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# Faculty Perceptions and Experiences of “presence” in the Online Learning Environment

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FACULTY PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF “PRESENCE” IN THE ONLINE  
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

by

Anita Samuel

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Urban Education

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2016

## ABSTRACT

### FACULTY PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF “PRESENCE” IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

by

Anita Samuel

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016  
Under the Supervision of Professor Simone C. O. Conceição, Ph.D.

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological research study was to gain an understanding of how faculty who teach fully online courses perceive and experience presence. The 25 faculty participants in this study were drawn from a four-year institution of higher education in the Midwest. The faculty designed and taught their own courses. Data were collected through: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews with each participant, (2) documentary analysis of two course syllabi from two different course offerings for each participant, and (3) observations of five participants' online course sites over the duration of an academic semester (16 week course). Findings revealed that faculty perceived presence as “being seen.” Faculty were concerned with projecting their personalities online and they wanted their students to see them for who they were. An emotional dimension to the experiences of presence emerged in the interviews. Emotional responses of faculty to online instruction influenced their experiences of presence. An intriguing finding was that the perception and experience of presence required a cognitive reframing of the online learning environment. A traditional classroom environment is characterized by a one-to-many relationship from faculty to students. In the online environment, this transformed into many one-to-one relationships between faculty and individual students. Experiences of presence were heightened when participants were able to change their mindset

and understand and acknowledge the change. Finally, this study introduced the conceptualization of online instruction as a dramatic performance enacted by the faculty to an audience of students. A diagrammatic depiction of online instruction as a staged performance is also provided.

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To

My parents who made this possible

My son, my motivation

My husband, for his patience and support

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Background of the Study</i> .....	2
Distance Education .....	2
Distance Education in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	2
The Nature of “Distance”.....	3
Presence .....	3
<i>Problem, Study Purpose, and Research Questions</i> .....	4
<i>Methodology of the Study</i> .....	7
<i>Philosophical Framework</i> .....	9
<i>Researcher Bias</i> .....	10
<i>Definition of Terms</i> .....	11
<i>Summary</i> .....	14
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	15
<i>Literature Review Methodology</i> .....	15
<i>Faculty in the Online Learning Environment</i> .....	17
Faculty Adoption of Online Instruction.....	17
Motivators and Barriers to Online Instruction .....	21
Faculty Satisfaction.....	23
Faculty Retention .....	24
Faculty Experience.....	24
Gap in the Online Faculty Literature .....	28
<i>Presence</i> .....	29
Defining Presence .....	30
Telepresence / Physical Presence.....	31
Co-presence.....	31
Social Presence .....	32
Review of Research on Presence .....	33
Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework .....	35
Research on the CoI Framework.....	36
Strategies to Create Presence .....	37
Gap in the Presence Literature .....	40
Bridging the gap.....	43
<i>Summary</i> .....	43

<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Focus of the Study .....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Methodological Framework .....</i>	<i>45</i>
Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) .....	45
<i>Conceptual Framework .....</i>	<i>47</i>
Dramaturgy .....	47
Determinants of Presence .....	50
<i>Study Design.....</i>	<i>52</i>
Context.....	52
Disciplines.....	52
Experience Level .....	54
Participant Description.....	54
<i>Site description.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Learning Management System (LMS).....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Support services.....</i>	<i>55</i>
Sampling .....	56
Sample Size.....	56
Participant Recruitment .....	57
<i>Demographic Information.....</i>	<i>58</i>
Experience Level .....	58
Gender .....	59
Age Groups .....	59
Student Demographic.....	61
Class Size.....	61
<i>Data Collection.....</i>	<i>62</i>
Documentary Evidence .....	62
Interview .....	64
Observation .....	65
<i>Data Analysis .....</i>	<i>68</i>
Documentary Evidence .....	68
<i>Stage one.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Stage two.....</i>	<i>69</i>
Interviews.....	69
<i>Reading the interview transcript.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Identifying themes.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Clustering.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Tabulation.....</i>	<i>71</i>
Observations .....	71
Summary of Themes Generated.....	71
<i>Ethical Considerations.....</i>	<i>73</i>
Informed Consent.....	74
Data Interpretation .....	74
Institutional Review Board .....	74
<i>Validity and Reliability .....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Summary .....</i>	<i>75</i>



<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Perception of Presence .....</b>	<b>77</b>
Projecting Self.....	77
Personal introductions.....	79
Communication style.....	80
Availability and Accessibility.....	83
Shared Experience .....	86
<b>Experience of Presence.....</b>	<b>87</b>
Cognitive Experience.....	87
Physical embodiment. ....	88
Student work.....	91
Feedback. ....	94
Emotional Experience.....	99
Technology.....	99
Content.....	102
Online instruction. ....	103
Behavioral Experience .....	106
Faculty behaviors.....	106
Student behaviors.....	108
<b>Strategies to Create Presence .....</b>	<b>113</b>
Cognitive Reframing.....	113
A 1 to 1 relationship.....	115
<b>Experience and Discipline.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Experience.....	118
Discipline Categories .....	118
Academic levels.....	118
Assessment styles. ....	120
Class sizes. ....	120
<b>Data Collection Strategies .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Sense of Presence.....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Teaching – A Performance Art .....</b>	<b>124</b>
The Online Performance .....	125
<b>Dramaturgy of Online Instruction .....</b>	<b>126</b>
Actors .....	127
Front.....	128
Setting. ....	128
Personal front. ....	132
Content.....	135
Back .....	136

<i>Training</i> .....	136
<i>Assessment</i> .....	139
Audience.....	139
<i>Physical embodiment</i> .....	139
<i>Being together</i> .....	140
<i>Engagement</i> .....	141
<b><i>A Cognitive Reframing of Online Teaching</i></b> .....	<b>143</b>
Moving From “1-many” to “many 1-1s”.....	144
<b><i>Discussion and Contributions to the Field</i></b> .....	<b>147</b>
Presence is “Being Seen”.....	147
Presence has an Emotional Dimension.....	150
Presence Requires Cognitive Reframing.....	151
Online Teaching is a Performance Art.....	153
<b><i>Implications for Research and Practice</i></b> .....	<b>155</b>
<b><i>Limitations of the Study</i></b> .....	<b>157</b>
Study Sample.....	157
Data Collection.....	158
<b><i>Future Research</i></b> .....	<b>159</b>
<b><i>Conclusion</i></b> .....	<b>160</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>163</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>181</b>
<b><i>Appendix A: Categorization of Academic Disciplines</i></b> .....	<b>181</b>
<b><i>Appendix B: Email invitation to participate in research study</i></b> .....	<b>183</b>
<b><i>Appendix C: Email request for course syllabi</i></b> .....	<b>184</b>
<b><i>Appendix D: Interview Schedule</i></b> .....	<b>185</b>
<b><i>Appendix E: Consent to Participate in Research Interview</i></b> .....	<b>186</b>
<b><i>Appendix F: Consent to Participate in Research Observation</i></b> .....	<b>187</b>
<b><i>Appendix G: Observation Outline</i></b> .....	<b>188</b>
<b><i>Appendix H: Document analysis</i></b> .....	<b>189</b>
<b><i>Appendix I: Participant Information</i></b> .....	<b>190</b>
<b>CURRICULUM VITAE</b> .....	<b>195</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: <i>Construct of presence</i> .....	30
Figure 2.2: <i>Being “There” for the Online Learner model</i> .....	42
Figure 3.1: <i>Framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence</i> .....	51
Figure 3.2: <i>Participant Experience across Discipline</i> .....	59
Figure 3.3: <i>Participant Gender across Discipline Categories</i> .....	59
Figure 3.4: <i>Participant Age Distribution</i> .....	60
Figure 3.5: <i>Class size distribution across the discipline categories</i> .....	62
Figure 4.1: <i>Experience level and Emotional response</i> .....	104
Figure 4.2: <i>Percentage of graduate level courses offered across discipline categories</i>	119
Figure 5.1: <i>Front stage</i> .....	136
Figure 5.2: <i>Front and back stage</i> .....	138
Figure 5.3: <i>The performance of online teaching</i> .....	145
Figure 5.4: <i>The dynamic interplay in faculty</i> .....	151

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: <i>Definition of terms</i> .....	11
Table 2.1: <i>Literature review criteria</i> .....	16
Table 2.2: <i>Major categories of studies conducted on faculty in the OLE</i> .....	17
Table 2.3: <i>Key themes repeated across categories</i> .....	27
Table 3.1: <i>Description of the determinants of presence</i> .....	50
Table 3.2: <i>Faculty Categorization Matrix</i> .....	56
Table 3.3: <i>Participant Recruitment Matrix</i> .....	58
Table 3.4: <i>Participant Demographics</i> .....	60
Table 3.5: <i>Summary of data collection methodology</i> .....	67
Table 3.6: <i>Tabulation of themes identified with examples</i> .....	72
Table 4.1: <i>Faculty use of communication strategies</i> .....	81
Table 4.2: <i>Faculty use of language in course syllabi</i> .....	86
Table 4.3: <i>Faculty comments on knowing students through students' work</i> .....	92

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*At 8 pm, Jane opens her laptop and logs into her Introduction to Education course. She watches a video posted by the professor, reads discussion postings from her classmates, and makes her own postings for the week. Jane has never met her professor or any of her classmates face-to-face. She has only ever interacted with them over the learning management and email system provided by her college.*

Jane represents a growing number of students for whom this situation is their new normal in higher education. A college classroom is no longer defined by a physical space bound by four walls. Online education has expanded these boundaries to encompass the whole world. Students can be present in this virtual “classroom” simultaneously or at different times that are convenient for them. They can access the classroom from wherever they are – at home, at work, or in transit. They can enter the classroom for ten minutes or three hours, whatever works best for them. This is the age of education on demand.

Statistics suggest that online courses are addressing a growing need. The number of students taking at least one online course in 2013 stood at 7.1 million, which represents an all-time high of 33.5% of the student population (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Online enrollment growth rate stands at 7.2% and almost 70.8% of higher education institutions identify online education as critical to their long-term plans (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Students are embracing online course offerings and institutions are offering more options for students. Online programs and online courses are the most recent iteration of distance education and they are increasingly becoming an integral part of mainstream higher / post-secondary education (Allen & Seaman, 2014).

## **Background of the Study**

### **Distance Education**

The National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) defines distance education as any form of education that requires technologies to deliver content and instruction to students who are physically separated from their instructors. Distance education is first and foremost characterized by a separation of learner and instructor in terms of place and usually, though not always, time (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). The earliest iteration of distance education was in the form of correspondence courses where printed instructional materials were delivered to students via mail.

As electronic technologies evolved, distance education programs adopted them over the years moving from print media to radio, movies, television, and video. In all these media modalities, there was a gap in communication between the instructor and the students - as any communication was predominantly one-way from the instructor to the student in a static non-interactive format. While communication could be initiated through telephone conversations, it was not the primary mode of instruction. With the advent of computers, distance education embraced computer mediated education and later, the Internet.

### **Distance Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, distance education programs are increasingly dominated by courses that are offered over the Internet using web technologies. These web technologies have come to be used as the primary mode of instructional delivery in distance education and they offer the advantage of providing a combination of text, audio, and video bundled together in one comprehensive medium.

These technologies enable increased communication and interaction between learner and

instructor and amongst the learners themselves. Interactions can be both synchronous and asynchronous and these interactions are an integral part of the online program. This format of educational delivery is what the Commission of College accreditation review now defines as distance education (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools [SACS], 2014).

### **The Nature of “Distance”**

Distance education is characterized by separation. Learner and instructor and learners themselves are all located in different places for most of the course. This geographic separation of student and instructor creates a distance that Moore (1993) defined as “transactional distance” (p. 22). Transactional distance encompasses distances of space and time, as well as the psychological and communication space between the learner and the instructor. This distance creates a sense of isolation and alienation in all participants – students and instructors (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007; Kim, Kwon, & Cho, 2011; Lee & Choi, 2011).

Students and faculty feel isolation due to the lack of physical presence of the other participants in the learning environment (Bair & Bair, 2011). One strategy that has been identified to successfully address the feelings of alienation is the creation of a sense of presence (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Boettcher and Conrad (2010) identify presence as the most important practice in online education.

### **Presence**

Presence, in the online environment, refers to the illusion of being in a real classroom, in real time, with a real person managing the learning experience. It is what Lehman and Conceição (2010) call, “being there” and “being together” (p. 5). Students step beyond the virtual aspect of the online environment and become so immersed in it that the virtual technology is abstracted and learners experience a sense of being physically, emotionally, and



psychologically present in the learning environment. Increased communication and interaction channels provided by online technologies allow faculty to connect with their students (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Kim et al. (2011) note that when learners experience presence within the online learning environment, their sense of alienation is mitigated. This sense of presence needs to be consciously created and actively supported within the online learning environment and this can only be done by the faculty who develop and teach the online courses (Schulte, 2010).

### **Problem, Study Purpose, and Research Questions**

As online learning gains popularity, faculty find themselves under increasing pressure to offer their courses in the online medium (Sammons & Ruth, 2007) and teaching online requires a different pedagogy from traditional teaching in order to account for the transactional distance. Curriculum needs to be reorganized and presented in a format that is easily accessible to online learners; assessments need to be modified or re-created to best suit the online environment; and, online faculty need to leverage web technologies in order to create successful courses. The transition to the online learning environment is further complicated by the absence of face-to-face interactions and physical and verbal cues (Treacy, 2007).

Most faculty who are now being asked to teach in the online environment lack relevant experience since online instruction is a new paradigm for them. As Prensky (2001) notes, “our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (p. 2). Faculty now need to master new technological skills, learn new pedagogical strategies, and work in an environment that does not provide the forms of interactions they are used to.

Teaching online requires faculty to engage within an environment that predominantly lacks physical and verbal cues. This lack of physical interaction with students Schulte (2010)

notes, is a major factor that dissuades faculty from teaching online. In the online learning environment, communications, interactions, and feedback to and from students are primarily text based. This poses a challenge for online faculty and distances them from their students (Sammons & Ruth, 2010).

Research has shown that faculty satisfaction influences the success of online programs (Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009) and impacts student retention, which is very important to institutions of higher education. One element of the online learning environment that has been shown to negatively impact faculty satisfaction is the lack of face-to-face interaction with students (Lloyd, Byrne, & McCoy, 2012; Mills, Yanes, & Casebeer, 2009; Shea, 2007; Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009). This absence of face-to-face interaction with students deters many faculty from adopting online instruction, which is a problem for institutions when they need more online instructors to meet the demands of students.

Literature studying the sense of alienation experienced by students has shown that creating a sense of presence plays an important role in alleviating the feeling of isolation (Joyce & Brown, 2009). Unfortunately, there is insufficient research into the role of presence in the context of faculty. This has created a gap in the literature where a concept that could positively affect faculty satisfaction and retention remains under researched.

This qualitative study therefore, seeks to understand the phenomenon of faculty experience of presence in the online learning environment. In order to do this, the following research questions were formulated.

1. How do online faculty perceive presence in the online learning environment?
2. How do online faculty experience presence in the online learning environment?
  - a. How do online faculty experience presence emotionally?

- b. How do online faculty experience presence cognitively?
  - c. How do online faculty experience presence behaviorally?
3. What strategies do online faculty employ in their online instruction to create a sense of presence and why?

