garrison and his colleagues (2001), and Chickering and Gamson (1987), the reason a social



constructivist teaching design works so well is because the design intermeshes teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence which produce what Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified as the seven principles of good teaching practice (Figure 2-2). These principles are: 1) that teachers should have contact with students; 2) that teachers develop reciprocity and cooperation among students; 3) that teachers use active learning techniques; 4) that teachers give prompt feedback; 5) that teachers emphasize time on task; 6) that teachers communicate high expectations to their students; and 7) that teachers respect their students' diverse talents and ways of learning.

Past and present researchers (Archambault, 1964; Bransford et al., 2000, 2005; Dewey, 1964; Garrison et al., 2001; Rourke et al., 2001; Rovai, 2001; Rovai et al., 2008; Shea et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wilhelm et al., 2001) assert each of these elements is critical to ensure students become autonomous learners. Teaching presence alone, however, these same researchers contend, is not enough, but without it from the outset an equally strong social presence is in jeopardy of being established and maintained. Furthermore, unless a strong teaching presence is maintained, social presence among students is at risk of eroding which would severely cripple the prospects for students to be able to advance from a zone of proximal development to mature comprehension or appropriation due to reduced psychological distance represented by decreased trust and respect amongst participants.

Specific components that denote a strong teaching presence (Figure 2-3) are effective and efficient instructional design and organization that convey to students a teacher's high expectations in terms of the quality and quantity they expect their students to show in their work and in their levels of community participation. It also includes

appropriate learning techniques that engage students' interests and talents regardless of their respective learning types as independent or dependent learners (Diaz & Cartnal, 1999; Hancock, 2002; Wolfe, 2000). Teachers who demonstrate an operational and affective efficient and effective teaching presence also facilitate and maintain dynamic discourse between themselves and their students and between their students encouraging ongoing socio-emotional as well as task-oriented interactivity regardless of participants' physical distances and time variations from each other.

Finally, an effective instructor provides pervasive and adequate direct instruction to ensure students not merely master, but appropriate knowledge which defines them as autonomous learners.

Closely connected to, but not completely dependent on teaching presence, is social presence (Figure 2-3). Similar to teaching presence with its three subcomponents, three subcomponents and nine subordinate components exemplify social presence. Among these is the level of a task's authenticity in terms of its complexity and challenge that predicates the time and effort students are likely to expend on completing a task. For example, harder, more realistic tasks do not have simple solutions because salient information is missing and multiple solutions are possible, any one of which would result in viable solutions. Authentic tasks therefore require more time and effort on the part of participants to reach intersubjectivity or agreement. However, without immediacy and reciprocity between participants intersubjectivity or agreement is unlikely. For while a teaching and learning community's emphasis needs to be task-oriented, researchers have determined that unless social discourse includes self-revelatory information or at least empathetic messages, affective as well as operational reciprocity declines thereby

slowing and hindering the community's problem-solving ability as trust and respect, two critical and essential features of successful social constructivist teaching and learning communities, are tenuous (Gunawardena, 1995; Keisler et al., 1984; Short et al., 1976; Walther, 1992).

Other contributing factors demonstrative of effective reciprocal and cooperative discourse between students and between students and an instructor are frequency and duration of contacts and use of relaxed and open communication styles that incorporate positive paralinguistic, positive nonverbal behaviors, and non-threatening or not overly assertive dramaturgical cues. In a computer-mediated environment paralinguistic and nonverbal behaviors are frequently demonstrated with emoticons. Individually and collectively these discrete elements facilitate discourse because they create an open forum that invites the kind of participation that encourages constructive, not polemic, debate.

Paradoxically, certain nonverbal behaviors, paralinguistic, and dramaturgical cues can adversely affect social presence when such features enable a participant to assume and exert a disproportionate negative affective influence that decreases other participants' reciprocity and their comfort levels due to an increase in psychological distance. When such is the case, social presence in terms of interactivity and the related teaching presence subordinate component of self-revelation are likely to decline as participants are less willing to state their personal opinions regarding peers' manuscripts much less share any personal information that helps establish trust and respect that decreases psychological distance amongst participants.

The other pivotal factor impacting affective social presence concerns students' and instructors' social, cultural, historical, and educational ontogenies. As explained by past researchers (Bakhtin, 1986; Bourdieu, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978) and contemporary researchers (Barry & Crant, 2000; Bransford et al., 2005; Cutler, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hanks, 2005; Marsh, 2006; Mehan, 1992; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001; Swan & Shih, 2005; Stodel et al., 2006; Wertsch, 1998; Zembylas, 2007) individuals' willingness or reticence to communicate is largely based on the four factors of social, cultural, educational, and historical experiences. Combined, these govern the probability a community member is likely to be more or less self-revelatory, to be computer-savvy, and to be a dependent or an independent learner. These same four factors also tend to influence a person's written and verbal, nonverbal, and paralanguage communication styles and therefore influence other participants' affective reactions (Heise, 1989; Heise & Thomas, 1989; MacKinnon, 1994; MacKinnon & Heise, 1993).

Since learner autonomy is in proportion to robust strong teaching and social presences (Bell, 1977; Bourjaily, 1977; Bransford et al., 2000; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Delbanco, 1994; Dillard, 1994; Garrett, 1994; Garrison et al., 2001; Gioia, 1986; Justice, 1977; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001; Tu & McIsaac, 2002) deficits in teaching presence and/or social presence can result in diminished learner autonomy regardless of whether the delivery system is face-to-face mediated or computer-mediated as was demonstrated in the respective workshops observed for this case study.

As previously discussed, instructors for the face-to-face mediated and for the computer-mediated workshops presented a strong teaching presence throughout the one year's observation period. Their respective instructional designs and organization were

clearly laid out, and each instructor presented her respective students with clearly stated high expectations. Each used teaching techniques that were both appropriate and correlated with their respective creative writing workshop's objectives. They encouraged and engaged in reciprocal and cooperative discourse with their students in and out of official workshop meeting times. They both engaged in task-oriented and socio-emotional dialogic exchanges with their students. Finally, based on observation and students' comments, both instructors provided prompt feedback and displayed respect for and knowledge of students' personal and academic differences regarding their chosen writing styles and genres as well as their individual abilities as writers.

Notwithstanding instructors' strong teaching presence and efforts to establish a strong social presence, three participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop, Andrea, Roy, and William, and Charles in one of the computer-mediated workshops, indicated they failed to gain trust or to have respect for all or several of their peers. As a result these participants stated their progress towards learner autonomy had been negatively affected. In light of the strong teaching presence and equally strong social presence of the instructors and most participants in both computer-mediated workshops, the concern voiced by these particular participants about their fellow participants appeared to be contributable to these individuals' variance in their social, cultural, educational, and historical backgrounds. These variances in turn not only resulted in conflicts, which would have been expected and acceptable, but because the discontented participants in each of these workshops lacked a sufficient level of trust and respect in all or several of their respective workshops' peers' ability as writers and critics, critical features for a viable teaching and learning community (Rovai, 2001), these participants, especially

those in the face-to-face mediated workshop who were universally affected by one disappointed peer's attitude due to the weaker social presence, indicated they were unable to fully participate in the teaching and learning community. They therefore indicated in their respective interviews that they did not get as much from their respective workshops as they had from other workshops they were taking or had taken.

In closing, the present research strongly indicates that the critical features determining the success of a computer-mediated workshop do not hinge on the mediating delivery system using different communication tools, but rather on the presence or absence of teaching presence and an equally strong, well established and maintained sense of social presence as cognitive presence or learner autonomy is achieved in proportion to the presence and potency of teaching presence and social presence. That having been said, computer-mediated creative writing classes appear to have certain advantages over face-to-face mediated creative writing classes with certain caveats that definitely helped ensure social presence was secured and maintained in conjunction with an on-going strong teaching presence.

First, unlike a face-to-face mediated workshop which is restricted by time and space to a limited meeting time, a computer-mediated workshop can stretch over several days. This allows students extra time to critique a manuscript and more importantly increased time for the writer to cogently consider and respond after his/her peers have made their initial comments. In the computer-mediated workshops observed for this case study this factor enhanced social presence by increasing immediacy and reciprocity and, based on other researchers' findings (Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Walther, 1992) and observations, increased socio-emotional messaging between participants.

Secondly, while it is standard for participants in face-to-face mediated workshops, including the ones observed for this case study, to comment and/or to ask questions at the close of the discussion of his/her manuscript, as participants from the face-to-face mediated workshop stated in their interviews, they felt so overwhelmed by the discussion that they did not have time to formulate questions. For example, Cierra stated:

[I]t can be a lot to process and I hadn't had time to formulate questions. In some instances, and this will sound crass, I really didn't care that much about what was said and didn't need to hear more of it!

William was a bit more positive:

I think... people tend to be a little overwhelmed at the end of hearing their work discussed. So much is said—sometimes we do go on for kind of a while—that by the end of it all I am usually ready to just move on, because I'm still processing. I think it's pretty common for people to go back and ask each other questions about their comments outside of class, either in person or through E-mail, once things have settled a bit. I have done this and seen this take place many times.

Rosie concurred with William's assessment:

I think, speaking for myself, that it's awfully difficult, right away, at the end of workshop to really formulate a question about the critiques one is still just taking in. Usually, I would take time after workshop to review comments and suggestions, and I met with [the instructor] one on one after nearly every workshop to discuss my reactions to comments, and I also always found myself talking further about my work with my classmates outside of the workshop setting. During those less formal discussions, and after some time to digest the critiques, I did indeed ask questions, it just didn't happen during the actual workshop. In addition, my specific questions about my work were often expressed in short letters to readers in the manuscript, so rarely was there some topic I wished to hear about that wasn't discussed. I had already asked.

None of the other participants, however, aside from Rosie and William indicated they conferred with peers outside of class. Additionally, while some participants aside from Rosie began to embed questions in their manuscripts they wished their peers to address, this was not true of all participants, nor was it routinely done by those who did do so until much later in the year.

Paradoxically, peers' critiques lead to a secondary issue for participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop. Even though the instructor continually exhorted them to "write forward," most of the students rewrote previously submitted chapters two or three times based on workshop discussions which detracted from the original objective to draft a complete novel. The fact that so many of his peers continued to rewrite sections previously submitted was one of William's complaints. As a result he suggested "implementing a rule that you can't re-work and re-submit a scene or section—let us know of any important changes in a writer's memo and move forward, forward, forward."

A third advantage of the computer-mediated format is that the instructor can quantify requirements for participation. While instructors of face-to-face mediated workshops are able to do this with written critiques they require, they cannot do so during actual workshop discussions as any attempt to quantify the number and length of time participants speak would severely hinder, diminish, or even extinguish valuable discourse about the manuscript as both instructor and participants' attention would necessarily be taken up keeping time records and scores regarding how often and for how long someone spoke. Such quantitative data, however, can easily be tracked during a computer-mediated discourse without affecting the flow or content of the discourse. Moreover, by quantifying the response requirements, the computer-mediated instructor accomplished critical social presence objectives. First, by ensuring a minimum amount of immediacy and reciprocity, she not only quantitatively increased the likelihood of social presence, she increased it qualitatively as well since the more people communicate and interact



dialogically, the greater the likelihood they will share personal information thereby increasing social presence (Cutler, 1996; Gunawardena, 1995; Walther, 1992).

Also, that the computer-mediated instructor had participants introduce themselves using a Proust-like questionnaire that asked for innocuous socio-emotional information like “what one item would you would want to have if stranded on a desert island,” what they did when they were not writing, and what types of writing they preferred further reduced psychological distance that again enhanced the establishment of social presence at the very beginning of the workshop. While the face-to-face mediated workshop instructor used similar techniques at the outset and during the workshop, individual responses were more repressed. This again appears to have been due to their respective social and cultural backgrounds in addition to nonverbal behaviors on the part of others.

The fourth and final advantage concerns the fact that assertive nonverbal behaviors, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues can create an imbalance in a group’s affective dynamics. Conversely, their absence in a social constructivist teaching and learning community can prove to be more beneficial than detrimental even when written communications become negative. For example, William, a face-to-face mediated workshop participant and Charles, a computer-mediated workshop participant indicated in their respective interviews they were competitive and tended to assert themselves in workshops.

Consequently, even though most students in the face-to-face mediated workshop were previously acquainted, and indicated in their interviews they frequently conversed socially regarding workshop matters outside of class, some participants, in accord with affect control theory (MacKinnon & Heise, 1994) indicated they curtailed their responses

in class or refrained all together from verbally commenting when a classmate they were well acquainted with assertively communicated verbally and nonverbally his dissatisfaction with the class and its participants. This led to an overall decrease in the workshop's social presence as the researcher observed and as some participants like Andrea, Roy, and the instructor verified in their interviews.

By contrast, when Charles responded negatively to his workshop peers' attempts to explain why and how they disagreed with his manuscript and tried to offer constructive suggestions, which Charles strongly disagreed with, his peers indicated in their interviews their sense of interactivity with the group was only marginally affected by Charles' attitude and comments.

### **Limitations**

It is understood that research studies are imbued with limitations; the current case study had four. First, only three workshops, one face-to-face mediated and two computer-mediated, were observed. Second, the workshops were limited to prose fiction while in reality creative writing workshops teach poetry, drama, screenwriting, creative nonfiction, children's literature, and young adult literature. Correlatively, because one was devoted to novels and the other to short fiction, manuscript writing requirements regarding the length of weekly submissions were substantially different. Third, both workshops used a traditional workshop approach. Though this is the most common approach used, it is not the only approach instructors use (Blythe & Sweet, 2008; Guevara, 1998; Hollis, 1992; Holtman & Lent, 1995; Lish, 1994; Shelnut, 1994; Smiley, 1994). Moreover, even amongst those that do use the traditional approach, research indicates there is considerable variance among instructors (Bly, 2001; Smiley, 1994).

Fourth, only fourteen of the twenty-two student participants were interviewed, and only two instructors were observed and interviewed.

Notwithstanding these limitations, it should be noted qualitative researchers Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Lincoln (1995) contend size is not the most relevant factor for qualitative research as it is up to the receiver to generalize data to other situations as opposed to the researcher proposing a definitive stance. With this in mind three discrete creative prose fiction writing workshop groups constitute a meaningful representation of creative prose fiction writing workshops as research conducted by Kealey (2008), May (2011), and *Poets & Writers* (“MFA Nation,” 2011) indicate EMU’s and NSU’s programs reasonably represent other creative writing programs in terms of requirements, location, faculty, and students.

Of greater importance in terms of limitations is that only two instructors, albeit both veteran teachers, were observed. However, it was especially helpful that the instructor for two computer-mediated workshops the researcher observed for this case study were her first workshops using an entirely electronic mode. Therefore, that she successfully transferred her pedagogical knowledge and experience as an instructor of face-to-face mediated workshops to a totally electronic medium was as a strong indicator, albeit not a definitive one, of the potential ability other instructors with similar knowledge, skills, and ability have to transfer their teaching knowledge, ability, and skills to a computer-mediated delivery system.

A third component only moderately examined during the current research was technology in general. In the current case study only two of the participants indicated they had electronic literacy concerns. Sheila, who referred to herself as a “techno-moron”

addressed her pre-workshop concerns about her ability to navigate the electronic forum in an email to the researcher. Such concerns she later indicated never materialized. Cierra said in her interview she was not “computer-savvy,” but like Sheila never gave any other further indication during the workshop or to the researcher that her lack of sophisticated computer-mediated skills hindered her workshop experience.

On the other hand, while several participants in the computer-mediated workshop, including the instructor, indicated they did experience electronic-related issues during the course of the study ranging from broken equipment to disrupted Internet service, no one indicated they had any concerns with regard to electronic privacy or electronic literacy other than those already noted. Nor did any of the problems participants encounter appear to have been any more problematic for computer-mediated workshop participants than inclement weather, health issues, or any other personal experiences were for participants in the face-to-face mediated workshop. Again, however, no definitive conclusion can be reached based on the small number observed. Although, given that even participants who voiced concerns regarding their electronic literacy were satisfied, electronic literacy issues appear to be of less critical concern due in general to today’s higher technological savvy culture and rising generation of computer users, as noted earlier this issue cannot be dismissed due to disparities in SES, which researchers (Neuman & Celano, 2006) have demonstrated continue to negatively affect users’ access and electronic literacy.

In spite of these limitations, the current case study demonstrates trustworthiness in terms of validity and reliability due to the fact that the researcher employed the above mentioned methodologies of triangulation, longitudinal observation, peer examination or debriefing, and external auditing, which qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2003, 2007;

Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2009) consider to be requisite criteria for establishing validity and reliability.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the findings of the current study three specific recommendations for future study appear germane. First, additional workshops should be observed taught by different instructors. Those observed and interviewed for this dissertation used a social constructivist methodology which research indicates is the prevailing method. However, because it is not the only method utilized further study will need to be conducted to determine if different paradigms (Barden, 2008; Guevara, 1998; Holtman & Lent, 1995; Lish, 1994; Shelnut, 1994; Smiley, 1994) are equally suited to computer-mediated workshops.

Second, both writing teachers were exemplary creative writing instructors who deftly employed the three constructs of a social constructivist teaching and learning community: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence (Figure 2-3). However, research has provided ample evidence that not all writing teachers incorporate these constructs (Bly, 2001; Gioia, 1986; Keegan, 2006; Lish, 1994; Shellnut, 1989a). Additionally the only current standard criterion for being hired as a creative writing teacher is the fact that an individual has published two or more book-length manuscripts (Lim, 2003). Thus the fact that writing teachers may or may not have an M.F.A. degree does not appear to be a prerequisite for teaching post-secondary creative writing workshops (Milstein, 2010). This, as Bly (2001), Ritter (2001), and Ritter and Vanderslice (2005) indicated, may preclude a writer-cum-teacher from having been exposed to a social constructivist workshop procedure. As a result there is no guarantee

creative writing teachers are cognizant of the proven value of teaching presence and social presence to achieve learner cognition (Ritter, 2001).