Studies by Lloyd et al. (2012), Mills et al. (2009), and Shea (2007) have all revealed that an absence of face-to-face interaction with students decreases faculty desire to teach online. This is especially so for less experienced online faculty (Hiltz, Kim, & Shea, 2007; Shea, 2007). More experienced faculty however, do not vocalize the same concern. They are comfortable with online instruction and even see it as superior to the traditional classroom (Ulmer, Watson, & Derby, 2007). Experienced faculty therefore, seem to have bridged the distance between student and instructor within the online learning environment.

At many universities, faculty are tasked with creating their own online courses. They are often the designers, implementers, and assessors of online courses (Schulte, 2010; Seaman, 2009) making them responsible for appropriate instructional design and interaction procedures that can overcome transactional distance (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). It therefore falls on faculty to create a sense of presence for their students.

Findings from this study provide insight into how faculty do and do not experience presence. It highlights what aspects of the online learning environment enable faculty to experience presence and what strategies faculty themselves employ to create presence not only for their students but also for themselves. Findings from this study can also inform the practice of new and novice online faculty and provide them with suggestions on how they can feel present and connected within the online learning environment. The satisfaction that online faculty experience can translate into student success and the overall success of online programs.

Online faculty who are engaged and satisfied in the online learning environment are an asset to institutions of higher education and increasingly, they are a necessity. This study helps to understand one crucial factor that contributes to faculty satisfaction – the sense of presence. Furthermore, this study considers how faculty perceptions translate into concrete pedagogical strategies. Understanding how faculty perceive and experience “presence” can be beneficial for online students, instructors, instructional designers, administrators, and other interested parties in the field of distance education. An awareness of how experienced faculty perceive presence and create it in their courses will help novice faculty in their practice. Student and faculty satisfaction impacts the institution as a whole. This study can shed some light on experiences that faculty find satisfying and affirming.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study was conducted using a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research attempts to explore the inner experiences of participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) without interfering with or manipulating the phenomenon and qualitative researchers are interested in “understanding the meaning people have constructed” (Merriam, 2014, p. 13). Qualitative research broadly draws from the philosophies of constructionism, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism (Merriam, 2014).

This research study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of faculty in the online learning environment. Since the focus of this research was on everyday personal experiences and how faculty make meaning of their lived environment (van Manen, 1984), this study adopted Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

The participants for this study were drawn from a four-year institution of higher education in the Midwest. They had taught at least two fully online courses. The courses were

autonomously designed by the participants including the syllabus, course activities, assessments, and assignments. This study recruited 25 participants from across the disciplines in the institution. Biglan's (1973) categorization of disciplines includes four main categories: pure-hard, pure-soft, applied-hard, and applied-soft. These broad categories formed the basis for participant recruitment.

This study, in phenomenological tradition, drew directly from the words and expressions of the participants through the following data collection strategies:

1. Interviews - One 60 - 90 minute semi-structured interview with the participant;
2. Documentary evidence – Two course syllabi from two different course offerings for each participant;
3. Online course site observations – The online course sites of 5 participants were observed over the duration of an academic semester (16 weeks).

These three data points were collected to allow for triangulation of data. The three data points also permitted a more comprehensive understanding of faculty perceptions and the operationalization of their perceptions. Triangulation through a combination of data points also enhanced validity of the data (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011).

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), dramaturgy, and the determinants of presence as identified by Lehman and Conceição (2010). IPA formed the primary method of data collection. In my approach, I, as the researcher, moved between understanding the parts of the text and the whole iteratively, while simultaneously testing the text against my preconceptions and pre-understanding of the situation. Hence, the double hermeneutic circle of IPA functioned more as a spiral with knowledge and understanding increasing with every iteration of the process.

Within the IPA framework, I deconstructed the participants' life world "existentials" of "lived space," "lived time," "lived body," and "lived other" (van Manen, 1990, pp. 101-105) from the theoretical perspective of dramaturgy. Dramaturgy considers all human interactions as a dramatic stage performance that takes into account space, time, relation between participants, and personal behavior of the primary actor. Goffman (1959) notes that an individual's actions in the presence of others affects the definition of the situation itself. In the online educational context, faculty behavior in the online learning environment directly impacts how students understand and interact within the online learning experience. While the four "existentials" (van Manen, 1990, p. 101) exist together in day to day living, in research, these elements can be teased apart into four discrete elements and analyzed individually. Dramaturgy affords a deeper analytical framework with which to understand human behaviors.

Finally, determinants of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010) was utilized to study the pedagogical choices made by faculty to create presence in the online learning environment.

### **Philosophical Framework**

My educational philosophy is strongly constructivist and I prioritize the personal capital that students bring to the learning environment. In the educational environment, I feel it is imperative for instructors and faculty to acknowledge the experiences and capital of their students and to nurture them. This research is framed by this constructivist world view.

Constructivists believe that meaning is subjective to each individual and is shaped by the individual's life experiences. Subjective meanings are formed as a result of a person's interactions with others and by cultural and historical norms. The constructivist researcher looks for a "complexity of views" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8) relying on the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon under study. The researcher therefore, studies interactions and the contexts in

which people operate to understand how people make sense of the world around them. The researcher then inductively formulates a theory or “pattern of meaning” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Constructivism provided the lens that shaped this research and the questions posed arise from this worldview. Hence, the research questions focus on participants’ personal experiences and the perceptions they have about world around them.

My larger world view is shaped by my background in literature. I feel that,

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts (Shakespeare, 2009, 2.7.139-141)

This view of the world as a stage has led me to adopt a dramaturgical lens for this study.

Dramaturgy, proposed by Goffman (1959), studies human interactions as stage performances where everyone is an actor, enacting a performance and presenting themselves in a particular way.

### **Researcher Bias**

Qualitative research relies heavily on the researcher who acts as an intermediary and is an integral part of the research process (Holloway & Biley, 2011). The choice of data, the interpretations imposed on the data, and the presentation of the findings are all tinged by my perspectives, assumptions, and biases as the researcher (Denzin, 2009; Holloway & Biley, 2011). The research was guided by my viewpoints as a “raced, gendered, classed, and politically oriented” researcher (Creswell, 2014, p. 65). To ensure trustworthiness of the data, transparency regarding my assumptions and biases is important.

This research was born out of my cultural background and my educational experiences

both as a student and a teacher. In my life, I have been a student in Dubai, India, and Malaysia. In these countries, not everyone has access to education. This is especially true for women who, for cultural reasons, are not allowed to pursue higher education. The online courses I took during my Masters and doctoral programs in the U.S., introduced me to the tremendous potential of online education.

My research is based on my belief in the success of online education and its potential for large scale penetration in higher education especially in developing countries. In addition, I believe that online education offers the same level of learning rigor as traditional face-to-face education. However, this can only be achieved by engaged and passionate faculty members.

I have been a teacher, instructor, facilitator, and faculty in various organizations for more than a decade. These experiences have led me to three conclusions. First, faculty play a key role in student success. Second, faculty have the potential to create negative learning experiences for the student. Third, faculty experience normal human emotions and their emotional state does affect their interactions with students. These beliefs that I hold needed to be recorded and were re-visited through the process of the research study to ensure that my feelings on these issues did not drown out or skew the voices of the participants

### Definition of Terms

In Table 1.1, I provide a definition of key terms that are utilized in this research.

Table 1.1  
*Definition of terms*

<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<i>Course</i>	A series of lessons within a particular subject (“Course,” 2014). Moore (2013) defines an educational course as a series of lessons containing elements such as learning objectives, assignments, assessments, and content presented textually or through multimedia.
<i>Discipline</i>	A branch of study, typically one studied in higher education (“Discipline,” 2015).



<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<i>Formal learning</i>	“Formal learning” is intentional, organized, and structured and offered by institutions. Formal learning follows a prescribed curriculum (Eaton, 2010).
<i>Online</i>	<p>Broadly, when any device is turned on and connected to other devices, it is defined as being “online” (“Online,” 2015). This term has now specifically come to mean devices that are connected to the Internet. This connection can be established through a phone line, a cable line, or via wireless connections.</p> <p>In this study, devices that are connected to the Internet and activities that take place over this connection, are called online. The devices can be as varied as desktop computers, laptop computers, smartphones (mobile phones with the ability to connect to the Internet), and personal devices such as iPads and tablets.</p>
<i>Online learning</i>	<p>Terminology has been diverse in the field. Distance learning, e-learning, online learning, online learning environments, technology mediated learning, online collaborative learning, virtual learning, web-based learning are some of the terms that have been employed (Moore, Dickson-Deane, &amp; Galven, 2011). These terms are also used interchangeably.</p> <p>“Online learning” in this research, refers to formal education that is offered fully online using devices that can connect to the Internet.</p>
<i>Learning Management System (LMS)</i>	A software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of online education courses or training programs.
<i>Online learning environment</i>	The online learning environment incorporates the LMS, the technologies used in the delivery of the course, and the pedagogical strategies implemented.
<i>Online courses</i>	<p>Online courses are defined as those that offer more than 80% of their content in the online platform and have no physical face-to-face meetings (Allen &amp; Seaman, 2007; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, &amp; Zvacek, 2011). These courses are characterized by separated learning groups that utilize interactive technology to connect “learners, resources, and instructors” (Schlosser &amp; Simonson, 2009, p.1).</p> <p>In this study, “online courses” refer to courses that are offered completely online, with no physical face-to-face meetings. These courses include both synchronous and asynchronous interactions both between students, and between students and instructor.</p>

<b>Terminology</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<i>Online program</i>	A program is defined as an integrated course of academic studies (“Program,” 2015). A program that is offered online using the Internet is called an online program.
<i>Online student</i>	Any person attending a fully online course in a formal institution of higher education. They could be attending the program on a full-time or part-time basis and attending undergraduate or graduate level programs.
<i>Synchronous activities / sessions</i>	When all participants are logged into the online learning environment at the same time and interacting with each other, they are said to be participating in synchronous activities or sessions. These are also called “live” or “real time” sessions (Johns Hopkins University School of Education [JHUSOE], 2010).
<i>Asynchronous activities / sessions</i>	In asynchronous activities and sessions, participants log into the online environment at different times and communicate with each other at times that are convenient for them.
<i>Faculty</i>	The teaching staff within a four-year institution of higher education are termed faculty. This includes faculty who are tenured, non-tenured, adjunct, and other academic staff
<i>Novice online faculty</i>	Faculty who have taught two or three fully online courses will be considered novice faculty in this study. These faculty have an understanding of the online learning environment and the requirements of online instruction. However, having taught only two or three courses, they are fairly new to the environment.
<i>Experienced online faculty</i>	Faculty who have taught more than three fully online courses are considered experienced faculty. They have had an opportunity to practice different strategies and hone their skills in the online learning environment.
<i>Virtual environment</i>	A computer-generated, three-dimensional representation of a setting. The user of the technology perceives themselves to be in this environment and all interaction takes place in this environment.
<i>Class size</i>	The number of students enrolled in an online course for the duration of a complete academic semester were counted in the class size. Class size was categorized as: Small – classes with 25 or fewer students Medium – classes with 26-50 students Large – classes with 51 or more students

## Summary

In this chapter, I provided a context for the research study and delineated the problem. I then presented the research questions that have been formulated to study this problem and I proceeded to detail the methodology that I employed to conduct this study. I followed by describing the philosophical framework of this study and laying out my assumptions and biases that could have influenced my research process. I ended the chapter with a definition of various terms that are used in this dissertation.

In the following chapter, I will present the literature review that was conducted to provide a foundation for this study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This literature review frames the problem (Creswell, 2014) and provides literature-based reasoning behind the formulation of the research questions. Since this study focuses on faculty experiences of presence in the online environment, two main bodies of literature were explored. Firstly, the literature pertaining to faculty in the online learning environment was analyzed, focusing on identifying issues related to faculty that had been studied thus far. Second, the literature regarding presence in the online learning environment was also collated and studied in order to determine how presence was conceptualized and studied and with what populations these studies had been conducted. This analysis of the literature led to an identification of gaps in the literature and situated the current study in a historical context.

In the next section, the literature review methodology is explicated to establish the context. After that, the research related to faculty in the online learning environment is considered which is followed by the research related to presence. Finally, the gaps in the literature are identified.

### **Literature Review Methodology**

Inclusion and exclusion criteria (See Table 2.1), for selection of materials for the literature review, were first identified. Empirical and research based studies were prioritized and opinion papers were excluded. The materials in this literature review were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or dissertations in the English language while conference paper proceedings were excluded. To ensure that the most current research was referenced, the studies were primarily drawn from 2006 to 2015. However, seminal works on different themes and concepts were drawn from outside this time frame.

The following key words were used to identify empirical studies and conceptual literature germane to online learning: “distance education,” “online learning,” “faculty + online,” “faculty + online + presence,” “sense of presence,” “presence + online courses,” “transactional distance,” “student retention + online,” “e-learning + faculty,” “faculty + alienation,” “faculty morale,” “strategies + presence,” and “face-to-face vs. online teaching.” These key words were also used in combinations with each other to obtain a comprehensive body of literature.

Searches conducted on academic databases such as, EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest, generated over 2000 articles that spanned K-12 education, higher education, professional workplace courses, and the latest iteration of online learning, MOOCs. This search was limited to materials pertaining to online learning in higher education. Though MOOCs are offered in the higher education context, they were removed as they occupy a separate space in online learning.

Table 2.1

*Literature review criteria*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- empirical and research based publications</li> <li>- published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals</li> <li>- doctoral dissertations</li> <li>- published between 2006 and 2015</li> <li>- English language only</li> <li>- only full-text articles</li> <li>- across all disciplines</li> <li>- higher education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conference proceedings</li> <li>- reports</li> <li>- opinion papers</li> <li>- MOOCs</li> <li>- blended learning environments</li> <li>- not higher education</li> <li>- focusing on specific technologies</li> </ul>
Keywords	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “distance education”</li> <li>- “online learning”</li> <li>- “faculty + online”</li> <li>- “faculty + online + presence”</li> <li>- “sense of presence”</li> <li>- “presence + online courses”</li> <li>- “strategies + presence”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “transactional distance”</li> <li>- “student retention + online”</li> <li>- “e-learning + faculty”</li> <li>- “faculty + alienation”</li> <li>- “faculty morale”</li> <li>- “face-to-face vs online teaching”</li> </ul>

## Faculty in the Online Learning Environment

Faculty have been recognized as an integral part of the online learning environment and this is reflected in the research that has been conducted centering on various issues that affect faculty performance and satisfaction. Research has been conducted into the motivators and barriers to faculty adoption of online courses, their perception of online courses, factors affecting faculty retention, contributors to faculty satisfaction, faculty perceptions and experiences in the online learning environment, and faculty development. Table 2.2 provides a categorical overview of the studies examined in this literature review.