For example, Elizabeth Bishop, a major American poet taught creative writing workshops in poetry for many years at Harvard. She was an award-winning poet, but her students discovered she had no talent for teaching it in a creative writing workshop because she had no formal teacher training (Gioia, 1986). On the other hand, Anne Bernays (Milstein, 2010) also an award-winning writer, who does not have an M.F.A. degree, is considered to be an excellent teacher. Notwithstanding Bernays's renowned reputation as an effective creative writing teacher, Bishop's example provides substantial credence to critics' insistence that creative writing teachers should have formal pedagogical training (Bly, 2001; Ritter, 2001; Shelnutt, 1989a). Again, however, given these limited examples more research is necessary.

Third, a related topic for further research would be to determine if computer-mediated workshops are suitable for other creative writing genres, including, but not limited to screenwriting, drama, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Since each of these genres employs different writing craft techniques, further study will be necessary to determine if they too can be taught as effectively and efficaciously as prose fiction writing was proven to be as a computer-mediated workshop.

Fourth, the current case study was limited to just M.F.A. students. However, both the students and the instructors interviewed for this case study clearly articulated their feelings that undergraduate creative writing students lack the necessary confidence or skills necessary to establish social presence. On the other hand, researchers have found age is not particularly salient to establishing social presence in either face-to-face

mediated or in computer-mediated classes (Rex et al., 2002; Rovai, 2001; Smagorinsky, 2001). The current case study similarly found factors other than age govern social presence. Consequently this too indicates further research is necessary.

### **Case Study Conclusions**

Notwithstanding these limitations and indicators for additional study, the following final conclusions were reached based on the data collected through interviews, observations, and an extensive literature review.

- Teaching presence and social presence are the dominant predictors for cognitive presence or learner autonomy in creative prose fiction writing workshops, not the delivery system used for teaching.
- A strong teaching presence alone is insufficient to ensure learner autonomy in both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated creative writing workshops. Notwithstanding, without a strong teaching presence, establishment of a robust social presence is less likely to occur.
- A strong social presence, reflective of participants' trust and respect for each other, is requisite for optimum learner autonomy in both face-to-face mediated and computer-mediated workshops.
- The ability of workshop participants to establish social presence depends in part on the homogeneity of participants' respective *habitus* and *cultural capital* shaped in part by their program's culture or *field*.
- Some individual's *habitus* (social, cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds) precipitate negative communication styles, paralanguage, and dramaturgical cues that can negate establishment of social presence in

face-to-face mediated workshops. Due to the lack of visuals in asynchronous computer-mediated workshops this appears to be less problematic as participants are better able to counter just negative written communication styles if a strong social presence has previously been established.

- While the potential for establishing a strong social presence is the same in both face-to-face mediated workshops and computer-mediated workshops, asynchronous computer-mediated workshops have certain potential advantages compared to face-to-face mediated workshops due to better time logistics for responding in terms of immediacy and reciprocity and for not having to overcome the potential negative affective effects of one or more participant's adverse paralanguage, nonverbal behaviors, and dramaturgical cues.



## List of References

## List of References

- Abramson, S. (2009). The top fifty MFA programs in the United States: A comprehensive guide. *Poets & Writers Magazine* 37(6), 80-95.
- Advice from the programs. (2011). *Poets & Writers Magazine* 39(5), 85-107.
- Allen, D. (2009). Competitive writers. Retrieved from <http://dwight-allen.com/2009/10/competitive-writers/>.
- Allen, I. E. & Seaman, J. (2005). *Growing by degrees: Online education in the United States, 2005*. Wellesley, MA: The Sloan Consortium.
- Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 5(2), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://sloanconsortium.org/jaln/v5n2/assessing-teacher-presence-computer-conferencing-context>.
- Andrews, K. (2009). A house divided: On the future of creative writing. *College English* 71(3), 242-255.
- Archambault, R.D. (1964). Introduction. In R. D. Archambault (Ed.). *John Dewey on Education: Selected writings* (pp. xiii-xxx). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Association of Writers and Writing Programs (2011a). The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs. Retrieved from <http://guide.awpwriter.org/>
- Association of Writers and Writing Programs Board of Directors (2009). *AWP guidelines for creative writing programs and teachers of creative writing*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpPS/guidelines.lasso>.
- Association of Writers and Writing Programs Board of Directors (2011b). *AWP hallmarks of an effective low-residency MFA program in creative writing*. Retrieved from <http://www.awpwriter.org/aboutawp/index.htm>.
- Austen, V. J. (2005). The value of creative writing assignments in English literature courses. *New Writing* 2(2), 138-150.

- Barden, D. (2008). Workshop: A rant against creative writing classes. *Poets & Writers*. Retrieved from [http://www.pw.org/print/477827?cmnt\\_all=1&desination=content/workshp\\_rant\\_against...](http://www.pw.org/print/477827?cmnt_all=1&desination=content/workshp_rant_against...)
- Barry B. & Crant, J. M. (2000). Dyadic communication relationships in organizations: An attribution/expectancy approach. *Organizational Science* 11(6), 648-664.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and late essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bell, M. S. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 1-18). New York: Harper Perennial.
- (1997). *Narrative Design: A Writer's Guide to Structure*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.
- Bell, M. (1977). Interview with S. Wilbers. In S. Wilbers (Ed.), *Inside the Writers Workshop: Interviews with three of its teachers*. *The North American Review*, 262(2), 9-13.
- Benbasat, I., Goldstein, D., & Mead, M. (1987). The case research strategy in studies of information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 11(3), 369-386.
- Berkeley, A. (1997). Changing theories of collegiate theatrical curricula. *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31(3), 77-90.
- Bernard, R. M., Abrami, P. C., Lou, Y., Borokhovski, E, Wade, A., Wonzey, L., Waiet, P. A., Fiset, M., & Huang, B. (2004). How does distance education compare with classroom instruction? A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research* 74(3), 379-439.
- Bezomozgris, D. (2004). Tapka. *Natasha and other stories*. New York: Garrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Billett, S. (2002). Workplace pedagogic practices: Co-participation and learning. *British Journal of Educational Strategies* 50 (4), 457-481.
- Biocca, F. (1997). The cyborg's dilemma: Progressive embodiment in virtual environments. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Education* 3(2), 1-27. Retrieved from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue2/biocca2.html>.
- Bishop, W. (1994). Afterword—Colors of a different horse: On learning to like teaching creative writing. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Colors of a different horse* (pp. 280-295). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- (1992). On being in the same boat: A history of creative writing & composition writing in American Universities. *The Writer's Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://awpwriter.org/m/awpChron/articles/wbishop01.lasso>.
- Bizzaro, P. (2004). Research and reflection in English Studies: The special case of creative writing. *College English* 66(3), 294-309.
- Bizzaro, P. (2009). Writers wanted: A reconsideration of Wendy Bishop. *College English* 71(3), 256-270.
- Bizzell, P. (1991). Classroom authority and critical pedagogy. *American Literary History*, 3(4) 847-863.
- Bly, C. (2001). *Beyond the writers' workshop: New ways to write creative nonfiction*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Blythe, H. & Sweet, C. (2008). The writing community: A new model for the creative writing classroom. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition and Culture* 8(2), 305-325.
- Bordelon, S. (2006). George Pierce Baker's "Principles of Argumentation": "Completely logical"? *College Composition and Communication* 57(3), 416-441.
- Bourjaily, V. (1977). Interview with S. Wilbers. In S. Wilbers (Ed.), *Inside the Writers Workshop: Interviews with three of its teachers*. *The North American Review*, 262(2), 13-15.
- Boulter, A. (2004). Assessing the criteria: An argument for creative writing theory. *new Writing* 1(2), 134-140.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Boyle, T.C. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America*. (pp. 19-37). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Bradley, R. (2010). Green writers (and I'm not talking newbies). Robyn Bradley's blog: Missed my spot! Retrieved from <http://www.robynbradley.com/green-writers-and-im-not-talking-newbies/>.
- Bransford, J., Brown, A., Cocking, R., Donovan, M., & Pellegino, J. W. (2000). *How people learn*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- Bransford, J., Darling-Hammond, L., & LePage, P. (2005). Introduction. In Darling-Hammond, Bransford, J. (Eds.). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp.1-39). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Bransford, J., Derry, S, Berliner, D, Hammerness, K., & Beckett, K. L. (2005). Theories of learning and their roles in teaching. In Darling-Hammond, Bransford, J. (Eds.). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 40-87). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Breuch, L. K. (2004). *Virtual Peer Review: Teaching and Learning about Writing in Online Environments*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brindley, J. E., Walti, C. & Blaschke, L. M. (2009). Creating effective collaborative learning groups in an online environment. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 10(3), 1-18. Retrieved from <http://www.uh.cu/static/documents/AL/Creating%20Effective%20Collaborative%20LG.pdf> .
- Bryant, E. (1988). Medicating blind spots: Or, how the workshop is supposed to work. Retrieved from <http://www.critters.org/wstips.ht>.
- Burnett, G. (2002). The scattered members of an invisible republic: Virtual communities and Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics. *The Library Quarterly* 72(6), 155-178.
- Cain, M.A. (1999a). Introduction to Interchanges: Inquiring into the nexus of composition studies and creative writing. *College Composition and Communication* 51(1), 70-71.
- (1999b). Problematizing formalism: A double-cross of genre boundaries. *College Composition and Communication* 51(1), 89-94.
- (2009). "To be lived": Theorizing influence in creative writing. *College English* 71(3), 229-241.
- Camoin, F. (1994). The workshop and its discontents. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Colors of a different horse* (pp. 3-7). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Carver, R. (1983), Foreword in J. Gardner. *On becoming a novelist* (pp. xi-xxv). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Chickering, A. W. & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin* 39(7), 3-7.