Table 2.2

*Major categories of studies conducted on faculty in the OLE*

Research categories	Researchers
Faculty adoption of online instruction	Ulmer et al. (2007); Tabata and Johnsrud (2008); Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt (2008); Gibson, Harris, and Colaric, (2008); Mills et al. (2009); Koberna (2010); Stewart, Bachmann, and Johnson (2010)
Motivators and barriers to online instruction	Shea (2007); Bruner (2007); Hiltz et al. (2007); Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009); Gautreau (2011); Lloyd et al. (2012)
Faculty satisfaction	Bolliger and Wasilik (2009); Wasilik and Bolliger (2009); McLawhon and Cutright (2012)
Faculty retention	Green, Alejandro, and Brown (2009)
Faculty experience	Conceição (2006); Kidd (2011); Regan et al. (2012); Chi (2013); Otter et al. (2013); Smith (2014); Mastel-Smith, Post, and Lake (2015)

### Faculty Adoption of Online Instruction

A well-researched area with regard to faculty in the online learning environment is faculty willingness to adopt online instruction. While institutions and learners are embracing online programs, faculty are more reluctant. Only 28% of chief academic officers believe their

faculty accept the value and legitimacy of online education. Even in institutions with fully online programs, faculty acceptance is rated at 35.6% by their chief academic officers (Allen & Seaman, 2015). These statistics have created a need to understand why some faculty are comfortable migrating to the online learning environment while others are more reluctant to adopt online instruction. Researchers have used different populations, sample sizes, and methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of faculty adoption of online instruction. Research shows that faculty adoption of online instruction is closely related to their perceptions of online education.

Ulmer et al. (2007), in a quantitative study, analyzed the perceptions of 137 members of faculty regarding online instruction. Their sample contained faculty members who possessed experience teaching online and others who had not. Their findings showed a marked contrast in the perceptions of these two faculty populations. Faculty who had experience teaching online believed in the effectiveness of online learning and viewed online learning as superior to traditional learning. Faculty without experience did not share this belief and were skeptical of the online learning environment. This study clearly showed that experience was the key to success for faculty in the online learning environment.

A large scale study with 2048 respondents was conducted by Tabata and Johnsrud (2008) at a public postsecondary ten campus system. Their findings revealed that faculty were more likely to adopt online education when they found it relevant and meaningful to their jobs. Familiarity with the use of technology, online instructional skills, and appropriate support with technology positively affected faculty adoption of online instruction. Furthermore, when faculty believed in the quality of online learning, they were more willing to adopt it. The respondents indicated that they were less likely to participate in online education because of a lack of

technology support and the perception that they would lose control over their courses. The idea of having to share their online instruction experiences with other faculty was also a barrier to the adoption of online instruction. This study also revealed that older faculty were more likely to adopt online instruction while faculty of minority status (non-Caucasian) were unlikely to adopt online instruction. A later study however, with a small number of 42 respondents, conducted by Gautreau (2011) revealed that age and gender did not have any bearing on faculty decision to adopt online instruction.

Zhen et al. (2008) conducted a quantitative study with four hundred faculty members hypothesizing that the following six variables affected faculty decision to adopt online instruction: faculty teaching philosophy, previous teaching experience, time-related challenges, peer-pressure, self-efficacy, faculty members' decision, and classroom-based innovations. Their results led them to conclude that the best predictors for faculty adoption of online instruction were self-efficacy and teaching philosophy. Faculty who had strong beliefs about their ability to teach online using effective instructional strategies and the philosophical viewpoints of faculty members regarding teaching in general were key factors. The factors of time, experience, peer-pressure, and class-innovation did not provide any statistically significant results.

The subject of adoption of online instruction was viewed as a representation of the acceptance of technology by Gibson et al. (2008). Their demographic was faculties in a college of business and a college of education. Using data obtained from 110 survey responses, they found that perceived usefulness of technology better predicted technology acceptance compared to perceived ease of use of the technology. They assert that the usefulness of technology in the context of their duties needs to be conveyed to faculty to enable greater rates of adoption.

Mills et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative grounded theory study at a College of



Education to understand faculty perceptions regarding online education. They were only able to obtain a small sample of 15 participants and found that the participants recognized the need for online education in order to remain competitive and to meet the needs of students. However, they were not confident about their technical abilities or that of the students. They also felt that their organization did not provide them sufficient support especially in view of the greater time requirement and additional workload. Other barriers to teaching online were doubts regarding the quality of teaching and the lack of face-to-face interactions with students.

An extended version of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used by Stewart et al. (2010) to identify predictors of faculty acceptance of online instruction. They included online instruction experience, motivation, and facilitating conditions to the original TAM variables of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of technology. Using a sample size of 127 participants, they found that faculty who believe the quality of learning is better in traditional environments were reluctant to adopt online instruction. Unlike Gibson et al. (2008), their study revealed that perceived ease of use of technology predicted an intent to teach online. They also discovered that some reluctant faculty could be motivated to teach online if the faculty believed it was easy and they were provided with necessary support.

Koberna (2010) surveyed 209 dental hygiene faculty in the U.S. to identify factors that predicted adoption of online instruction. Faculty experience with online instruction reduced barriers to teaching online. Faculty with less or no experience with online instruction reported the most number of barriers and were more reluctant to teach online. Tenure status was also a predictive factor for the adoption of online instruction as tenured faculty were more willing to teach online versus those who were non-tenured. Furthermore, the speed at which an institution adopted online education affected how faculty adopted it as well.

## **Motivators and Barriers to Online Instruction**

Studies have also considered the subject of adopting online instruction in terms of factors that motivate and demotivate faculty. These factors have been popularly termed motivators and barriers to teaching online. Studies by Shea (2007), Burner (2007), Hiltz et al. (2007), Oomen- Early and Murphy (2009), Gautreau (2011), and Lloyd et al. (2012) have all focused on identifying specific factors that encourage or discourage faculty from participating in online instruction.

A large-scale study was conducted by Shea (2007) considering the motivators and barriers to online instruction from the perspective of experienced online faculty. This quantitative study of 386 faculty participants, from thirty-six colleges, identified the following motivators: flexibility and convenience, opportunity to gain new knowledge, and increased access for students. Enhanced compensation and professional advancement opportunities were not rated highly by the participants. Since the participants were experienced online faculty, Shea noted that there were few strongly demotivating factors. A top demotivator was inadequate compensation rather than worries about the quality of online education or the workload.

This study also highlighted some interesting trends. Female faculty and part-time faculty were more motivated to teach online principally due to the flexibility provided. Younger faculty were demotivated by concerns related to promotion opportunities. Unfamiliarity with online pedagogies, unavailability of sufficient training, and lack of face-to-face interaction held back inexperienced faculty from participating in online instruction.

With a sample of sixty-four participants from a small, private college, Bruner (2007) found that the faculty surveyed viewed online courses as involving a lot of work. Inexperience with technology and the online learning environment was also identified as a barrier. For

younger faculty, increased compensation was a motivator to adopting online instruction. Fifty four percent of their participants strongly felt that the lack of face-to-face interaction with students was sufficient reason to avoid online instruction.

In an attempt to test the generalizability of the motivators and barriers identified in the literature, Hiltz et al. (2007) conducted a study with twenty-five faculty who were divided into four focus groups. The participants in this study identified flexible schedules as their greatest motivator. Other motivators included the ability to reach more diverse student populations, creativity of the online learning environment, and professional development. Unlike Bruner's (2007) participants, the participants in this study found the online learning environment to have better personal interaction, which was a motivator for them. Their demotivators were workload, inadequate compensation, technology problems, lack of recognition, and lack of support. The five participants in Kidd's (2011) phenomenological study also identified lack of technical support, lack of rewards and incentives, and an organizational culture that did not fully recognize and accept online education as demotivating factors to teaching online.

A qualitative approach was implemented by Oomen-Early and Murphy (2009) to assess the factors that faculty identified as necessary for effective online instruction. They used an open-ended survey and from 101 respondents they identified five categories: administrative and institutional support, student readiness, instructor readiness, technical support, and academic integrity. In this survey, faculty conveyed that the possibility for plagiarism and cheating was a barrier to effective instruction. The faculty also felt that students needed to be ready for the unique requirements of online learning and technical support needed to be provided not only to the faculty but to the students as well.

Motivational factors such as salary and a recognition of faculty achievement were also

identified by the 42 participants in Gautreau's (2011). Providing pedagogical support for faculty to teach online and clarifying their responsibility to teach online also acted as motivators.

Lloyd et al. (2012) gathered quantitative data from surveys completed by seventy-five faculty at one higher education institution. Their study showed that experience played a large role in minimizing barriers to online learning. Faculty with least experience perceived the greatest barriers. Any experience helped to reduce the perception of barriers. Older faculty in this study rated inadequate compensation as a barrier. Increased workload and time commitment were also identified as barriers.

### **Faculty Satisfaction**

Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) looked into what impacted faculty satisfaction in online instruction and identified student-related, instructor-related, and institution-related issues. The results were based on a quantitative survey taken by 102 online instructors at a public research university. Faculty experienced satisfaction when they felt they were meeting the needs of their students and when their students participated actively in the online courses. Instructor-related issues concerned reliable technology and a need to be creative in their courses. Institution-related issues such as compensation, support, workload, and course evaluations did not strongly influence faculty satisfaction in this study.

In an attempt to determine factors that affected faculty satisfaction, Wasilik and Bolliger (2009) studied a quantitative data set of 95 participants. Their findings were similar to those of Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) where active participation by students was encouraging and institutional issues were not significant factors. However, they also discovered that major frustrations for faculty arose from technology related issues and a lack of face-to-face contact with students including a lack of student involvement. Furthermore, more satisfied faculty had a

greater level of interaction with their students highlighting the importance of interaction for faculty as well.

### **Faculty Retention**

Within the time frame of 2006 to 2015, only one study has explicitly researched the issues affecting retention of faculty in online instruction. Green et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study to identify factors that influenced online faculty retention in an organization. They surveyed 135 faculty members across various institutions and found online faculty retention was motivated by flexible working conditions, opportunities to use technology and share knowledge, career development, and the chance to gain teaching experience. The participants in the study were encouraged to stay in an organization when they received continuous training and fair financial compensation. They also appreciated mentoring from veteran educators, an opportunity to develop their own courses, and overall increased institutional support.

### **Faculty Experience**

Another line of inquiry in studies on faculty in the online learning environment has been the faculty experience of online instruction. Faculty experience is very subjective and hence, studies in this area have primarily been qualitative in their methodology. This includes studies by Conceição (2006), Kidd (2011), Chi (2013), and Smith (2014) among others.

One of the first studies into the lived experiences of faculty in the online learning environment was conducted by Conceição (2006). It was a phenomenological study with a total of 10 participants. Her study highlighted two major themes with regard to online instruction: work intensity and rewards. The participants in the study commented that online instruction required a lot more investment of time and effort on the part of the faculty. This happened

before the course and after the course. Prior to the start of the course, participants commented that they needed to set up the learning environment and design the course in such a way that they minimized potential problems for their students. Participants also felt that online instruction was intense due to the lack of physical and verbal cues. While the participants did miss the face-to-face interaction, they also felt that they had the ability to know their students better through their online discussions. The participants felt that the online learning environment was different from the traditional classroom but it was rewarding in its own way. This motivated them to keep teaching online.

In a phenomenological study of five participants, Kidd (2011) considered the online instructional experiences of public health faculty. Institutional support, faculty development and training, and personnel resources were essential aspects of the faculty experience. The faculty viewed themselves as not just instructors or facilitators but more specifically as instructional facilitators, creators of social environments, designers of educational learning experiences in addition to being instructional designers. The faculty experience was more positive when they were given sufficient time to prepare and develop their online courses. There was a positive correlation between the time they had and their satisfaction levels. The respondents also shared that they experienced fear over a lack of interpersonal relationship with students. This fear however, dissipated as faculty gained more experience in the online environment and they concluded that they were able to develop a deeper understanding of their students. The experience itself proved to be transformative for the participants. These findings are similar to those of Ulmer et al. (2007) and Lloyd et al. (2012) who also found that experience in the online learning environment was a key factor in positively influencing faculty perceptions.

Six online nursing instructors were interviewed and their courses were observed in a

qualitative study by Mastel-Smith et al. (2015). These participants reinforced that experience made instructors more comfortable with teaching online. They acknowledged the difficulty in teaching online since they were unable to see their students or hear their voices. They also mentioned that in the online environment, students expected their instructors to be available at all times which placed greater demands on the instructor. This need to be constantly available to students was also noted by the faculty participants in the quantitative study by Otter et al. (2013). They added that online courses placed more demands on the instructors' time and took more time when compared to traditional face-to-face courses.

Regan et al. (2012), in their qualitative study, considered the experiences of six instructors who were teaching in different online learning formats such as asynchronous, hybrid, and synchronous formats. The participants in this study found the online environment to be restrictive in terms of communication. They leveraged technology in different ways to bridge the communication gap and the disconnect they felt from their students. For these participants, technology was a facilitator and inhibitor. While it facilitated communication, technological glitches were stressful, and the participants felt that overall, technology limited the ways they taught and interacted with their students.

In order to understand faculty journey to teaching online and their experiences in online instruction, Chi (2013) conducted a case study with four online faculty. While there was an acceptance that online instruction required more time, they appreciated the flexibility. The participants admitted that they did feel a sense of isolation from their students and other faculty and they maintained a need to interact face-to-face with their students. The participants shared that students tended to think that online learning would be less demanding and this attitude affected their performance and faculty satisfaction with the course as well. The participants in

the study admitted that there were inadequate institutional rewards but they chose to continue with online instruction through intrinsic motivation.

Smith (2014) studied the experiences of ten online nursing faculty and their perceptions of the environment. Her participants recognized the importance of relationships with their students which they found difficult to establish in the online learning environment. They identified support as peer support, mentoring, technical support, administrative support, and creating community. As in other studies (Lloyd et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2009; Zhen et al., 2007), they echoed concerns regarding workload and the behaviors of their students, such as cheating, plagiarism, and lack of preparation, in the online learning environment.

The studies discussed above have considered different issues related to faculty in the online learning environment: adopting online instruction, faculty satisfaction, faculty retention, and faculty experiences. In all these categories, certain key elements repeatedly appear as a part of the finding. These elements positively or negatively affect faculty in the online learning environment depending on their presence or absence. The key elements have been summarized in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3  
*Key themes repeated across categories*

Element	Short description
<b>Institutional support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technology</b></li> <li>• <b>Infrastructure</b></li> <li>• <b>Pedagogical</b></li> </ul>	Support provided by the institution faculty are employed at. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support related to the LMS and technology related issues both for faculty and students</li> <li>• Good internet connection, computer equipment</li> <li>• Workshops and training on teaching in the online environment</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	Amount of time provided to prepare online courses and the amount of time required to conduct online courses
<b>Adequate compensation</b>	Compensation that recognizes the additional time and effort faculty need to dedicate to creating and delivering online courses
<b>Flexible working conditions</b>	Being able to teach from anywhere and at anytime



Element	Short description
<b>Experience</b>	The level of experience faculty have with online instruction. Usually measured in the number of courses they have taught online.
<b>Employment status</b>	Tenured, tenure track, adjunct, academic staff
<b>Face-to-face interaction with students</b>	The ability to interact with students in a traditional environment with verbal and physical cues

### Gap in the Online Faculty Literature

Faculty repeatedly mention that the lack of face-to-face communication with their students is a deterrent to their adoption of online instruction (Bruner, 2007; Mills et al., 2009; Shea, 2007; Smith, 2014; Wasilik & Bolliger, 2008). Yet, this demotivating aspect of online instruction has been overwhelmingly overlooked by the research community. Researchers like Lloyd et al. (2012) note that with experience in online instruction, faculty lose their apprehension over the lack of face-to-face communication. This finding seems to be sufficient for most researchers as they conclude that the deciding factor is experience. There is minimal research into faculty experience of isolation and alienation in the online learning environment.