- Clegg, S., Hudson, A., & Steel, J. (2003). The emperor's new clothes: Globalisation and e-learning in higher education. *Journal of Sociology of Education* 24(1), 39-53.
- Cole, M. (1999). Cultural psychology: Some general principles and a concrete example. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R-L. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 87-106). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Connelly F. M. & Clandinin D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher* 19(5), 2-14.
- Corless-Smith, M. (2011). Advice from the programs. *Poets & Writers Magazine* 39(5), 86.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- . (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cutler, R. H. (1996). Technologies, relations, and selves. In L. Strate, R. Jacobson, & S.B. Gibson (Eds.). *Communication and cyberspace: Social interaction in an electronic environment* (pp. 317-333). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Davidson, C. & Fraser, G. (2009). Out of the margins: The expanding role of creative writing in today's college curriculum. *The Writers Chronicle* 42(3), 76-81.
- Delaney, E. J. (2008). The best of the best: Ten top graduate programs in creative writing. *The Atlantic Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200708/mfa-programs>.
- Delbanco, N. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 57-72). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- DeVries, R. (1997). Piaget's social theory. *Educational Researcher* 26 (2), 4-17.
- Dewey, J. (1964). Interest in relation to training the will. In R. D. Archambault (Ed.) *John Dewey on education: Selected writings* (pp. 260-285). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Diaz, D. P. & Carnal, R. B. (1999). Students' learning styles in two classes: Online distance learning and equivalent on-campus. *College Teaching* 47(4), 130-135.
- Dillard, R. H. W. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America*. (pp. 73-88). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Distance education is coming to the black colleges (2004). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 45, 112-114.
- Doyle, C. L. (1998). The writer tell: The creative process in the writing of literary fiction. *Creativity Research Journal* 11(1), 29-37.
- Duncan, H. (2005). On-line education for practicing professionals: A case study. *Canadian Journal of Education* 28(4), 874-896.
- Dunning, J. (2010). Toward a pedagogy of process for creative writing classroom. *Pedagogy Exclusives*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpPed/articles/jdunning01.lasso>.
- Eddey, R. (2011). Create your own MFA in 5 steps: If you can't enroll in a degree program, develop a self-guided curriculum to reach your writing goals. *Writer* 124(2), 35-36.
- Eldridge, C. (2004). *Sharks*. *Unkempt*. Orlando, FL: Harvest Books.
- Elred, J. C. & Hawisher, G. E. (1995). Researching electronic networks. *Written Communication* 12(3), 330-359.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R., & Punamäki (Eds.) *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19-38). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Farber, J. (1998). The Third Circle: On education and distance learning. *Sociological Perspectives* 41(4), 797-814.
- Faust, M. (2000). Reconstructing familiar metaphors: John Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt on literary art as experience. *Research in Teaching of English* 35, pp. 9-34.
- Fenza, D. W. (2000). Creative writing and its discontents. *The Writer's Chronicle*, 50. Retrieved from <http://www.awpwriter.org/magazine/writers/fenza01.htm>.
- . (2009). About AWP: The growth of creative writing programs. Retrieved from The Association of Writers and Writing Programs website <http://www.awpwriter.org/aboutawp/index.htm>.

- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1925). *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner.
- Fleckenstein, K. S. (1999). Writing bodies: Somatic mind in composition studies. *College English* 61(3), 281-302.
- Francis, C. A. (2006). Introduction to control theory. In Kent A. McClelland and Thomas J. Fararo (Eds.) *Purpose, meaning, and action: Control theories in sociology* (pp.139-161). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Frederickson, N., Reed, P., & Clifford, V. (2005). Evaluating web-supported learning versus lecture-based teaching: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives. *Higher Education* 50 (4), 645-664. doi: 10.1007/s1073-004-6370-0
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy for the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Tans.). New York: Continuum Press.
- Gance, S. (2002). Are constructivism and computer-based learning environments incompatible? *Interface: The Journal for Education, Community, and Values*. Retrieved from <http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2002/03/gance.php>.
- Gardner, J. (1983a). *On becoming a novelist*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Gardner, J. (1983b). *The art of fiction: Notes on craft for young writers*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Garramone, G. M., Harris, A. C., & Anderson, R. (1986). Uses of political computer bulletin boards. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 30(3), 325-339.
- Garrett, G. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 107-124). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Garrett, G. (1989) The future of creative writing programs. In J. Moxley (Ed.), *Creative writing in America: Theory and pedagogy* (pp. 3-24). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Garrison, D. R. (2007). Online community of inquiry review: Social, cognitive, and teaching presence issues. *Journal of Asynchronous Training Networks* 11(1), 61-72. Retrieved from <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~nvaughn/collissues.pdf>.
- Garrison, D. R. (2000). Theoretical challenges for distance education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century A shift from structural to transactional issues. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 1(1), 1-17. Retrieved from <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?149.1.1.2>.



- Garrison, R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2001). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet in Higher Education* 2(2-3), 1-19.
- Gass, W. H. (1987, October 11). A failing grade for the present tense. *New York Times Book Review*. Retrieved from [www.times.com/books/98/11/01/specials/gass-present.html](http://www.times.com/books/98/11/01/specials/gass-present.html).
- Gioia, D. (1986, September 15). Studying with Miss Bishop. *The New Yorker*, 90-101.
- Goodyear, P., Jones, C., Asenio, M., Hodgson, V., & Steeples, C. (2005). Networked learning in higher education: Students' expectations and experiences. *Higher Education* 50(3), 473-508.
- Gordon, S.P. (2004). *Professional development for school improvement*. Boston: Pearson.
- Gouge, C. (2009). Conversation at a crucial moment: Hybrid courses and the future of writing programs. *College English* 71(4), 338-362.
- Graff, G. (2009). What we don't say when we *don't* talk about creative writing. *College English* 71(3), 271-279.
- Green, C. (2001). Materializing the sublime reader: Cultural studies, reader response, and community service in the creative writing workshop. *College English* 64(2), 153-174.
- Grenier-Winther, J. (1999). Real issues in the virtual classroom. *The French Review* 73(2), 252-264.
- Grimes, T. (1999). Workshop and the writing life. In T. Grimes (Ed). *The workshop: Seven decades of the Iowa writers' workshop forty-three stories, recollections, and essays on Iowa's place in twentieth century American literature* 1-15. New York: Hyperion.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S., (1988). Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies? In D. Fetterman (Ed.) *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education: The silent scientific revolution*. (pp. 89-115). New York: Praeger.
- Gunawardena, C. (1995). Social presence theory and implications for interaction and collaborative learning in computer conferences. *International Journal of Educational Telecommunications* 1(2/3), 147-166.
- Gunawardena, C. N. & Zittle, F. J. (1997). Social presence as a predictor of satisfaction within a Computer-mediated conferencing environment. *The American Journal of Distance Education* 11(3), 8-26.

- Guevara, M.K. (1998). Out of the ashtray: Revivifying creative writing classes. AWPeLink. Retrieved from <http://www//elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpChron/articles/nguevara01.lasso>.
- Guri-Rosenblit, S. (2005). 'Distance education' and 'E-learning': Not the same thing. *Higher Education* 49(4), 467-493.
- Haake, K. (1994). Teaching creative writing if the shoe fits. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Colors of a different horse* (pp. 77-99). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Hall, D. (1983). Poetry and ambition. *The Kenyon Review* 5(4), 90-104.
- Hamilton, D. (1994). Writing at Iowa. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/Bai/hamilton.htm>.
- Hancock, D. R. (2002). Influencing Postsecondary students' motivation to learn in the classroom. *College Teaching* 50(2), 63-66.
- Hanks, W. (2005). Pierre Bourdieu and the practices of language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34, 67-83.
- Hara, N. & Kling, R. (2000). Student distress in a web-based distance education course. *Information, Communication & Society* 3(4), 557-579. doi: 10.1080/13691180010002297
- Hargreaves, A. (1992). Cultures of teaching: A focus for change. In A. Hargreaves and M. G. Mullen (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development* (pp. 216-240). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harper, G. (2010). Several faces of creative writing. *New Writing* 7(3), 175-178.
- Harrigan, J., Rosenthal, R., & Scherer, K. (2005). *The new handbook of methods in nonverbal behavior research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harris, J. (2001). "Re-writing the subject: Psychoanalytic approaches to creative writing And composition pedagogy. *College English* 64(2), 175-204.
- Hawisher, G. E. & Selfe, C. L. (1991). The rhetoric and the electronic writing class. *College Composition and Communication* 42(1), 55-65.
- Hawisher, G. E., Selfe, C. L., Moraski, B., & Pearson, M. (2004). Becoming literate in the information age: Cultural ecologies and the literacies of technology. *College Composition and Communication* 55(4), 642-692.

- Heise, D. R. (1989). Effects of emotion displays on social identification. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52(1), 10-21.
- Heise, D. R. & Thomas, L. (1989). Predicting impressions created by combinations of emotion and social identity. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52(2), 141-148.
- Heti, S. (2001). The princess and the plumber. *The Middle Stories*. Toronto, ON: House of Anansi Press Limited.
- Hiltz, S. R. & Johnson, K. (1990). User satisfaction with computer-mediated communication systems. *Management Science* 36(6), 739-764.
- Hollis, K. L. (1992). Feminism in writing workshops. A new pedagogy. *Composition and Communication* 43(3), 340-348.
- Holmberg, B. (1989). *Theory and practice of distance education*. New York: Routledge.
- Holquist, M. (1983). Answering as authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's trans-linguistics. *Critical Inquiry* 10(2), 307-319.
- Holtman, J. P. & Lent, M. (1995). Reinventing the graduate fiction workshops: From here to Quarter after Eight. *The Writer's Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awp/Chron/articles/jholtmanmlent01.lasso>.
- Houston, H., Keller, E., Kritzman, L., Madden, J., McGinnis, S., Monta, S., Perl, S., & Swaffer, J. (2001). MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching: Final report. *Profession* (pp. 225-238).
- Internet Legal Resource Group (2009). 2009 Raw Data Law School Rankings. Retrieved from <http://www.irlg.com/rankings/law/index.php/1/asc>.
- Irving, J. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 141-152). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Issroff, K. & Scanlon, E. (2002). Using technology in higher education: An activity theory perspective. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 18, 77-83.
- Jazwinski, C. H. (2000). Gender identities on the world wide web. In C. R. Wolfe (Ed.), *Learning and teaching on the world wide web* (pp. 171-189). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Jonassen, D. H. & Kwon H. I. (2001). Communication patterns in computer mediated versus face-to-face group problem solving. *Educational Technology Research and Development* 49(1), 35-51.

- Justice, D. (1977). Interview with S. Wilbers. In S. Wilbers (Ed.), *Inside the Writers Workshop: Interviews with three of its teachers*. *The North American Review*, 262(2), 7-9.
- Kalamaras, G. (1999). Interrogating the boundaries of discourse in a creative writing class: Politicizing the parameters of the permissible. *College Composition and Communication* 51(1), 77-82.
- Kealey, T. (2008). *Creative writing MFA handbook: A guide for prospective graduate students*. New York: Continuum.
- Keegan, A. (2006). The disease of competence. *The Internet Writing Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.internetwritingjournal/apr06/keegan.38.htm>.
- Keisler, S., Siegal, J., & McGuire, T. W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication. *American Psychologist* 39(10), 1123-1134.
- Kennedy, A. L. (2004). *Paradise*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries.
- Kilmurray, J. (2003). e-Learning: It's more than automation. *The Technology Source Archives*. Retrieved from <http://technologysource.org/article/elearning>.
- Kinne, W. P. (1954). *George Pierce Baker and the American theatre*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Retrieved from [http://www.archive.org/stream/georgepiercebake030409mbp/georgepiercebake030409mbp\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/georgepiercebake030409mbp/georgepiercebake030409mbp_djvu.txt)
- Knowles, M. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education*. New York: Association Press.
- Kroll, J. (1999). Uneasy bedfellows: Assessing the creative thesis and its exegesis. *TEXT Journal* 3 (2), pp. 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct99.kroll.htm>.
- Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. In B. A. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 17-44). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- LaFemina, G. (2011). Demystifying and demythifying the workshop: On the supposed 'lore' of creative writing pedagogy. *Pedagogy Exclusives*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpPed/articles/glafemina02.lasso>.
- . (2008). More than just mentorship and modeling: Creative writers and pedagogy. *Pedagogy Exclusives*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpPed/articles/glafemina01.lasso>.

- . (2003). Teaching craft, teaching criticism: The creative writer in the literature class. *Pedagogy* 3(3) (pp. 431-435).
- Lardner, T. (1999). Locating the boundaries of composition and creative writing. *College Composition and Communication* 51(1), 72-77.
- Larson, T. (1998). Honesty, confession, & other dramas of “creative writing.” Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpChron/articles/tlarson01.lasso>.
- Lawless, C. J. & Richardson, T. E. (2002). Approaches to studying and perceptions of academic quality in distance education. *Higher Education* 44, 257-282.
- Lawless, E. J. (1998). Ars rhetorica en communitas: Reclaiming the voice of passionate expression in electronic writing. *Rhetoric Review* 16(2), 310-326.
- Lewis, C. & Fabos, B. (2005). Instant messaging, literacies, and social identities. *Reading Research Quarterly* 40(4), 470-501.
- Light, G. (2002). From the personal to the public: Conceptions of creative writing in higher Education. *Higher Education* 43(2), 257-276.
- Lim, S. Geok-lin. (2003). The strangeness of creative writing: An institutional query. *Pedagogy: Critical approaches to teaching literature, language, composition, and culture* 3(2), 151-228.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretative research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 1(3), 275-289. doi: 10.1177/107780049500100301
- Lish, G. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 153-175). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Liu, Y. (2002). What does research say about the nature of computer-mediated communication: Task-oriented, social-emotion-oriented, or both? *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Retrieved from <http://www.sociology.org/content/vol006.001/liu.html>.
- Lively, R. L. (2010). Rhetoric’s stepchildren: Ancient rhetoric and modern creative Writing. *International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* 7(1), 35-44.
- Lodato, V. (2009). *Mathilda Savitch*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- MFA Nation: Do you want to be a part of it. (2011). *Poets & Writers* 39(5), 78.

- MacDonald, J. (1989). Guidelines and exercises for teaching creative writing. In J. Moxley (Ed.), *Creative Writing in America* (pp. 83-87). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- MacKinnon, N. J. (1994). *Symbolic interactionism as affect control theory*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- MacKinnon, N. J. & Heise, D. R. (1993). Affect control theory: Delineation and Development. In J. Berger & M. Zelditch, Jr. (Eds.), *Theoretical research programs: Studies in the growth of theory* (pp. 64-103). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- McCory, M. (2011). Among barbarians. Ovid, the classics and the creative writer. *New Writing* 7(3), 192-200.
- McGurl, M. (2009). *The program era: Postwar fiction and the rise of creative writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McFarland, R. (1993). An apologia for creative writing. *College English* 55(1), 28-45.
- McMahon, T. A. (1997). *From isolation to interaction? Network based professional development and teacher professional communication*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 408 257).
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marsh, J. (2006). Popular culture in the literary curriculum: A Bourdieuan analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly* 41(2), 169-174.
- Marsh II, G. E. & Ketterer, J. J. (2005). Situating the zone of proximal development. *Journal of Distance Learning Administration* 8(2), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer82/marsh82.htm>.
- Matthews, R. S., Cooper, J. L., Davidson, N., & Hawkes, P. (1995). Building bridges between cooperative and collaborative learning. *Change* 27(4), 34-40.
- Maxwell, J. (2009). Transcending talk: The role of discussion & context in the creative writing classroom. *Pedagogy Exclusives*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpPed/articles/jmaxwell01.lasso>.
- May, L. (2011). *Low-residency MFA handbook: A guide for prospective creative writing students*. New York: Continuum.

- Mayers, T. (2009). One simple word: From creative writing to creative writing studies. *College English* 71(3), 217-228.
- . (1999). (Re)Writing craft. *College Composition and Communication* 51(1), 82-89.
- Mehan, H. (1992). Understanding inequality in schools: The contribution of interpretative studies. *Sociology of Education* 65(1), 1-20.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Millhauser, S. (1998). *The Knife Thrower. The Knife-thrower: And other stories*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Milstein, D. (2010). Anne Bernays: The curious urge to write. *Provincetown Arts*, 91-97.
- Molm, L. D. (2006). The social exchange framework. In P. J. Burke (Ed.), *Contemporary social psychological theories* (pp. 24-40). Stanford, CA: Stanford Social Sciences.
- Moore, M. G. (1972). Learner autonomy: the second dimension of independent learning. *Convergence* 5(2), 76-88.
- . (1997). Theory of transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 2-28). New York: Routledge.
- Morahan-Martin, J. (2000). Caught in the web: Research and criticism of internet abuse with application to college students. In C. R. Wolfe (Ed.), *Learning and teaching on the world wide web* (pp. 191-219). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Morley, D. (2007). *The Cambridge introduction to creative writing*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Moro, Y. (1999). The expanded dialogic sphere: Writing activity and authoring of self in Japanese classrooms. In Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R., & Punamäki (Eds.) *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 165-182). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Morson, G. S. (1983). Who speaks for Bakhtin? A dialogic introduction. *Critical Inquiry* 10(2), 225-243.
- Moxley, J. M. (1989). *Creative Writing in America: Theory and Pedagogy*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Myers, D. G. (1996). *The Elephants teach: Creative writing since 1880*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Studies in Writing and Culture.