Childers and Berner (2000) and Henning (2012) note that the sense of isolation could potentially affect faculty satisfaction and motivation to teach in the online environment. The few articles written on this subject (Bair & Bair, 2011; Childers & Berner, 2000; Henning, 2012) are personal stories and no empirical studies have been conducted. Bair and Bair (2011), reflecting on their personal experiences in online instruction, note that since there was a lack of physical interaction in the online environment, they, as faculty, experienced isolation. They felt that they were merely “looking at the computer screen rather than at human faces” (p. 6) which deprived them of the satisfaction of getting to know their students “in person” (p. 6). They also felt that while their students might recognize them, the students did not really know them on a deeper

level.

This section reviewed the studies that have been conducted on faculty in the online learning environment. Main themes in this body of literature were identified which helped highlight the existing gap in the literature. In the next section, the body of literature associated with the concept of presence in the online learning environment is explored. Since the focus of the research study is on faculty perceptions and experiences of presence in the online learning environment, it is necessary to undertake an in-depth look at the concept of presence and the studies that have been conducted in this area.

### **Presence**

The concept of presence spans a variety of research areas including communication, psychology, computer science, philosophy, human-computer interaction, and education. Across these fields of study and even within each of these fields, presence is conceptualized and operationalized differently such as – telepresence, virtual presence, social presence, sense of presence, subjective presence, physical presence, cognitive presence, place presence, co-presence, sentient presence, and non-sentient presence (Beck, Fishwick, Kamhawi, Coffey, & Henderson, 2011; Lombard & Jones, 2007).

Lombard and Ditton (1997) brought together these various conceptualizations and defined presence as a “perceptual illusion of nonmediation” (Presence Explicated section, para. 1) where the mediated environment appears transparent and abstracted from the user. Presence, in a mediated environment, creates opportunities for rich social interaction and users are encouraged to respond to social cues as though they were in a non-mediated environment; where entities appear real, and users feel immersed and experience a sense of moving across the mediated divide (Lombard & Ditton, 1997).

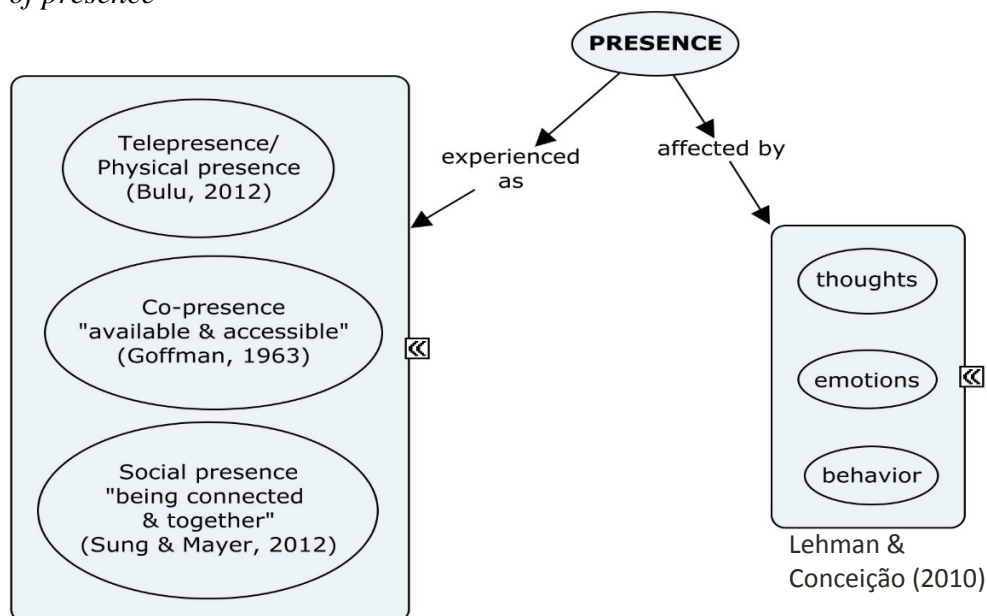
In the following sections, I provide a definition of how presence is conceptualized in this research study. I then define the presence constructs and review research studies that have been conducted on them. While presence has been studied in different disciplinary contexts, the parameters of this study have led me to confine my definitions and reviews specifically to online education.

### Defining Presence

In this study, presence is defined as a sense of “being there” (Slater, 1999), “being connected and together” (Sung & Mayer, 2012, p. 1739), and being “accessible, available, and subject to one another” (Goffman, 1963, p. 22) in a mediated environment. It is the result of the dynamic interplay of emotions, thoughts, and behavior (Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

This definition combines three conceptualizations of presence – telepresence / physical presence (Bulu, 2012), social presence (Sung & Mayer, 2012), and co-presence (Goffman, 1963) incorporating emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. The construct of presence used in this study is diagrammatically depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1  
*Construct of presence*



## **Telepresence / Physical Presence**

Minsky (1980) coined the term “telepresence” referring to technology that works in such a manner that the user is unable to distinguish between the real and the technology controlled. Lombard and Ditton (1997) labeled this “presence as transportation” where the user of a technology feels physically transported to another location. Slater and Usoh (1993) discuss telepresence for media users as involving “suspension of disbelief that they are in a world other than where their real bodies are located” (p. 222). This experience of presence plays a very important role in technologies such as virtual reality (VR) where the user feels like s/he is “actually ‘there’ at the remote site of operation” (Sheridan, 1992, p.120). Witmer and Singer (1998) defined it as a “subjective experience of being in an environment, even when one is physically situated in another” (p. 225).

## **Co-presence**

Co-presence was coined by Goffman (1963) to describe people being “accessible, available, and subject to one another” (p. 22). According to Goffman (1963), co-presence is realized when persons “sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing...and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived” (p. 17). Goffman (1963) placed co-presence in the context of face-to-face communication. However, it has been used by researchers to describe aspects of mediated communications. Biocca and Harms (2002) define co-presence in mediated environments as an “automatic psychological response either small or great in which we react, model, or respond to representations of others as if they were present” (p. 14).

But co-presence is problematized by its different conceptualizations. Zhao and Elesh

(2008) consider co-presence a social relationship where people not only felt physically close to each other, they were also “reciprocally oriented toward each other” (p. 570). Here, Zhao and Elesh (2008) expand the definition of co-presence to include social presence and therefore, broaden its scope. Wei, Chen, and Kinshuk (2012) subsume co-presence as one component of social presence and not a discrete construct by itself. Biocca and Harms (2002) however, identify co-presence as the first level of awareness of another person’s mediated body. According to them, it is one aspect of “being together” but does not approximate to social presence.

### **Social Presence**

Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) introduced the concept of social presence as the “degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships” (p. 65). It is the “subjective feeling of being connected and together with others during computer mediated communication” (Sung & Mayer, 2012, p. 1739); the experience of being physically present and connected to others in a technologically mediated environment (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Walther and Burgoon (1992) defined social presence as awareness of another person and Biocca, Harms, and Burgoon (2003) broadened the definition of social presence to include access to peer learners’ intelligence, intentions, and sensory impressions of one another.

Short et al. (1976) attributed the experience of social presence to the quality of the medium. Gunawardena (1995) contended that social presence was not dependent on the medium. Rather, she proposed that social presence could be cultivated through a conducive learning environment created by the conscious incorporation of techniques such as providing spaces for participant introductions and interactions. Lowenthal (2009) argues that definitions of

social presence tend to fall on a continuum bound by the two extremes of a person's perception of other people as "being there" or physically present in the mediated environment and an emotional connection between the participants. According to Lowenthal (2009), the majority of definitions tend more towards the perception of "being there" and there is minimal attention paid to the emotional or interpersonal connection.

Social presence enables learners to create "mental models of virtual others in mediated communication" (Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003, p. 34). When social presence is successfully created, learners feel that they are interacting with real people in the online environment and do not feel disconnected or alienated (Sung & Mayer, 2012).

### **Review of Research on Presence**

Overwhelmingly, research into the concept of presence in the online learning environment has put the learner at the center of the study and is conducted from the perspective of the student. Hence, studies have been conducted with the intention of understanding students' experience of presence and factors that could contribute to and enhance their experiences of presence. With the exception of a recent study by Rosselli (2014), research has not considered the aspect of faculty experience of presence.

In this section, I will look at the research that has been conducted in the area of presence in the online learning environment. While these studies focus on the student experience of presence, I think it is important to include them in this literature review to paint a picture of what the landscape in the research on presence currently looks like.

Research into presence in the online learning environment has been dominated by the construct of social presence. Studies on telepresence and co-presence in educational research are minimal while there has been an explosion in the studies on social presence in the online learning

environment context (Cui, Lockee, & Meng, 2013). Telepresence and co-presence are primarily studied in the context of 3D virtual worlds. Studies on social presence are broader in scope and study diverse learning environments including completely text-based online learning environments.

Bulu (2012) considered the role of place presence / telepresence, co-presence, and social presence in 3D virtual worlds. She surveyed 46 students who were, for the first time, using the Second Life virtual world for education. Her study revealed that place presence, co-presence, and social presence were related in the virtual environment. Place presence was positively correlated with co-presence and social presence. Higher experiences of place presence and co-presence related to a higher sense of social presence. Bulu's (2012) study also revealed that social presence was the best predictor of student satisfaction.

Demographic variables such as age, work status, and gender were not significant predictors of social presence and learning satisfaction in Kim et al.'s (2011) study. They surveyed 81 students and found that media integration, interaction between participants, and instructor's teaching quality did predict social presence and learning satisfaction.

From a quantitative survey conducted with a sample of 612 undergraduate students at two Korean online universities, Sung and Mayer (2012) concluded that four features of online learning affected social presence. They identified respect for students' efforts, sharing of personal information and personal stories, open and hospitable learning environment, and awareness of students' identity as four important features. These features, according to Sung and Mayer (2012), need to guide online course design to ensure a sense of social presence for the students.

Wei et al. (2012) quantitatively surveyed 522 online students from three colleges. Their

findings were similar to those of Kim et al. (2011) and identified user interface and social cues as having a statistically significant impact on students' sense of social presence. They were also able to validate their hypotheses that social presence impacted interaction between students which in turn influenced learning performance. Moreover, they found that social cues were affected by the interface used in the course.

In 2013, Remesal and Colomina, conducted a qualitative study with 16 freshmen online students on the sense of social presence in online small group collaborative work. Remesal and Colomina (2013) reconceptualized social presence as a sociocultural and interactional construct that was no longer an individual's perspective rather, the perspective of a group. Social presence in this instance was created by the group and experienced by the group. Their findings show that participants experienced a substantial amount of social presence in their group interactions and group members acted and reacted to the psychological representations they had of the group.

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

A literature review on presence in the online learning environment would be incomplete if it did not mention the CoI framework. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (1999) developed the Community of Inquiry Framework to guide research and practice (Garrison, 2009) in online learning. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework brings together social, teaching, and cognitive presence into one comprehensive framework. Garrison et al. (1999) contend that these three types of presence influence the educational experience of students in the online learning environment. These three presences are seen as intersecting circles that interact with each other to create a successful learning experience for the student.

Cognitive presence is the extent to which participants are able to construct meaning in an environment of sustained communication (Garrison et al., 1999). Garrison (2009) defines



cognitive presence as “the exploration, construction, resolution, and confirmation of understanding through collaboration and reflection in a community of inquiry” (p. 65).

Garrison et al. (1999) explain social presence as the ability of participants to project their presence into the online environment as “real people” (Garrison et al., 1999, p. 89). Social presence in the CoI framework prioritizes not just a creation of personal connections but “purposeful relationships” (Garrison, 2009, p. 64).

Teaching presence encompasses the functions of course design and facilitation (Garrison et al., 1999). In an educational environment, these functions are the responsibility of the teacher. Teaching presence is experienced by students as the instructor providing a well-designed course, facilitating discourse, and providing direct instruction. Garrison et al. (1999) contend that teaching presence and social presence need to be effective in order to facilitate students’ learning – cognitive presence.

### **Research on the CoI Framework**

The CoI framework has gained tremendous acceptance and recognition. More than 100 research studies have been conducted on the various constructs of the CoI framework. Researchers like Arbaugh et al. (2008) and Shea and Bidjerano (2009) attempted to establish the construct validity of the CoI framework and identified teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence as three unique factors. Other researchers (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010; Kumar, Dawson, Black, Cavanaugh, & Sessums, 2011; Ice, Curtis, Phillips, & Wells, 2007; Mayne & Wu, 2011; Nagel & Kotzé, 2010) considered the relationship between the three factors of the CoI framework and student satisfaction. All their studies indicated that social presence was related to student satisfaction but the experience of social presence itself was dependent on the degree to which teaching presence was established. Teaching presence or the

role of the faculty in the online learning environment emerged as a key factor in the CoI framework.

These research studies reinforce the importance of faculty in the online learning environment. However, the framework is built around the educational experience of the student which is at the core. And all these studies therefore, centralize the student experience. Hence, while faculty are recognized as important, their personal experiences of presence are not considered.

### **Strategies to Create Presence**

Since research has shown the impact of presence on students' learning, a number of studies have focused on strategies that could create a sense of presence for students. Different researchers have presented their strategies in different ways. Some studies have considered the course as a complete entity. They have identified three strategies to enhance presence: good course design, providing opportunities for communication among students, and designing collaborative activities. Other researchers have focused on specific technologies and pedagogical practices as strategies to enhance presence

An online course consists of many interactive parts such as the technology, the students, course structure, content, and instructor. Taking all these elements into account, some researchers have presented best practices for creating presence for students. Kehrwald (2008), in a longitudinal study with 20 students within a text-based online learning environment, discovered that social presence is closely related to interpersonal communication. Therefore, he suggests creating opportunities for students to interact with each other. Mayne and Wu (2011) studied how social presence could be incorporated into graduate level nursing courses. They surveyed 26 students in an experimental study. They discovered that course design,

communication from the instructor, and small groups, when implemented appropriately, had the potential to increase students' experience of social presence. Therefore, they encourage good course design, prompt responses from the instructor to student inquiries, providing prompt feedback, and designing small group activities.

The survey conducted by Wei et al. (2012) identified two key factors that impacted social presence: user-interface and social cues. They recommend creating learning environments that are media rich but incorporate user-friendly technology. According to them, this will enable students to readily share verbal and non-verbal cues. The technology in combination with the social cues, they contend, will enhance social presence for students.

Kim et al. (2011) identified three factors that influenced social presence. From a survey of 81 students, their investigation brought forward media integration, course quality, and interactions as good predictors of social presence. From their study, they suggest that technology needs to be used effectively. They encourage the use of diverse media modalities but in dynamic ways that spark and facilitate quality interactions.

Nagel and Kotzé (2010) considered presence in the context of a large class (160 students). Based on responses received from 76 students, they state that teaching presence as exhibited through course design and communication enhanced the students' learning experience. Part of good course design, in their opinion, includes providing sufficient online resources for students. Peer review as a strategy facilitated communication and feedback for the students.

The importance of collaborative activities was reinforced by Akyol and Garrison (2014), through a mixed-methods study of 16 participants. They note that group discussions were effective especially when students assumed facilitating roles and posing thought provoking questions was important for cognitive presence.

Casey and Kroth (2013) used a different approach. They introduced the faculty voice into this dialogue. Eight experienced online faculty were interviewed in their qualitative study. From their interviews, Casey and Kroth (2013) identified course organization, consistent communication with students, creating learning relationships with students, and collaborative activities as best practices to creating presence for students. Specific strategies that they highlighted included creating welcome messages for students and maintaining ongoing communications with students. With respect to collaborative activities, they describe having students create codes of conduct and assigning group leader roles to the students. They encourage having students take responsibility for the collaborative activities thereby enabling the students to become self-directed learners.