- Myers, D. G. (2008). On the reform of creative writing. Retrieved from <http://www.english.tamu.edu/pers/fac/myers/reform-of-creative-writing.htm>.
- Nabokov, V. (1955). *Lolita*. New York: Vintage International Books.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2008). Distance education at degree-granting postsecondary institutions: 2006-07. (NCES Publication No. 2009044). Retrieved from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubSearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2009044>.
- National Council of Teachers of English. CCCC statement on the multiple uses of writing. *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, November 007. Retrieved from <http://.ncte.org/ccc/resources/positions/multipleuseswriting> accessed 24 May 2009.
- National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.(2004). *How does technology affect access in postsecondary education? What do we really know?* (Publication No. NPEC 2004-831). Retrieved from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/npec>.
- Neff, J. M. (1998). From a distance: Teaching writing on interactive television. *Research in Teaching English* 33(2), 136-157.
- Neuman, S. B. & Celano, D. (2006). The knowledge gap: Implications of leveling the playing field for low-income and middle-income children. *Reading Research Quarterly* 41(2), 176-201.
- Norton, R. W. (1986). Communicator style in teaching: Giving good form to content. In J.M. Civikly (Ed.), *Communicating in college classrooms* (pp. 33-40). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Collins, K. M. T., & Elbedour, S. (2003). Aptitude by treatment interactions and Matthew effects in graduate-level cooperative-learning groups. *The Journal of Education Research* 96(4), 217-230.
- Oxford, R. L. (1997). Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction: Three communicative strands in the language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal* 81(4), 443-456.
- Perse, E. M., Burton, P. I., Kovner, E. S., Lears, M. E., & Sen, R. J. (1992). Predicting computer-mediated communication in a college class. *Communication Research Reports* 9(2), 161-170.
- Peshkin, A. (1993). The goodness of quantitative research. *Educational Research* 22(2), 22-29.



- Peters, O. (1983). Distance education and industrial production: a comparative interpretation in outline. In B. Holmberg (Ed.), *Theory and practice of distance education*. London: Routledge.
- Petraglia, J. (1998). The real world on a short leash: The (mis)application of constructivism to the design of educational technology. *Educational Technology Research and Development* 46(3), 53-65.
- The Proust Questionnaire (2005). New York: Assouline Publishing.
- Pinnegar, S. & Daynes, J.G. (2006). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.). *Handbook of narrative inquiry* (pp. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rashotte, L. S. (2002a). Incorporating nonverbal behaviors into affect control theory. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Retrieved from <http://www.sociology.org/content/vol/996.003/rashotte.html>.
- Rashotte, L. S. (2002b). What does that smile mean? The meaning of nonverbal behaviors in social interactions. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65(1), 92-102.
- Radavich, D. (1999). Creative writing in the academy. *Profession* 1999, 106-112.
- Ragan, T. J. & White, P. R. (2001). What we have here is a failure to communicate: The criticality of writing in online instruction. *Computers and Composition* 18, 399-409.
- Rafaleli, S. (1988). Interactivity: From new media to communication. In R.P. Hawkins, J.M. Wieman & S. Pinegree (Eds.). *Advancing communication science: Merging mass and interpersonal process* (pp. 112-134). Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Rex, L., Murnen, T., Hobbs, J., & McEachen, D. (2002). Teachers' pedagogical stories and the Shaping of classroom participation: "The dancer" and "Graveyard shift at the 7-11." *American Educational Journal* 39(3), 765-796.
- Rice, R. E. & Love, G. (1987). Electronic emotion: Socio-emotional content in a computer-mediated communication network. *Communication Research* 14(1), 85-108.
- Ritter, K. (2001). Writers/writing professionals: Revamping teacher training in creative writing Ph.D. programs. *College English* 64(2), 205-227.
- Ritter, K. & Vanderslice, S. (2005). Teaching lore: Creative writers and the university. *Profession*, 102-112.

- Roberts, Keith A. (1993). Toward a Sociology of Writing. *Teaching Sociology* 21(4), 317-324.
- Robertson, J. S., Grant, M. M., & Jackson, L. (2005). In online instruction perceived as effective campus instruction by graduate students in education? *Internet and Higher Education* 8, 73-86.
- Robinson, D. T. & Smith-Lovin, L. (2006). Affect control theory. In Peter J. Burke (Ed.), *Contemporary social psychological theories* (pp. 137-164). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. (2005). The transactional theory of reading and writing. *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinmann, 1-37.
- Rourke, L., Anderson, T., Garrison, R., & Archer, W. (2001) Assessing social presence in asynchronous text-based computer conferencing. *Journal of Distance Education* 14(3), 51-70.
- Rovai, A. P. (2001). Building a classroom community at a distance: A case study. *Educational Technology Research & Development* 49, 33-48.
- Rovai, A. P. Poston, M. K., & Baker, J. D. (2008). *Distance education in higher education: A programmatic approach to planning, design, instruction, evaluation and accreditation*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sagé, N. (2004). Who are we to judge: The politics of literary evaluation. *AWPelink*. Retrieved from <http://elink.awpwriter.org/m/awpChron/articles/nsage03.lasso>.
- Salaberry, M. Rafael (2000). Pedagogical design of computer mediated communication tasks: Learning objectives and technological capabilities. *The Modern Language Journal* 84(1), 28-37.
- Sarrimo, C. (2010). Creative writing as a communicative act—an artistic method. *New Writing* 7(3), 179-191.
- Saunders, G. (2000). Sea Oak. *Pastoralia*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Scotiabank Giller Prize. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.scotiabankgillerprize.ca/>.
- Schein, E. (1984). Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review* 25 (2), 3-16.

- Selfe, C. (1999). Technology and literacy: A story about the perils of not paying attention. *College Composition and Communication* 50(3), 411-436.
- Shea, P., Pickett, A., & Pelz, W. (2003). A follow-up investigation of “teaching presence” in the SUNY learning network. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 7(2), 61-80. Retrieved from <http://sloanconsortium.org/jaln/v5n2/assessing-teacher-presence-computer-conferencing-context>.
- Shelnutt, E. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 193-208). New York: Harper Perennial.
- . (1989a). Notes from a cell: Creative writing programs in isolation. In J. Moxley (Ed.), *Creative writing in America: Theory and pedagogy* (pp. 3-24). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- . (1989b). Transforming experience into fiction. In J. Moxley (Ed.), *Creative writing in America: Theory and pedagogy* (pp.151-167). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Shepard, L., Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Rust, F. (2005) “Assessment.” In L. Darling-Hammond and J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn to be able to do* (pp. 275-326). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Shivani, A. (2010). The MFA/Creative writing system is a closed, undemocratic, medieval guild system that represses good writing. *Boulevard M* 26(1), 25-37.
- Short, J., Williams, E., & Christie, B. (1976). *The social psychology of telecommunications*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2001). If meaning is constructed, what is it made from? Toward a cultural theory of reading. *Review of Educational Research* 71(1), 133-169.
- Smiley, J. (1994). Interview with A. Neubauer. In A. Neubauer (Ed.), *Conversations on writing fiction: Interviews with thirteen distinguished teachers of fiction writing in America* (pp. 209-227). New York: Harper Perennial.
- Smith-Lovin, L. & Robinson, D. T. (2006). Control Theories of identity, action, and emotion: In search of testable differences between affect control theory and identity control theory. In K. A. McClelland & T. J. Fararo (Eds.), *Purpose, meaning, and action: Control theories in sociology* (pp. 163-187). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Solaroff, T. (1987). The literary campus and the person-of-letters. *The American Poetry Review* 16, 7-10.
- Sperling, M. (1996). Revisiting the writing-speaking connection: Challenges for research on writing and writing instruction. *Review of Educational Research* 66(1), 53-86.
- Stake, R. E. (1967). The countenance of educational evaluation. *Teachers College Record* 687, 523-540.
- (1976). To evaluate an arts program. *Journal of aesthetic education* 10(3/4), 115-133.
- (1994). Methodologies in music education research conference. *Bulletin of the Council for research in music education* 122, 31-44.
- (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake R.E. & Trumbull, D. (1982). Naturalistic generalizations. *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* 7(1), 1-12.
- Stodel, E. J., Thompson, T. L., & MacDonald, C. J. (2006). Learners' perspectives on what is missing from online learning interpretations through the community of inquiry framework. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance learning* 7(3), 1-24.  
Retrieved from <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/325/744>.
- Swan, K., & Shih, L. F. (2005). On the nature and development of social presence in online course discussions. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 9(3), 115-136.
- Teachout, Z. (2009 September 13). A virtual revolution is brewing for colleges. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/11/AR2009091104312\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/11/AR2009091104312_pf.html).
- Tobach, E. (1999). Activity theory and the concept of integrative levels. In Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R., & Punamäki (Eds.) *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 133-146). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tu, C-H. (2000). On-line learning migration: from social learning theory to social presence theory in a CMC environment. *Journal of Network and Computer Application* 23, 27-37.
- Tu, C-H. & McIsaac, M. (2002). The relationship of social presence and interaction in online classes. *The American Journal of Distance Education* 16(3), 131-150.
- Tudge, J. (1992). Process and consequences of peer collaboration: A Vygotskian analysis. *Child Development* 63(6), 1364-1379.