The second approach to identifying strategies that create presence has been to focus on one specific element in the course. In 2007, Ice, Curtis, Phillips, and Wells drilled down to one specific technology, asynchronous audio feedback, and tested to see if this approach would enhance the teaching presence aspect of the CoI framework. They conducted a mixed-methods research with 34 students. Their hypothesis was upheld when the student participants declared an overwhelming preference for audio feedback over traditional feedback. Moving from asynchronous audio, Borup, West, and Graham (2012) looked at asynchronous video and considered how this strategy improved social presence. In an experimental study, they interviewed 18 student participants. They determined that asynchronous videos created by the instructor were more effective at creating social presence when compared to videos created by course peers.

Another technology that was considered was virtual reality. The efficacy of virtual reality classrooms in the context of social presence was studied by Hodge, Tabrizi, Farwell, and

Wuensch (2007). The participatory and interactive nature of the environment led the student participants to support the continued use of the technology.

Social media was also studied as a strategy to enhance presence. Dunlap and Lowenthal (2009) incorporated social media, specifically Twitter, in their courses. Their intention was to enhance social presence. Positive feedback from students led them to propose using Twitter as a strategy to create social presence.

Moving away from technological tools, Remesal and Colomina (2012) concentrated on the effect of small group collaboration on social presence. They analyzed the discussion posts of 16 student participants and showed that social presence is dynamic and evolves over time. Dunlap et al. (2015), through a literature review, propose the use of emoticons as a strategy to increase social presence.

In addition to the studies discussed here, a number of other peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on strategies to create presence were located. These articles though, were not empirical in nature. In the literature studying strategies to create presence, a number of articles share opinions and best practices but lack data to support their claims. These articles all build off what the empirical articles in this review highlighted. Good course design, activities that provide opportunities for communication, and collaborative activities are key to creating a sense of presence.

### **Gap in the Presence Literature**

Within the body of presence literature, there are two categories that have not been sufficiently explored: the emotional dimension of presence and how presence is experienced by faculty. In the following section, I look at the few studies that have attempted to bridge this gap.

The conceptualizations of presence and research on presence have overlooked the

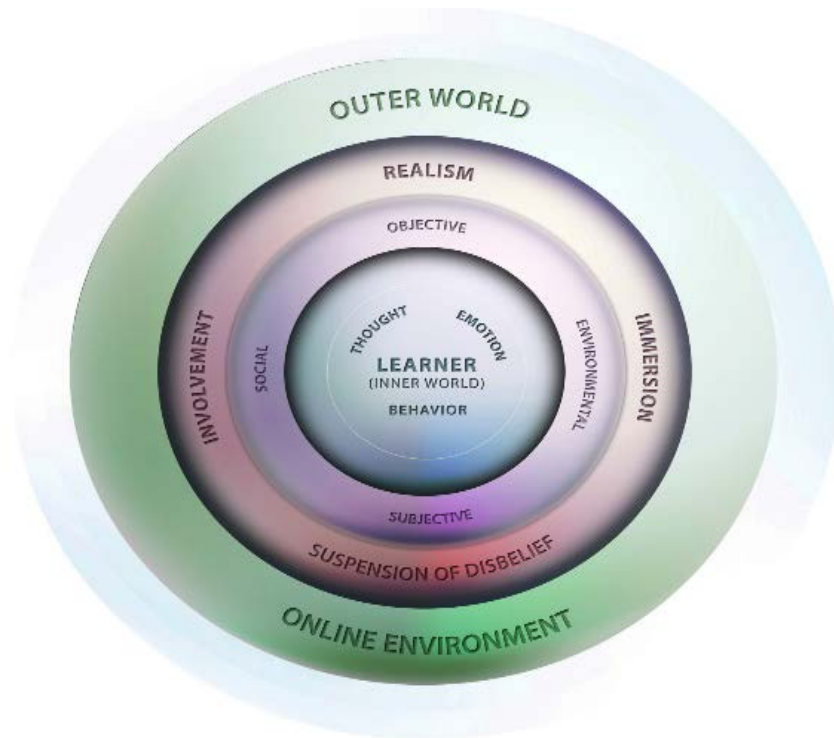
involvement of emotions in the learning environment. Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) have been among the few researchers who have recognized the importance of emotions in a learning environment. Though their focus has been on the emotional dimension of presence in relation to students, it is important to include their research in this literature review. They have shown that presence has an emotional dimension that needs to be recognized and researched.

Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) contend that when students transition to a new learning environment as the online learning environment, they encounter emotions that will impact their learning experience. The researchers conducted a mixed methods study with 217 students from 19 courses to test for the existence of emotional presence using the lens of the CoI framework. Their findings indicated that emotional presence existed independent of social presence and cognitive presence. They concluded that emotional presence underpinned the whole online learning experience for students. From this study, they defined emotional presence as “the outward expression of emotion, affect, and feeling by individuals and among individuals in a community of inquiry, as they relate to and interact with the learning technology, course content, students, and the instructor” (Discussion section). The definition of emotional presence that Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) have developed is broad and can apply to students and faculty in the online learning environment. Their definition considers the emotions of all participants of the OLE though they do not explicitly mention faculty.

Set apart from other researchers in the field of presence, Lehman and Conceição (2010) take a holistic view of presence. Their Being There for the Online Learner model (See Figure 2.2), places the learner’s inner world at the core of the model. They contend that “emotions affect thought, and then behavior affecting the experience of presence in the online environment” (p. 23). They identify this as a dynamic interplay between thoughts, emotion, and behavior.

This model does not tease out the experiences of presence into social or physical. Rather, they consider the social and physical aspects as working together to create a fuller experience of presence. As with other frameworks and conceptualizations of presence, Lehman and Conceição (2010) also place the student at the center of their model. Their model therefore references the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of students and the students’ experience of presence that is affected by the outer world and the OLE.

Figure 2.2  
*Being “There” for the Online Learner model*



Lehman and Conceição (2010). Used with authors’ permission.

Rosselli (2014) conducted a phenomenological study using the “Being There for the Online Learner model” and he applied it to the nursing faculty population. As of May 2015, Rosselli’s is the only research study that has examined the experience of presence from the perspective of faculty. He studied 13 nursing faculty and interviewed them regarding their experiences of presence in online instruction. His research was framed by the “Being There for

the Online Learner model” and his findings concluded that his participants experienced presence as a sense of “being there” and “being together” (Lehman & Conceição, 2010, p. 5). Rosselli (2014) notes that the participants in his study experienced presence to varying degrees. This negated simplistic conclusions of “yes” or “no” with regard to the experience of presence. Furthermore, his study added a new dimension to the presence concept – “coming here” (Rosselli, 2014, p. 106). The participants in his study felt that their students “came” to them in the virtual environment leading to their perception of “coming here.”

### **Bridging the gap**

This literature review has highlighted two main areas that have been under-researched: faculty experience of presence, and the conceptualization of presence as an interplay of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. The intention of this research study therefore, is to bridge this gap. This study will concentrate on how faculty perceive and experience presence in the online learning environment and how they translate this into practice for their students.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of the methodology used in identifying studies to include in the literature review. The literature review itself was divided into two sections. Section one covered the literature on faculty in the online learning environment and ended by identifying gaps in the literature. Section two looked at the concept of presence and the studies associated with it. The gaps in this literature were identified at the end of the section. Finally, the two sections were brought together and presented the focus of the study and the questions that were raised by the literature. The next chapter will describe the methodology employed to conduct this study.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The following methodology section aims to provide comprehensive information on the procedures that were implemented in this study, and the reasoning behind the choices (Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2013). The chapter begins with the methodological and conceptual frameworks for the study. Next, the study design delineates the participants and sample size followed by the process of participant recruitment. After explication of the process, the demographics of the participants are presented. Then, the analysis of data is elucidated. Finally, ethical considerations and validity and reliability issues are addressed.

### Focus of the Study

The literature review identified two research areas that have been predominantly overlooked in research: (1) faculty experience of presence, and (2) the conceptualization of presence as the interplay of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This research study addressed this gap in the literature by considering the following research questions.

1. How do online faculty perceive presence in the online learning environment?
2. How do online faculty experience presence in the online learning environment?
  - a. How do online faculty experience presence emotionally?
  - b. How do online faculty experience presence cognitively?
  - c. How do online faculty experience presence behaviorally?
3. What strategies do online faculty employ in their online instruction to create a sense of presence and why?

## **Methodological Framework**

The methodology adopted in this research study was dependent upon the problem, the questions posed, and the literature that was reviewed (Creswell, 2012). In this research study, my constructivist worldview, the research problem, and my research questions led me to take a qualitative methodological approach. This research strives to understand the perceptions of participants, their behaviors, and the strategies utilized by participants to create presence in the online learning environment. To ensure a clear understanding of these different facets, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as the methodological framework. IPA was conducted through the conceptual lens of dramaturgy and the determinants of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). In the following sections, IPA, dramaturgy, and the determinants of presence are explicated while providing reasoning for the choices.

### **Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

The intention of this research was to examine the personal experiences and perceptions of faculty in the online learning environment, focusing on the specific phenomenon of “presence.” IPA allows for a detailed analysis of the phenomenon from the participants’ perspective while incorporating the element of interpretation. The methodological choices used in this study were guided by the practical research guidelines set out by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) in IPA.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a very recent qualitative research methodology that was proposed by Jonathan Smith in his seminal work “Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretive phenomenological analysis in health psychology” (1996). It is based on the theoretical principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

IPA is phenomenological in that it aims to understand a social phenomenon from the

perspective of the people directly involved with the phenomenon. The researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals concerning a specific phenomenon as described by the participants while asking critical questions of their experiences to then interpret them (Shinebourne, 2011). The intention is to arrive at the essence of the experience as described by the participants (Creswell, 2014). Interpretive phenomenology acknowledges that the researcher's lived experiences influence the researcher's perceptions of the world and the research.

The analytic process in IPA utilizes a double hermeneutic or a "dual interpretation process" (Pietkiewickz & Smith, 2014, p. 8). Firstly, participants attempt to make sense of their own experience. Secondly, the researcher attempts to understand how participants make sense of their individual experiences. Participants are given voice and their understanding and experience of the phenomenon is subsequently interpreted by the researcher.

IPA is strongly idiographic since it focuses on one participant at a time. In addition, the area of study is restricted to one specific phenomenon. In IPA, the focus is placed on one case, which is analyzed in-depth before moving on to the next case. The cases are then analyzed to identify cross-themes and points of divergence and convergence (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). While a person's experiences are recognized as being unique, phenomenology focuses on how one's experiences can translate into experiences of others within the same context (van Manen, 1990, p. 57). IPA does not attempt to find a generalizable theory that can be applied across a variety of contexts. Rather, it looks for the essence of a particular experience or set of experiences across different participants. It focuses on vertical generalizability where findings within one context could prove useful in other situations within similar contexts (Yardley, 2008).

## Conceptual Framework

### Dramaturgy

A conceptual framework provides a lens through which a research problem can be viewed. In this study, I conceptualized teaching as a dramatic performance with the faculty in the role of actor creating a performance for their audience, the students. In 1968, Eliot Eisner wrote:

Teachers, like actors, attempt to communicate to groups of people in an audience-like situation, and while the ends of comedy and instruction differ markedly, both the actor and the teacher employ qualities to enhance communication; both must come through to the people with whom they work. (p. 362)

The notion of teacher as an actor is interesting and acknowledges the role of teacher and actor as performing to an audience (Smith & Hansen, 1972). Acting techniques have also been suggested as successful strategies for teachers to utilize in their classrooms (Barbuto, 2006; Griggs, 2001; Harris, 1977). One faculty participant in Conceição's (2006) study explicitly stated that the experience of teaching online was like "performing on stage or filming in front of a camera" (p. 40). Recently, Sims (2014) used the metaphor of an "educational *performance*" (p. 106) for the online learning environment.

The metaphor of teacher as actor does not frame the teacher in the role of sage on the stage. Rather, as Conklin (1979) notes, teaching is interactive. Students react to the performance of the teacher including the teacher's clothes, manners, and the style of teaching. Students' reaction then informs the teacher's performance. Conklin (1979) also states that teachers adopt behaviors and teaching styles that are a "'natural' manifestation of their personalities" (p. 104).

MacFarlane (2007) argued that teaching is traditionally viewed as a narrow activity that happens within the space of the classroom. For him though, teaching extended beyond the classroom. To illustrate this, he applied a dramaturgical lens to teaching wherein the act of teaching becomes a performance enacted by the teacher for the student audience. He contends that there are three phases to teaching: pre-performance (off stage), performance (on stage), and post-performance (off stage). The off stage, pre-performance activities include program design, lesson planning, developing teaching materials, etc. During the on stage performance, the teacher engages in lectures, experiments, workshops, etc. Finally, the post-performance moves off stage and includes student advising, assessment and feedback, mediating online discussions to name a few. According to MacFarlane (2007) teaching needs to be assessed in a holistic manner encompassing all phases and the dramaturgical lens best captures this.

The intention of this study is to understand faculty perceptions and experiences of presence in a holistic manner. The sociological theory of dramaturgy therefore, provides an appropriate theoretical framework through which to analyze and interpret the experiences of faculty as a dramatic performance that lacks immediate feedback.

Dramaturgy was adapted into sociology from the stage by Erving Goffman in his seminal work *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Dramaturgy studies human interactions as stage performances where everyone is an actor, enacting a performance and presenting themselves in a particular way. Dramaturgy recognizes that people assume different personae, attitudes, behaviors, and manners based on the situations they are participating in. So a waiter in a restaurant dons a particular uniform and language style when interacting with customers. The same waiter will wear different clothes in more private settings such as when interacting with close family.

Goffman (1959) proposed that each of these performances is authentic within their contexts. Goffman (1959) preferred to use the concept of “impression management” (p. 49). Impression management refers to how people control themselves and the environment around them to create a specific impression on the people around them. These people are placed in the role of audience. The concepts of dramaturgy focus on the impressions people choose to create. The concepts of “front” and “back regions” (Goffman, 1959, p. 66) guide the performance and are manipulated to manage the impression created.

The front comprises of two main elements – the personal front and the setting. The personal front is made up of appearance and manners. Appearance includes clothing, sex, age, gender, race, and size. Manners, refers to facial expressions, speech patterns, posture, and gestures among others. Setting refers to the props that surround the actor and are a part of the background or are utilized actively by the actor. The setting sets up the context and environment for the interaction. The setting is usually geographically fixed and a performance cannot begin in the absence of the setting (Goffman, 1959).

The back is where the actor can “step out of character” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112) of him/herself. This is where the preparation for the front occurs and consequently influences the success of the interaction in the front. Goffman includes the back region in the analysis of a performance highlighting its importance in the performance though it happens completely in the background and away from the presence of the audience.

Goffman (1959) also discusses the role of script, teams, and frames within the performance. In addition, he highlights the discrepant roles that people adopt, discordant teams, and communications that are out of character and context. Goffman brings all these elements together to illustrate how all elements have a function within a performance.

## Determinants of Presence

The determinants of presence are one element within the larger model of the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence (See Figure 3.1). A reciprocal relationship exists between the Being There model and the framework. A sense of presence leads to the designing of courses with the six determinants. These determinants in turn create a sense of presence. As indicated by the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence, instructors can use the determinants of presence as a guide to create presence for their students.

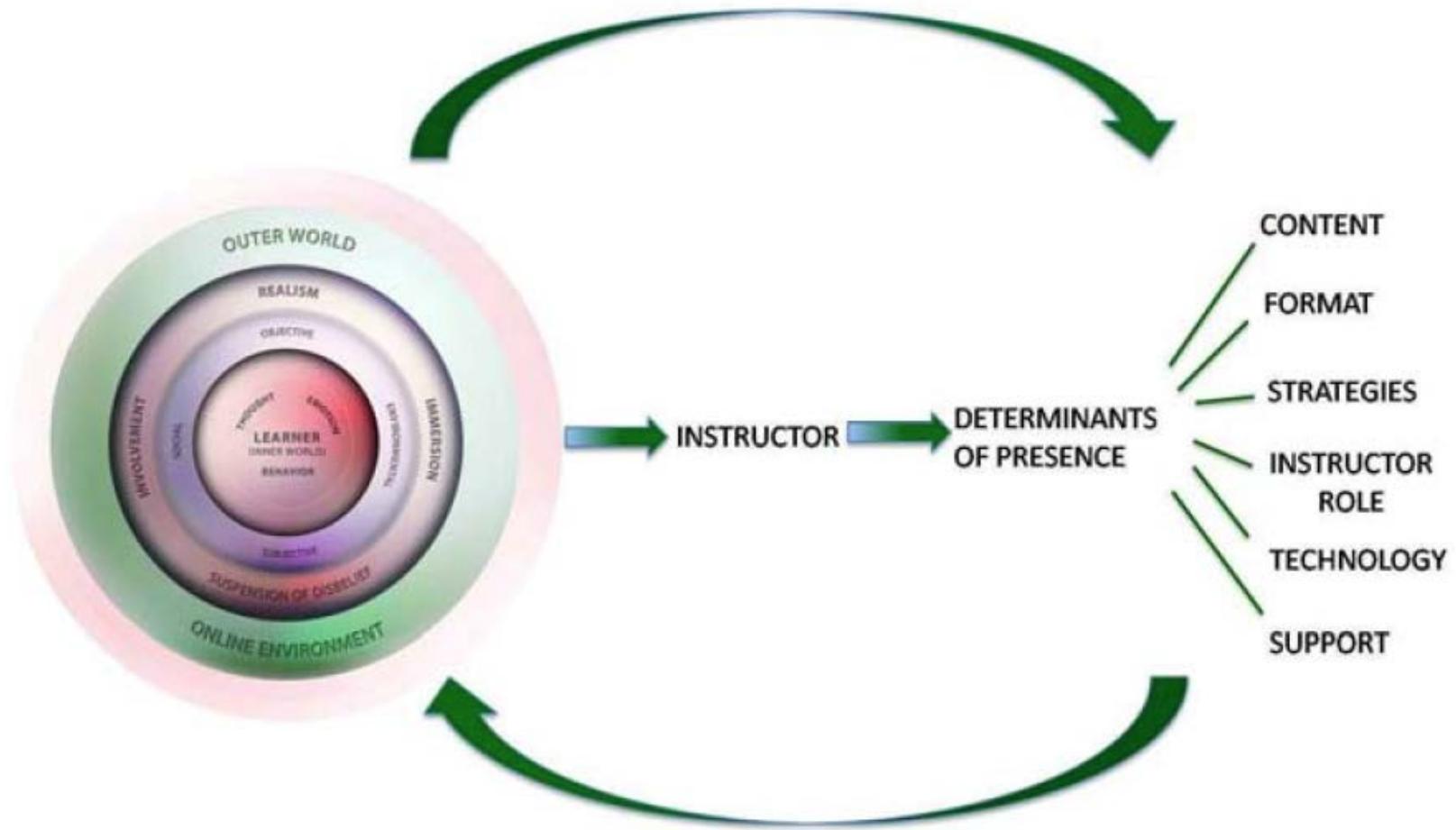
Table 3.1  
*Description of the determinants of presence*

Determinants	Description
<b>Content</b>	The focus of the content depends on the mindset of the instructor and influence the sense of presence. There can be a process or purely content focus depending on the discipline and the instructor.
<b>Format</b>	Courses can be structured to be self-paced, group-based, or a combination of both. The format influences how presence can be created for students. For example, in group-based courses, discussions would create presence for students.
<b>Strategies</b>	Strategies engage learners with each other, the instructor, and with the content. The types of strategies are only limited by the imagination of the instructor. Creating videos, role-plays, presentations, are all examples of strategies.
<b>Instructor role</b>	Instructors can function in different roles in the OLE. They are course designers, mentors, facilitators, catalysts, supporters, and evaluators to name a few.
<b>Technology</b>	Online courses are primarily delivered synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that are selected for a course are dependent on the delivery format. The technologies should also be user-friendly and become transparent to the users.
<b>Support</b>	Technical support (related to the technological aspects of the course) and instructional support (such as access to library resources, support with research techniques, Writing Center, Academic Support Center) are important in an online course.

Lehman & Conceição (2010), Used with authors' consent

Figure 3.1  
Framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence

51



Lehman and Conceição (2010). Used with authors' permission.



## Study Design

The research was designed taking into account the research questions and findings from prior research studies.

### Context

This research explores faculty perception and experience of presence in a formal educational online learning environment. Online learning programs are offered by a variety of institutions – four-year institutions of higher education, for-profit universities, and community colleges to name a few. This study was conducted at an urban, public, mid-western four-year institution of higher education, which will be referred to as University X (UX).

Faculty control over the design and delivery of their online courses was the primary reason for the selection of this particular university. While faculty receive support from a technology center and might have assistants to help them with the technological elements of courses, at UX, the courses themselves are the sole responsibility of the faculty. This implies that faculty design the syllabus, activities, and assessments for their courses as well as personally conduct their courses. Faculty, therefore, have control over how they create and maintain presence with their students. They are not limited by course structures that have been created for them by instructional designers, as is the case in some other institutions. This autonomy in course design was a critical consideration in the selection of the research location.

### Disciplines

This study used academic disciplines as one point of analysis of the findings. Research has shown that pedagogic strategies and assessment activities are different across academic disciplines. In a study of the dialogic behavior across disciplines in an open university, Gorsky, Caspi, Antonovsky, Blau, and Mansur (2010) found that science courses had more tutor

assignments than in the humanities. Faculty in the sciences and humanities also exhibited differences in the type of discussion prompts they posted. Faculty in the humanities posted more triggering events, which are dilemmas or problems arising from personal experiences. Faculty in the sciences posted more exploration oriented comments. These comments caused students to move out of their personal reflection to a social exploration of the issue being studied (Gorsky et al., 2010). Smith, Heindel, and Torres-Ayala (2008) specifically looked at the disciplinary differences in the transactional distance experienced in online courses. They used Biglan's (1973) categorization of disciplines to frame their study and found that pure-hard disciplines emphasized mastery of facts and tended to quantitatively measure the knowledge acquired. Pure-soft disciplines, on the other hand, focused on knowledge application oriented evaluations that were more process oriented and qualitative in nature.

Smart and Umbach (2007) found that faculty in different disciplines structure their courses differently and interact with their students differently. They suggest that research into college environments should include a focus on the distinct disciplines within the institution (Smart & Umbach, 2007). Krause (2012) in her study of teaching and learning across academic disciplines in an Australian university concludes that faculty perceptions and experiences need to be examined through a disciplinary lens. This research study therefore, recruited participants from a variety of disciplines across the university.

Research on the differences between academic disciplines has primarily used Biglan's model of disciplinary classification (Jones, 2011). Biglan's (1973) model categorizes disciplines as hard/soft, pure/applied, and life/non-life. For this study, Biglan's model was modified into four main categories of pure-hard, pure-soft, applied-hard, and applied-soft and the academic course offerings of UX were classified into these four categories (See Appendix A:

Categorization of Academic Disciplines).

### **Experience Level**

Faculty experience in the online learning environment was another point of analysis in this study. Faculty with different experience levels in the online learning environment have very different responses to online instruction. Experienced faculty frequently believe in the effectiveness of online education and see little difference between traditional learning and online learning (Ulmer et al., 2007). Inexperienced faculty are often reluctant to adopt online instruction and have reservations about its efficacy. Experienced faculty express greater satisfaction with online instruction and are usually willing to teach online again. The experiences of expert and novice faculty are clearly different and cannot be ignored in a study focusing on faculty experiences. Hence, this study included participants with two experience level classifications – novice and expert. Novice faculty refers to those who have taught two or three fully online courses. Faculty who had taught more than three fully online courses were classified as experienced faculty.

### **Participant Description**

Participant sample needed to be as homogenous as possible to enable a study of similarities and differences in experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). All participants for this study were recruited from University X (UX).

**Site description.** UX is a four-year public university in the Midwest that offers a variety of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs. UX has been developing online and blended learning programs for more than a decade and offers more than three dozen degree programs and a number of certificate programs in a fully online format. In total, UX offers more than 700 online courses and in the academic year 2013-2014, 35% of students were enrolled in at

least one online course and 6% of students were enrolled in online courses full-time. These statistics made this university a credibly suitable location for a research study on online learning.

**Learning Management System (LMS).** Limiting this study to faculty from one institution ensured that all participants utilized the same learning management system (LMS). The LMS utilized by UX is available to all faculty and students. The LMS is used by faculty not only for online courses but for traditional face-to-face and hybrid courses. The LMS incorporates synchronous and asynchronous interaction capabilities and users can elect to organize synchronous video conferencing sessions on this platform. The LMS also includes discussion boards, instant messaging, and email features. All participants in this study conducted their classes primarily in an asynchronous format. Content was posted and students could interact with the content at their convenience. Most class interactions occurred on the discussion boards. Some participants chose to use synchronous video conferencing but this was not the primary mode of instruction or interaction.

**Support services.** UX provides support services to all faculty on the use of the LMS. The university's technology center conducts regular workshops on the technological aspects of the LMS and relevant software that can be leveraged for use in online courses. In addition, the technology center offers sessions on the pedagogical aspects of online instruction. The support is not limited to organized workshops and sessions. Faculty can also meet with the technology center staff for individualized assistance. All services provided by the technology center are optional and it is up to faculty to leverage the resources available to them.

Recruiting participants from one institution, UX, helped ensure that the participants had all experienced the phenomenon of presence on a similar platform, within a similar online learning environment, and with access to the same support services. Hence, their experiences

could be compared and contrasted on an equal plane.

In addition, participants had designed and conducted at least two fully online courses. Faculty who had taught two courses had familiarity with the LMS. They had had an opportunity to try out the online learning environment, experienced challenges, and had an opportunity to address these challenges in another course. They had, most likely, formed ideas as to which strategies worked best for them and had time to overcome initial responses to a new teaching environment.

### Sampling

This research study incorporated purposive sampling since participants were selected based on particular criteria that they satisfied (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2014). The intent was to include the perspectives of participants across the four identified discipline categories and across different levels of experience (novice to experienced). Purposive sampling ensured that the viewpoints of participants from various disciplines and experience levels were represented. In addition, purposive sampling helped to safeguard against skewing in favor of a particular group that might participate in larger numbers than others (Burton et al., 2014). A matrix was created to help categorize faculty (See Table 3.2).

Table 3.2  
*Faculty Categorization Matrix*

	<b>Experienced faculty</b>	<b>Novice faculty</b>
<b>Pure/Hard</b>	<i>Quadrant 1</i>	<i>Quadrant 2</i>
<b>Applied/Hard</b>	<i>Quadrant 3</i>	<i>Quadrant 4</i>
<b>Pure/Soft</b>	<i>Quadrant 5</i>	<i>Quadrant 6</i>
<b>Applied/Soft</b>	<i>Quadrant 7</i>	<i>Quadrant 8</i>

### Sample Size

IPA aims to provide an in-depth analysis of a participant's experience and researchers are encouraged to consider the depth of data rather than the breadth. Sample sizes are therefore kept

small to allow for a detailed study of the participants' accounts. However, there are no specific numbers that an IPA researcher is required to adhere to. Participant numbers depend on the depth and richness of individual cases, the researcher's aim in comparing and contrasting data, and even the availability of participants. Within these parameters, IPA studies have included sample sizes from one to fifteen (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

In this study, it was important to provide a representative group of novice and experienced faculty from the four broad discipline categories. Hence, at least two participants for each of the eight quadrants in the matrix (See Table 3.3) were recruited.

### **Participant Recruitment**

UX maintains a list of online courses and the faculty in-charge in openly accessible PDF files. These PDF files were analyzed for the period beginning spring 2013 to identify faculty who had taught two or more graduate or undergraduate fully online courses. The resulting list of faculty was then categorized into a matrix (See Table 3.3). Faculty who had taught online courses in the most recent semesters (summer 2015, spring 2015, fall 2014, and summer 2014) were sent the first set of emails, inviting them to participate in the study (See Appendix B: Invitation email). Based on the responses, three other sets of emails were sent. Thirty participants responded to the emails indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Due to scheduling conflicts five respondents were unable to participate in the study. One respondent participated in the interview but later changed his mind. All his information was then removed from the study. A final total of 25 participants were included in the study (See Table 3.3) with a minimum of two participants per quadrant.

Table 3.3

*Participant Recruitment Matrix*

	<b>Experienced faculty</b>	<b>Novice faculty</b>
<b>Pure/Hard</b>	2 participants	3 participants
<b>Applied/Hard</b>	4 participants	3 participants
<b>Pure/Soft</b>	3 participants	4 participants
<b>Applied/Soft</b>	4 participants	2 participants

### **Demographic Information**

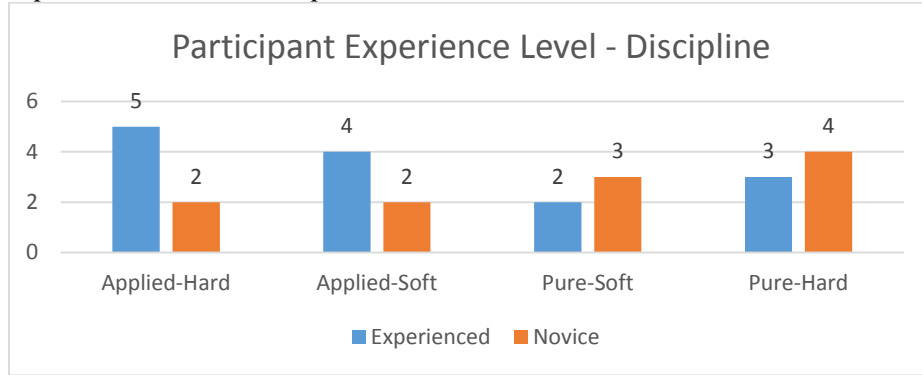
The following section presents demographic information about the faculty participants in this study, the classes they taught, and the students in the classes. Participation in this study was voluntary. The participants who agreed to participate were either happy with online instruction or were interested in improving their online teaching practices.

Demographic information provided by the faculty participants revealed that 88% of the participants self-identified as Caucasian; 4% of the participants self-identified as Hispanic; 4% self-identified as African-American; and, 4% of the participants abstained from providing this information. There were 12 adjunct faculty participants (contracted to teach individual courses) and 13 faculty who worked full-time at the university. There were 5 participants in the pure-hard disciplines; 7 participants in the pure-soft disciplines; 7 participants in the applied-hard disciplines; and, 6 participants in the applied-soft disciplines.