- Turkle, A., Bair, J., Barnett, R. A., Pierce, T. & West, R. (1994). Life in the trenches: Perspectives from five writing programs. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Colors of a different horse* (pp. 35-53). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Twigg, C. A. (2001). *Innovations in online learning: Moving beyond no significance difference*. (Research Report No. 7507). Retrieved from The Pew Learning and Technology Program; Distance-Education.com: Resources & Industry Issues, News, Reviews, Resources, Tools website <http://www.distance-educator.com/elearning/modules.php?op=modload&name=Newsfile&articleesid=7507>.
- Umbach, P.D. & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education* 46(2), 153-184. doi: 10.1007/s11162-004-1598-1
- Vaughn, N. & Garrison, R.D. (2005). Creating cognitive presence in a blended faculty development community. *Internet and Higher Education* 8, 1-12. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.204.11.001
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research* 19(52), 52-90. doi:10.1177/009365092019001003
- (1995). Relational aspects of computer-mediated communication: Experimental observations over time. *Organization Science* 6(2), 186-203.
- Warnock, S. (2009). *Teaching writing online: How and why*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-mediated collaborative learning: Theory and practice. *The Modern Language Journal* 81(4), 470-481.
- (1998). Online learning in socio-cultural context. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 29(1), 68-88.
- Wedemeyer, C. A. (1981). *Learning at the back door: Reflections on non-traditional learning in the lifespan*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Wilbers, S. (1981). *The Iowa Writers' Workshop: Origins, Emergence, and Growth*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Wilhelm, J. D. (2002). *Action strategies for deepening comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Wilhelm, J., Baker, J., & Dube Hackett, T. (2001) *Strategic reading: Guiding students to life Long literacy*. Portsmouth: NH.: Heinemann.
- Wilkins, A. & Ouchi, W. (1983). Effective cultures: Exploring the relationship between culture and organizational performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28(3), 468-481.
- Wolfe, C. R. (2000). Learning and teaching on the world wide web. In C. R. Wolfe (Ed.), *Learning and teaching on the world wide web* (pp. 1-22). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Zembylas, M. (2007). Emotional capital and education: Theoretical insights from Bourdieu. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55(4), 443-463. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00390.x
- Zevenbergen, R. (1996). Constructivism as liberal bourgeois discourse. *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 31, 95-113.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### Interview Questions for Program Administrators

1. What weight/importance do you place on students having knowledge of literary criticism and theory in an M.F.A. program?
2. If you do feel it is critical, do you believe literary criticism and theory should be taught before; coincidental with; or after workshops? Explain.
3. Do you require a standard curriculum for workshops, or do you allow individual instructors to develop their own?
4. Do you think there should be a standard curriculum for workshops? Why or why not? (This is based on information that indicates a number of creative writing programs are mandating a standardized curriculum of their instructors.)
5. What is deemed/considered to be talent? Is there a definitive definition that is used as a hiring/admission criterion for writing instructors or students respectively?
6. In addition to talent how are writing instructors chosen—what criteria are used for hiring? For student admissions?
7. What, in your opinion, makes a workshop efficient?
8. What do you think makes the workshop method an effective method for learning to write creatively?
9. What prompted NSU to elect to offer a total computer-mediated online distance education M.F.A. program? How long has it been available?
10. Of NSU's three options—full-time residency program; low-residency program; and optional total online distance education program—how does each option rank in terms of number of enrollees?
11. Have you found that many online students tend to be established professionals as appears to be the case with your instructor's two classes based on their introductions at the beginning of the class? (This contrasts with the face-to-face workshop participants most of whom are in their twenties and are not employed full-time.)



12. One last technical question, how long have you been NSU's optional-residency's program director and what were the program's particular merits that you wanted to be its program director?

## APPENDIX 2

### Interview Questions for Workshop Instructors

1. How many face-to-face (f2f) writing workshops have you taught? How many computer-mediated online distance education writing workshops have you taught?
2. Having taught both on-line and f2f writing workshops do you have a preference? What do you attribute your preference to (familiarity; your own history as a student with f2f or online workshops; your gender; your age; other)?
3. What is considered to be talent in a would-be writer? Does your school have a definitive definition that is used to define talent? Do you have a personal definition or criteria?
4. What weight/importance do you place on a student's knowledge of literary criticism and theory in an M.F.A. program?
5. Do you believe literary theory and criticism should be taught before; coincidental with; or after workshops? Explain.
6. Some M.F.A. programs are promoting a standardized curriculum for workshop instructors; how do you feel about having a standardized curriculum?
7. How do you build rapport with your online workshop students? How does what you do with online students differ from what you do with face-to-face workshop students?
8. On the average, how often do students request input and/or additional help? Have you noticed a difference between the number and/or the nature of f2f and online students' requests?
9. How do you deal with problematic group members (the big talker, the bully, the shy ones)? What about a group that doesn't bond or coalesce? Have you found this tends to be problem more with f2f or with online groups? (I want to note I have not found that to be a particular problem with these two workshops. At times an individual may have gotten a bit defensive, but the growing rapport amongst group members who are not previously acquainted and are not having face-to-face interaction has been incredible.)

10. Do you see any difference in the effectiveness and efficiency of an online workshop compared to a face-to-face workshop? Explain.
11. Have you found it difficult to compensate for the lack of non-verbals (facial expression, body language, pitch and tone of voice) in a computer-mediated workshop?
12. How much influence do spontaneous/extemporaneous comments make to you when teaching a workshop to help students improve their writing?
13. As a writing instructor, do you feel spontaneous and extemporaneous comments are critical to a writer's development via the workshop experience or are the in-depth online comments an improvement?
14. Many online instructors complain of information overload associated with computer-mediated online distance education. Has this been a problem for you? If so, how have you handled information/communication overloads as an online instructor?
15. Do you feel students integrate writing strategies and techniques from assigned readings into their work?
16. During the workshops I observed a noticeable increase in a sense of community as workshop members became more familiar with each other in spite of their face-to-face separation due to time zones and locations. Did this surprise you or did you expect it? How would you compare this online sense of community to what you have observed/experienced in your face-to-face workshops?
17. In your previous face-to-face workshops to what extent do students follow your and their peers' advice to revise stories? Do you anticipate the same level of influence will be present in your online workshop students' subsequent revisions?

## APPENDIX 3

### Interview Questions for Face-to-Face Mediated Workshop Students

1. How many creative writing workshops have you had as a graduate student? How many total, undergrad and grad? (Numbers are all I need here)
2. How many of these have been face-to-face? Have any been online as distance education classes? (Numbers are all I need)
3. Which characterization as a learner best describes you: a) independent; self-starter; strongly motivated; need little structure; prefers to work by self; abstract thinker or b) prefers group/community activities (not necessarily group projects); likes a lot of structure; deadlines provide needed motivation to complete; concrete and specific thinker? (I appreciate that most of us are a bit of both; but if you can indicate type you might be more of than the other is sufficient)

According to John Gardner (*On Becoming a Novelist*), creative writing students are hampered by having extensive foreknowledge/education in literary criticism and theory as their knowledge tends to make them try to introduce symbolism at the beginning of a novel as opposed to developing character and plot. However, a lot of criticism has been leveled towards M.F.A. students that lack such knowledge/education. I've noticed some instructors teach form and theory concomitant with their workshop. Based on this fact do you:

4. Do you believe literary criticism and theory should be taught before; coincidental with; or after workshops; or not at all? Explain.
5. Do you, or think you might, have a personal preference for workshopping online or face-to-face? Explain the reasons for your preference.
6. If you prefer f2f do you attribute your predilection to having had more exposure as a student to f2f classes (including workshops), your learning style, some other factor such as your age, your gender, or a combination of these factors? (If it is combination, which factors influence you?)
7. What specific difference do you perceive in hearing versus reading comments and questions about your creative writing? Does one method soften or sharpen your reactions when being peer-critiqued in a workshop? When you are a peer critic?

8. What specifically makes a f2f creative writing workshop *efficient* for you?
9. What specifically makes a f2f creative writing workshop *effective* for you?
10. Why did you choose to attend a high-residency M.F.A. program rather than a low-residency program? If you had access to a low-residency program would you have considered it? Prioritized it?

Many creative writing M.F.A. programs have or plan to institute a standard curriculum that would include standardization of procedures, texts, supplemental readings, etc.

11. Do you think there should be a standard curriculum for workshops or should the curriculum be totally left up to individual instructors?
12. What do you realistically expect to get from your current workshop? To date do you feel you are achieving this objective?
13. To date do you feel participating in f2f workshops has helped you become a better/more successful writer? (This question is intended to reflect the mode, not instructors). Explain why or why not.
14. How do you feel when a workshop group does not coalesce? (If this has been your experience, how often has it happened? If not for an entire group for the entire semester, has it ever happened for a single class or two?)
15. When being critiqued or critiquing, how important to you is it to hear a person's tone of voice, make eye contact, and see their physical gestures and body language?
16. As a writing student, how important is immediate/extemporaneous feed-back to you?
17. As a peer critic how important is it to you to be able to give immediate/extemporaneous feed-back to a fellow writer?
18. Because writing workshops traditionally have been taught f2f, conventional wisdom says writing detailed critiques kills spontaneity and the potential insight and triggers for discussion that accompany it. As a f2f writing workshop student do you agree or disagree with this. Why or why not in terms of how it may or may not improve your ability to write successful prose fiction and to help others improve their writing.