### **Experience Level**

There were 14 faculty who had taught more than three courses (Experienced) and 11 faculty who had taught two or three courses (Novice). Figure 3.2 shows the participant experience distribution across the discipline categories. There were at least two participants in each category for the four discipline categories.

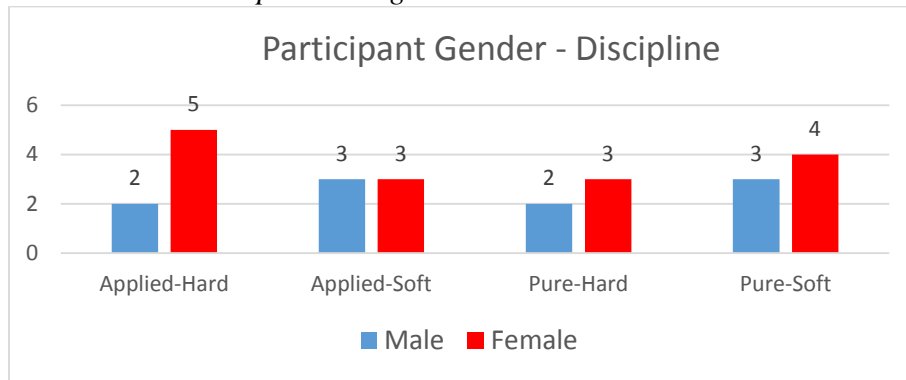
Figure 3.2  
Participant Experience across Discipline



### Gender

All participants self-identified as male or female. There were 10 male participants and 15 female participants. The participant gender distribution across the discipline categories is represented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3  
Participant Gender across Discipline Categories

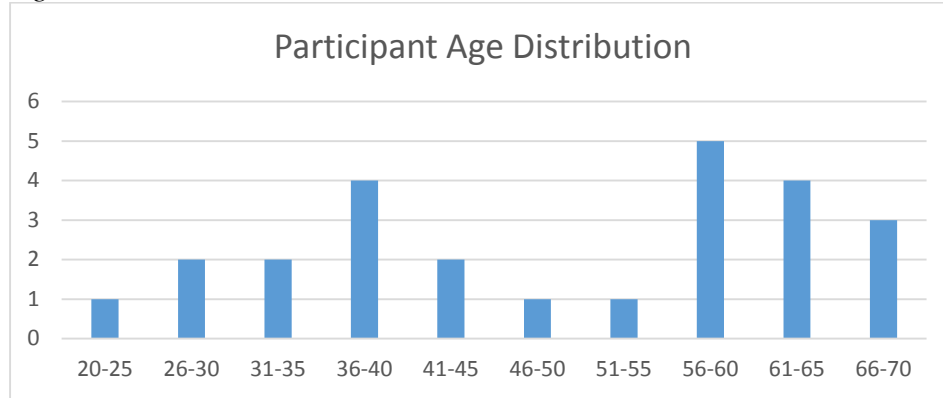


### Age Groups

Participants were presented with 11 age range choices: 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-65, 66-70, and 71 and over. There were no participants in the 71 and over age range. Figure 3.4 depicts participant distribution across the age ranges. The highest number of participants fell in the 56-60 age range followed by participants in the 61-65 and 36-40 age ranges.



Figure 3.4  
Participant Age Distribution



Participants were assigned identifiers to ensure their anonymity. They were assigned identifiers such as P1 to indicate Participant 1 and P2 for Participant 2. The numbers were assigned in the order in which participants were interviewed. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the demographic information for the participants in this study. The data are organized based on the four discipline categories.

Table 3.4  
Participant Demographics

Discipline	Experience Level	Participant	Gender	Age	Interview Location
Pure-Hard	E	P6	M	31-35	Office
		P23	F	41-45	Office
	N	P4	F	36-40	Office
		P7	M	56-60	Office
		P12	F	41-45	Skype
Pure-Soft	E	P2	F	66-70	Library
		P13	M	61-65	Office
		P15	F	36-40	Office
	N	P3	M	26-30	Library
		P11	F	20-25	Library
		P16	M	36-40	Library
		P19	F	36-40	Library
Applied-Hard	E	P8	M	66-70	Skype
		P10	F	61-65	Skype
		P17	F	46-50	Office
		P18	F	56-60	Skype
	N	P14	F	26-30	Library
		P20	F	31-35	Skype
Applied-	E	P21	M	51-55	Office
		P1	F	56-60	Library

Discipline	Experience Level	Participant	Gender	Age	Interview Location
Soft		P5	M	61-65	Library
		P9	F	61-65	Office
		P22	F	56-60	Skype
	N	P24	M	66-70	Library
		P25	M	56-60	Office

**Legend**

Experience Level	E – Experienced N – Novice	Gender	M – Male F - Female
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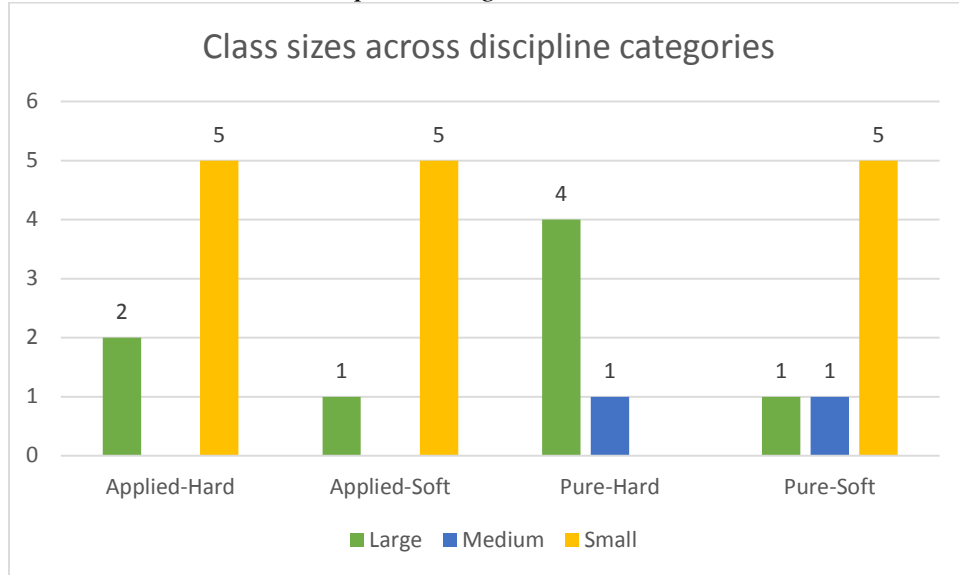
### Student Demographic

The online courses at UX are offered at undergraduate and graduate levels. Some courses are taken by both undergraduate and graduate students. The faculty participants in this study taught a variety of online courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Faculty participants in the pure-hard disciplines mentioned that in their subject areas online courses were offered only at the undergraduate level. These were introductory level courses that satisfied General Education Requirements (GER) or program specific requirements. Faculty in these disciplines did not think that graduate level courses in their subject areas could be offered online. Programs in other discipline areas such as applied-soft offered up to complete Master’s programs in a fully online format.

### Class Size

The class sizes that the faculty participants taught varied greatly. The university requires a minimum of 12 students per class. This was the smallest class size. The largest class size in this study was taught by P12 and stood at 175 students. The three class size classifications used in this study are: small (0-25 students), medium (26-50 students), and large (51 or more students). The classes participants taught in pure-hard courses were all medium or large with the smallest class size at 40 students. Whereas, courses that participants taught in the applied-soft and pure-soft disciplines had small class sizes. Class size distribution across the discipline categories was as in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5  
*Class size distribution across the discipline categories*



### Data Collection

The researcher plays a key role in qualitative studies. As the researcher, I personally collected data through a variety of methods such as document analysis, observation, and interviews (Creswell, 2014). Data collection occurred over five months from August 2015 to January 2016.

Since qualitative research usually incorporates different forms of data, I gathered three types of data: documentary evidence (artifacts), observations, and interviews (Creswell, 2014). These data were then examined and themes that cut across them were identified. Data collection for this study followed a prescribed pattern. First, documentary evidence was collected and analyzed. The participants were then interviewed and finally, the online course sites were observed.

### Documentary Evidence

While the primary data source for IPA is semi-structured interviews, it does allow for the use of different sources of data including journals, personal accounts, letters, and open-ended

questionnaires (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In this study, I incorporated documentary evidence in the form of course syllabi developed by the participants.

Course syllabi are a contract between the faculty and students and are a representation of the faculty's expectations for the course. They lay the basis of the relationship between students and faculty and convey the intrinsic teaching styles and preferences of the faculty. The course syllabus is an objective representation of the strategies that faculty utilize in their courses to create presence for their students and engage them.

Documents are a snapshot of one point in time and while the syllabi did not represent what actually happened within the course (Burton et al., 2014), they provided an insight into how the participants designed courses for their students. The syllabi were a point of reference as they were inevitably molded by the perceptions of the designer. The syllabi were also a starting point for the interviews with the participants and provided a baseline to critically evaluate participant responses. Furthermore, it was possible to compare and contrast the syllabi of different subject faculty to assess how each individual addressed the same requirements (Burton et al., 2014).

For each participant, at least two course syllabi documents were evaluated. These course syllabi were drawn from two different course offerings designed and taught by the participants. Course syllabi of the educational institution, UX, are a part of the public domain but were not always readily available. Faculty subjects were therefore contacted to provide sample syllabi (See Appendix C: Email request for course syllabi). However, as a part of the public domain, incorporating them in research did not require special permissions. Some of the syllabi comprised of discipline specific jargon and "insider knowledge" that required special interpretation (Burton et al., 2014, p. 107). The interviews allowed for clarification and greater exposition on the syllabi.

## **Interview**

The interview process in this study was framed by IPA and dramaturgy. IPA data collection depends primarily on semi-structured interviews (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Therefore, my research employed a semi-structured interview format allowing me to focus on a main topic and to subsequently drill deeper into it thereby gaining richer data related to the topic (Burton et al., 2014). Interviews were used not to gather factual data, rather to understand how participants understood and experienced the phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The interviews provided a subjective interpretation of the world of the participant and were grounded in the perspectives and beliefs of the participants. Through the interviews I attempted to understand how the participants made sense of their experience through open and free dialogue with them (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Meaning was arrived at inductively in this process.

Before I conducted the interviews, I ensured that I possessed comprehensive background knowledge of the participant and the topic. I framed questions that were guided by the literature and prior research, and I prepared myself to pursue new leads that might arise during the course of the interview (Burton, Brundrett, & Jones, 2008). The documentary evidence that was collected, in addition to a close study of the courses taught by the faculty, enabled me to approach the interviews from an informed position.

Semi-structured interviews allowed me to approach the research questions “sideways” during the interview process (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 58). As per IPA guidelines, I used an interview schedule that was prepared in advance and was used to guide the interview. The schedule is a list of questions and follow-up probing questions anticipating participant responses (See Appendix D: Interview schedule). These questions were not prescriptive and

were formulated with the knowledge that the interview might take a different direction (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). While the interview schedule provided a set of guiding questions, it was flexible enough to allow the participants latitude in their answers and gave me an opportunity to explore new ideas and concepts that evolved through the interview. The interviews needed to be conducted skillfully to elicit the most details in order to answer the research question (Connelly, 2010) while remaining open to the participants' stories and experiences that formed the basis of inductive analysis.

A total of 25 online faculty participated in this study. Interviews with the participants were conducted at locations convenient to them. Each interview was 60-90 minutes in length depending on participant responses and availability. Faculty who were on campus at the university were interviewed in their offices. Some faculty preferred to participate in the interviews at private rooms in the library. Six participants requested Skype interviews. They were unable to come to campus due to a variety of reasons including being located in other parts of the country and on other continents. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants (See Appendix E: Consent to participate in interview). Interviews and all information shared by participants were organized using their assigned identifiers. None of the data contained the names of the participants in order to ensure confidentiality.

### **Observation**

Through this qualitative research I hoped to study participants in their natural setting, seeing how they behaved in their day-to-day contexts (Creswell, 2014). My research poses the question of how faculty experience presence behaviorally. An objective understanding of behavior is provided by observations. To this end, I observed the online course offerings of five participants. Moreover, observations provided triangulation of data and gave me an opportunity

to fully investigate the research questions (Glesne, 2011).

Observations provided a richer and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. They enabled me to gather data on the setting and behaviors participants engaged in when they were actively conducting an online course. Participants were contacted after their interviews to request permission to observe their online course on the university LMS. The observation was limited to one academic semester, fall 2015. Therefore, only faculty who were teaching during the semester could be observed. Five participants were open to having their online courses observed (See Appendix F: Consent to participate in observation). To maintain privacy of students, I was granted specific access permissions that did not allow me to view the grades of the students.

Observations can be intrusive as I was inserting myself into the participants' space and the participant was aware that as the researcher I was making judgments. Lichtman (2013) notes that while there are no easy ways to address this, good judgment should prevail. My observations were from the position of a third person observer who does not participate in the activity. I felt this position was important to ensure that I did not influence the observation in any way.

My observations were guided by dramaturgy and the determinants of presence. I observed the online interaction between the faculty and students evaluating how faculty presented themselves through the impression management techniques they employed. Faculty interactions online constituted the fore ground that was supported by the technological resources that acted as props in this situation. Faculty utilization of these "props," and their on-stage behaviors in the course environment formed my observational focus.

During the observation, I recorded data by taking detailed notes including specific

comments made by the faculty. Although the observations were unstructured, I used the determinants of presence to guide the observations (See Appendix G: Observation outline).

Observations can be intrusive and sensitive and needed to be conducted in a very ethical manner. The ethical considerations at play here were similar to those that were relevant during the interview process. Considerations therefore included a clear understanding with the participant that the data gathered would be confidential and used only for research purposes (Burton et al., 2014). The participants were assured anonymity and also assured that no information regarding their students would be collected for the research.

Table 3.5 provides a summary of the data collection methodology and how they align with the research questions. The table also restates the reasons behind the different methods I have chosen to employ in this research study.

Table 3.5  
*Summary of data collection methodology*

RESEARCH QUESTION	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY
1. How do online faculty perceive presence in the online learning environment?	<p><b>Interview</b></p> <p>This question aimed to understand the perceptions of the participants. This required a subjective response from the participants. Hence, an interview was conducted to understand the phenomenon through participant voices.</p>
2. How do online faculty experience presence in the online learning environment? a. How do online faculty experience presence emotionally? b. How do online faculty experience presence cognitively? c. How do online faculty experience presence behaviorally?	<p><b>Interview + Observation + Document Analysis</b></p> <p>This question considers three aspects of faculty experience – emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Insight into emotions could only be gained through an interview. The interview also shed light on the cognitive and behavioral experiences of the participants.</p> <p>Document analysis provided a deeper understanding of participants’ cognitive experience of presence and behavior.</p> <p>The observation allowed me to see how the participants behaved in their teaching environment.</p>



RESEARCH QUESTION	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY
<p>3. What strategies do online faculty employ in their online instruction to create a sense of presence and why?</p>	<p><b>Interview + Document analysis + Observation</b></p> <p>Through this question I identified specific strategies that the participants used in their courses to create presence and their reasons for their choices. The interview provided insight into the reasoning of the participants. They also shared their strategies in the interview. The documents provided more information and examples of the strategies that the participants used in their courses. The observations allowed for an in-depth look into how faculty leveraged the LMS and technologies available to them and the strategies they used to create presence.</p>

### Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study included an analysis of the course syllabi, interviews, and observation transcripts. The analysis was conducted as per IPA guidelines. Within this larger framework, analysis was informed by the conceptual lens of the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence and dramaturgy.