19. If writing out comments (and receiving written comments on your own work) is more insightful and in-depth what is the advantage to making and receiving face-to-face comments which may not be as well-thought out because they are extemporaneous?

## APPENDIX 4

### Interview Questions for Computer-Mediated Workshop Students

Please answer each question briefly. One to three sentences will be fine.

1. How many creative writing workshops have you had as a graduate student? How many total, undergrad and grad? (Just numbers are fine.)
2. How many of these have been face-to-face? How many have been online as distance education classes? (Numbers again are all I need.)
3. Which characterization as a learner best describes you: a) independent; self-starter; strongly motivated; need little structure; prefers to work by self; abstract thinker or b) prefers group activities; likes a lot of structure; deadlines provide needed motivation to complete; concrete and specific thinker? (No detailed explanation is necessary if just giving me a letter is sufficient. If you feel you are both kinds, most of us are, which type do you tend to lean towards?)

*According to John Gardner (On Becoming a Novelist), creative writing students are hampered by having extensive foreknowledge/education in literary criticism and theory as their knowledge tends to make them try to introduce symbolism at the beginning of a novel as opposed to developing character and plot. However, a lot of criticism has been leveled towards M.F.A. students that lack such knowledge/education. I've noticed Charlotte teaches form and theory concomitant with her workshop. Based on this:*

4. Do you believe literary criticism and theory should be taught before; coincidental with; or after workshops or not included at all? Why?
5. Do you, or think you might, have a personal preference for workshopping online or face-to-face (f2f)? Explain the reasons for your preference even if you only have experience with one mode?
6. If you prefer f2f do you attribute your predilection to having had more exposure as a student in f2f classes (including workshops), your learning style, or some other factor such as your age, your gender, or a combination of these factors? (If it is combination, which factors influence you?) (A list is fine here)

7. Many f2f workshop students indicate they depend heavily on non-verbals (i.e., facial expressions, body language, a speaker's tone and pitch of voice), how do you as an online workshop student compensate for the absence of non-verbals? Does participating in computer-mediated online distance education workshops tend to make you soften or sharpen your responses when being peer-critiqued in a workshop? When you are a peer critic?
8. What specifically makes an online creative writing workshop *efficient* for you?
9. What specifically makes an online creative writing workshop *effective* for you?
10. Since NSU offers the option of attending some f2f workshops as part of the M.F.A. program, have you taken that option or are you sticking with the total online option? If you plan to take some f2f workshops why do you feel you need any f2f workshops rather than doing everything online?

*Many creative writing M.F.A. programs have or plan to institute a standard curriculum that would include standardization of procedures, texts, supplemental readings, etc.*

11. Do you think there should be a standard curriculum for workshops or should the curriculum be totally left up to individual instructors?
12. To date do you feel participating in online computer-mediated distance education workshop(s) has helped you become a better/more successful writer? (This question is intended to reflect the mode, not instructors). Explain why or why not.
13. How do you feel when a workshop group does not coalesce because a member tries to dominate, is too timid, etc.? (If this has been your experience, how often has it happened? If not for an entire group for the entire semester, has it is ever happened for a single class or two? If it has never been you experience please let me know that too.)
14. Because writing workshops traditionally have been taught f2f, conventional wisdom says writing detailed critiques kills spontaneity and the potential insight and triggers for discussion that accompany it. As an online writing workshop student do you agree or disagree with this. Why or why not in terms of how it may or may not improve your ability to write successful prose fiction and your ability to help your peers improve their prose fiction writing.
15. If writing out comments (and receiving written comments on your own work) is more insightful and in-depth what advantage(s) do you see to making and receiving face-to-face comments which may not be as well-thought out because they are extemporaneous?



## APPENDIX 5: Coding Scheme Templates

**Table 3-1: Coding indicators for instructional design and organization (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 6)**

<i>Indicators</i>
Setting curriculum
Designing methods
Establishing time parameters
Utilizing medium effectively
Establishing netiquette
Managerial matters (organizational, procedural, administrative)

**Table 3-2: Coding indicators for facilitating discourse (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 8)**

<i>Indicators</i>
Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement
Seeking to reach consensus/understanding
Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions
Setting climate for learning
Drawing in participants, prompting discussion
Asking a relevant question
Assess the efficacy of the process

**Table 3-3: Coding for providing direct instruction (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 10)**

<i>Indicators</i>
Present content/questions
Focus the discussion on specific issues
Summarize the discussion
Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback.
Diagnose misconceptions
Inject knowledge from diverse sources, e.g., textbook, articles, internet, personal experiences (includes pointers to resources)
Identifying relevant elements

**Table 3-4: Coded indicators for social presence (Adapted from Rourke et al., 2001, pp. 12-13)**

Category	Indicators	Definition
Affective	Expressions of emotion	Conventional expressions of emotion, includes repetitious punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons.
	Use of humor	Teasing, cajoling, irony, understatements, sarcasm
	Self-disclosure	Presents details of life outside of class, or expresses vulnerability
Interactive	Continuing a thread	Using reply feature of software, rather than starting a new thread; continues point of discussion from a previous speaker
	Quoting from others' passages	Using software features to quote others entire message or cutting or pasting selections of others' messages
	Referring explicitly to others' messages	Direct references to contents of others' posts
	Asking questions	Students ask questions of other students of the teacher
	Complimenting, expressing appreciation	Complimenting others or contents of others' messages
	Expressing agreement	Expressing agreement with others' or content of others' messages.
	Cohesive	Vocatives
Addresses or refers to group using inclusive pronouns		Addresses the group as we, us, our group
Phatics, salutations		Communication that serves a purely social function; greetings, closures

**Table 3-5: Coded indicators used for participants from face-to-face mediated workshop regarding cognitive presence (Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 6)**

<i>Indicators</i>
<i>Triggering event issue</i>
a. Initiate the discussion and provide brainstorming opportunities
<i>Exploration</i>
a. Immediacy of communication
b. Sense of community
c. Familiarity
d. General values
<i>Integration</i>
a. Sense of responsibility
b. Time commitment
<i>Resolution/application</i>

**Table 3-6: Coded indicators used for participants from computer-mediated workshops regarding cognitive presence (Vaughn & Garrison, 2005, p. 7)**

<i>Indicators</i>
Triggering events a. Initiate the discussion and provide brainstorming opportunities
Exploration a. Ability to extend the conversation, debate and discuss b. Flexibility of access
Integration a. Reflective nature b. Sense of responsibility c. Time commitment and workload issues
<i>Resolution/implication</i>

## APPENDIX 6: Example of Stake's Description/Judgment Matrix

**Table Appendix 6-1: Stake's Description/Judgment Matrix for Reciprocity (Stake, 1976)**

Intents	Observations		Standards	Judgments
After discussing a ms. the author is allowed to ask questions	<p>The f2f instructor always asked the workshopped writer if he/she had any questions.</p> <p>A workshopped c-m student had to let everyone comment day 1, then he/she could jump in with comments, questions, etc for the next 2 days.</p>	Antecedents	<p>Student asks questions of other students and/or of the teacher for clarification or edification after the discourse is complete.</p> <p>After initial detailed comments/observations are made by other c-m students and instructor, the author can pose questions, ask for suggestions, clarification, etc.</p>	The purpose of workshopping is to hone craft knowledge.
Author asks questions to help improve writing in general and story in particular by clarifying any points made in discussion	<p><b>Jane:</b> I don't have any questions; you comments are helpful, but painful.</p> <p><b>Rosie:</b> No questions. Thank you for complicating everything for me.</p>	Transactions	While students are not allowed to comment during the round-table discussion of their work it is understood that they may need or want clarification on points made. This aspect helps them write better, but it also indicates respect and trust in their peers' writing capability	<p>F2f students never had any questions at the end of workshopping. When asked why they replied they felt too overwhelmed. Only towards end of 2<sup>nd</sup> sem. did they start to embed questions in submitted ms.</p> <p>C-m students asked for suggestions repeatedly, prompted first by initial comments then by on-going discourse of their ms.</p>
Students have opportunity to improve their writing by asking peers for additional help that focuses on specific questions they have.		Outcomes	When students ask their peers questions and respond positively (not negatively) they indicated a higher level of social presence (decreased psych distancing). This helps improve their writing.	F2f students typically did not ask peers questions. Less than half started to embed questions in ms towards end of wk. suggesting little social presence (high psychological distancing). The opposite was true of c-m students

Description Matrix

Judgment Matrix

## VITA

Mindy A. Daniels was born September 3, 1953 in Port Hueneme, California and is an American citizen. She graduated from George Washington High School, Alexandria, Virginia in 1971. She received a Bachelor of Arts in English with a History minor in 1974 from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She received a Masters of Arts in English/English Education in 1981 from Virginia Commonwealth University and a second Masters in Education in 1998 also from Virginia Commonwealth University. Before resuming her teaching career, she worked for the State of Virginia as a records manager for the Virginia State Library and Archives until 1986 when she began work as the Executive Assistant for the Chairman of the Parole Board and the Board's legislative liaison until she returned to school in 1994. She taught seven years as an adjunct for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, two years at Louisa County High School from 2000 to 2002, and the last twelve years with Richmond City Public Schools.