### Documentary Evidence

The course syllabi – the documentary evidence in this study – were inductively analyzed using IPA guidelines and deductively through the determinants of presence. Analysis of the course syllabi was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, I reviewed individual syllabi of each faculty before their interview to enable me to conduct an informed interview. In the second phase, following the interview, the syllabi were reviewed again. Themes and clusters were then identified.

**Stage one.** I began my analysis of the syllabi by noting first level information. This included biographical information and factual information (Appendix H: Document analysis).

This was followed by a detailed content analysis. The syllabi were loaded into NVivo and coded

using the NVivo software. The analysis was guided by the determinants of presence drawn from the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Each syllabus was read separately and coded for type and focus of content, format of the course, interactive strategies, role of the instructor, technologies used, and the support provided. The syllabi were also analyzed for the choice of activities and pedagogical strategies implemented by the instructor. Furthermore, the dramaturgical perspective was incorporated and the personal front that faculty portrayed through their syllabi was also analyzed.

**Stage two.** Since the data were coded in NVivo, comparative queries were run using NVivo. Three main queries were run on the syllabi:

1. Codes for syllabi by instructors across the four discipline categories were queried to identify similarities and differences.
2. Syllabi of novice instructors were then compared with that of experienced instructors to identify points of divergence and convergence.
3. The age of faculty was also used as a point of query to identify similarities and differences.

## **Interviews**

NVivo was used for the analysis of interview recordings. The audio recordings were uploaded to NVivo. NVivo allowed for direct coding of the audio recordings. Hence, the interviews were not initially transcribed. I listened to the audio recordings and coded the audio.

Data analysis in IPA is shaped by openness to the data and dwelling in the data and therefore, is not prescriptive. However, textual analysis in IPA can follow a particular series of phases. Although the interviews were not transcribed, they were treated as textual data.

**Reading the interview transcript.** Analysis began with a close listening and re-

listening to the audio while noting initial thoughts and ideas in the form of codes. I stepped back from the recordings to assess my preconceptions and consider how researcher bias may be affecting my interpretation of the interviews. These presuppositions and biases were noted in a reflective journal and interpretations were assessed against this (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

**Identifying themes.** In the next phase, emergent themes were identified. The process was cyclical with new data being tested against the themes that had already emerged. The next audio recording was analyzed in consideration of the emergent themes while identifying any new themes that led to a review of the first interview recording. This cyclical process was repeated for all the audio recordings.

While identifying themes, the following focus areas were considered:

- Faculty perception of presence;
- Emotional experience of presence;
- Cognitive experience of presence;
- Behavioral experience of presence;
- Determinants of presence: content, instructor role, strategies, support, format, and technology; and,
- Impression management through presentation of personal front and use of props.

**Clustering.** The third phase was clustering where related themes were identified and grouped and a hierarchical structure within the clusters was arrived at. Discordant and convergent narratives were noted. Themes were clustered in related groups through abstraction (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Discordance led to revisiting prior texts to ensure key points had not been missed. Themes that did not answer the research questions were dropped (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The clusters were organized into a hierarchical structure with

ordinate and super-ordinate themes.

**Tabulation.** Finally, these ordered themes were presented in tabular format supported by evidence from the text (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). I followed these four phases in my data analysis. Data were coded inductively. However, the use of the determinants of presence from the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010) led to a deductive analysis of the data. The first two research questions of how faculty perceive and experience “presence” lent themselves to an inductive analysis. The third question regarding the strategies employed required a deductive analysis.

### **Observations**

The observation notes were also analyzed using the four phases of IPA. The data were read and initial impressions were coded. Following this, emergent themes were identified and then clustered. Finally, the data were presented in a tabular format with evidence from the transcripts.

The observation analysis differed from the interview analysis in that these data were analyzed deductively through a dramaturgical lens and the determinants of presence. Each transcript was assessed dramaturgically and themes were developed based on the impression management strategies employed by faculty: front region, back region, script, and props; and the six determinants of presence: content, format, instructor role, strategies, technology, and support.

### **Summary of Themes Generated**

The final step in research employing IPA is to present a tabulation of the themes developed through the analysis. In this study, the themes were developed following analysis of all three data sources: course syllabi, interviews, and observations. Table 3.6 provides a

tabulation of the themes generated with examples from the interviews, observations, and course syllabi.

Table 3.6  
*Tabulation of themes identified with examples*

	Themes	Sub-themes	Examples
Perception of presence	Projecting Self	Personal introductions	P6 shared “where I’ve gone, what I’ve done”
		Communication style	P1 “I tend to kind of show humor and pictures about me”
	Availability and Accessibility		P11 “I try to let them know that if there’s something going on, please come to me about it.”
	Shared Experience		P4 “YOU are part of this team.”
Experience of presence	Cognitive	Physical embodiment	P11 “How do I interact with a student when I don’t know what they look like?”
		Student work	P22 “I’m very connected with them [students] by their projects”
		Feedback	P9 “when they [students] get feedback and they use it. . . . So that affirms my presence.”
	Emotional	Online instruction	P18 “I love it. I really love it.” P6 “I hate it.”
		Technology	P22 “I’m always bringing in other technologies.” P24 “I am kind of a technology interested person. The setting up of that stuff and figuring that stuff out was interesting to me.” P20 “I get easily frustrated when there are technical issues.”
		Content	P4 “Probably helps that I really like the subject material and it changes every year.” P12 “I love the topic matter so it’s easy to be enthusiastic.”
	Behavioral	Faculty behaviors	Personal introductions, discussion forums, group discussions
		Student behaviors	P7 “it takes two people to have a conversation.”
Strategies to create presence	Cognitive reframing		P1 “I think it [online instruction] does take a switch or cognitive reframing to do well online.”
	A 1to 1 relationship		P22 “I’ll have a relationship with each student in the class but collectively, I have a much more macro or removed presence from them.”

## **Ethical Considerations**

Research is intrusive in many ways and participants need assurance that no harm will result from their participation. Harm need not only represent physical harm. It can represent threats to participants' jobs, their reputation, and their personal lives. Privacy and anonymity are therefore key aspects of the research process.

All research participants deserve an assurance of privacy and anonymity. This is to ensure that no harm befalls the participants. Participant names were removed to ensure privacy and anonymity, and replaced with identifiers. Privacy is not limited to the individual participant alone but includes the institution as well. Hence, the name of the institution is also masked in this study.

Identifying faculty by their discipline might pose a threat of exposure since there might only be a few faculty in a discipline who offer online courses. This would make it easy to identify them. Therefore, faculty were only associated with their discipline category rather than individual disciplines or subject areas.

Furthermore, the data gathered from the participants were not shared with anyone else. However, this is in contradiction to the purpose of research where findings will be shared with others including quotations from participants (Seidman, 2013). What can be assured is that transcripts and recordings that could identify the participant would not be shared without the expressed consent of the participants. In order to ensure confidentiality and privacy, these data were not publicly shared or archived.

Research can also cause mental and emotional stress to the participants especially in qualitative research where participants share their life experiences (Lichtman, 2013). In this research, I was interviewing university faculty concerning their teaching strategies, analyzing

their syllabi, and making interpretations based on this. This could potentially have an impact on their professional lives. Participants were assured that they could always choose to withdraw from the study.

### **Informed Consent**

Participants needed to have a clear idea of the research. To ensure this, participants were presented with detailed and comprehensive information describing the research project (See Appendix E: Consent to participate in interview and Appendix F: Consent to participate in observation). They were provided with a clear explanation of the purpose and scope of the project and why they had been chosen as potential participants. They were also informed of the strategies that would be implemented to maintain participant confidentiality. In addition, they were assured of their freedom to choose to participate in the study and to withdraw from it at any time (Burton et al., 2014).

### **Data Interpretation**

As the researcher, I had to stay true to the participants' stories and avoid misrepresentation. This had to be balanced with the fact that my voice also plays an important role in qualitative research. Presenting sufficient evidence in support of interpretation helped to address ethical issues in this regard.

### **Institutional Review Board**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that all research abides by the code of conduct and ethical standards of an institution. The proposal overview, informed consent forms, interview schedule, and observation guidelines were all submitted to the institutions IRB for approval prior to data collection.

## **Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability of a qualitative research study depends on the richness of detail and transparency (Creswell, 2014; Lichtman, 2013). Although qualitative research does not incorporate the certainty of numerical data and statistical calculations, it still needs to adhere to standards of validity and reliability to ensure rigor in the research. Research that lacks validity is meaningless (Cohen et al., 2007). Trustworthiness is associated with confidence in the research (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). This can be achieved in a variety of ways.

Presenting thick detail with substantive textual evidence was one way in which I could assure the credibility of a study. Triangulation of data and multiple voices also contributed to credibility factors. Transparency in researcher reflection was another way of assuring credibility (Tracy, 2010). The detailed explanation of the process and methodology of the research allows for replication of the research and adds to the reliability of the study. Finally, a transparent accounting of researcher biases and reflections adds to the credibility of the study.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology of IPA and the conceptual frameworks of dramaturgy as well as the determinants of presence as defined by the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010) that have been used to guide this study. This chapter also described the participant recruitment process, the sampling methods, and demographic of the participants recruited. Finally, the chapter presented the data collection and data analysis methods that were implemented.

The next chapter will present findings from the data including the syllabi, observation notes, and interviews. The findings are organized thematically using the research questions as a guiding framework.



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Introduction

The intention of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to study the perceptions and experiences of presence of faculty teaching in the online learning environment. Three main research questions were constructed focusing on the perceptions of presence, experiences of presence, and the strategies faculty utilized in their courses to create presence for themselves and their students. Data were collected through interviews with 25 participants, review of two course syllabi per participant, and a review of five participants' course sites on the Learning Management System (LMS).

Faculty participants for this study were recruited on the basis of two criteria. The experience level of the faculty was one point of consideration. Faculty were recruited on the basis of the number of courses they had taught. Faculty who had taught two or three courses were categorized as novice and those who had taught more than three courses were categorized as experienced. Discipline areas was the second point of consideration. Participants were recruited from the pure-hard, pure-soft, applied-hard, and applied-soft discipline categories. At least two participants representing these criteria were recruited and their experiences were recorded.

The findings from this study answered the research questions. Faculty participants perceived and experienced presence in distinct ways. The study also highlighted new strategies to create presence.

In this chapter, the findings are presented in three main sections: perception of presence, experience of presence, and strategies to create presence. The chapter then presents findings with reference to the two points of analysis: experience and discipline. This is followed by a

consideration of the three data collection methods: interviews, observations, and document analysis. The chapter ends with a summary overview.

### **Perception of Presence**

The goal of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of presence in the context of online faculty. The first research question was “How do online faculty perceive presence in the online learning environment?” Interviews with the participants revealed that they perceived presence as: projecting self, availability and accessibility, and shared experience.

#### **Projecting Self**

Within their classrooms, the faculty participants felt that they created a presence of themselves. P19 revealed that:

A lot of the value of me as an instructor is my classroom performance, coz I do see it a lot as a performative art. I am very much the energy. I create very playful spaces. . . . I do believe that teaching is a performance art.

P18 echoed the performance aspect when she said, “I really enjoyed being in the classroom because who wouldn’t love to get up and perform in front of people once or twice a week?” Faculty participants wanted to project this energy and performance in their online instruction. For the participants in this study, their perception of presence was related to their ability to project their personalities onto the online learning environment.

Participants really wanted their students to get a sense of who they were. As they repeated, they wanted to show their personality to their students. This was a way of being present to their students. Furthermore, their own sense of presence was tied up with how well their students were able to “see” them and get a sense of who they were. P19 explained:

Online environment can feel like a lot to me. They’re [students] out there in the world,

just taking these documents and learning from them or listening to my lecture recording or whatever tool I've used but it's always separate from *me* [emphasis added] and just a version of me, a limited version of me that's like textual. They're over there engaging with me, distanced from me.

Faculty participants wanted to overcome this textual two-dimensional image and project a more human three-dimensional persona of themselves. P6 described this urge to be perceived as:

I don't want students to think I don't care. I feel very invested in my students. I really want them to succeed and I want to help them as much as I can. I try to make sure that my desire for their success is very clear to them and I don't come across as some professor who doesn't care just sitting in my office doing nothing. Whatever. This is just a course I have. That's not the case. I want them to see I like the course.

P3 suggested, "find ways to make your personality come through in just the things that you post so that they [students] realize that you're still a human being." P19 reinforced it with, "I think it's very much about them [students] getting to know me and I let them know that. I want them to judge *me* [emphasis added]... I let them know who I am." P11 explained that revealing herself to her students helped draw her closer to them and establish a connection with them. As she put it:

When I first started out teaching, I was 23. I was trying to do everything in my power to just appear older and I was in charge coz I felt that's the only way they were going to respect me and take me seriously. And so I think as a result I kind of distanced myself a little bit from them. And I think gradually I've been trying to loosen up and kind of talk to them, not be friends with them but still be approachable and not be so shy about admitting my age or [my status]. . . . I found when I've been more honest and open about

who I am and talking to them more I think you do kind of develop more of a trust relationship in a lot of ways . . . by kind of opening up my personality I get to know their personalities a little bit more.

Faculty participants conveyed their personality to their students through personal introductions and the personal information they shared with their students. In addition to “what” they said, “how” they said it or the communication style they adopted also helped project their self to their students.

**Personal introductions.** The most obvious way for faculty to show their personality was to share information about themselves. Faculty chose to begin their courses with personal introductions. These introductions were not only professional biographies, but faculty also shared personal information about themselves. P13 and P21 talked about their families and their children; P6 shared information about “where I’ve gone, what I’ve done”; and, P15 talked about her hobbies and activities like “jump on the trampoline with the kids.” In addition to personal information, some of the participants included pictures of themselves like P3 who posted pictures of himself and his dog. P1 posted pictures of herself and her twin and invited her students to pick her out.

An examination of course sites revealed that P9, P17, and P25 did not post any personal introductions. P9 shared that she always had a synchronous face-to-face orientation session with students and so did not feel a need to post an introduction. P17 explained that students in her online course were part of a cohort who knew each other and her, so it seemed an artificial exercise to impose introductions. P25 did not provide any introductions in his course site. He did have an activity where students introduced themselves. However, these introductions were not shared on a discussion board. They were papers submitted directly to him. He did not post

any introduction of himself on the forum.

**Communication style.** Faculty also conveyed their personality to their students through their style of communication. The language used in course syllabi, course materials, and in communications within the course sites reflected the individual faculty personalities.

P18, an experienced faculty, explained that:

[J]ust in the way you write your course materials, you can put your personality into it. . . . I will post Camtasia video tutorials with voice over so they get to know the voice . . . they're [the videos] not terribly polished. They're not lovely, they're just usually about one take . . . good enough. I mean it's professional but I'll also say 'oops.' It's informal. It's professional but informal. I'm very comfortable communicating in the written mode, all my chatty emails to you, and that's how I am. My emails are me.

P18 added that providing assessments that were relevant to the learners and had real-world applications was important to her because, "that is part of projecting my persona, that I am practical, I am down-to-earth, I am concerned with real life, I want this to be relevant." P19, a novice, felt more comfortable in her emails because as she said, "in my emails I see it as an opportunity to be more myself and to say more . . . I feel I can do more of my positivity and kindness in a focused way through email."

Some faculty used pictures, humor, and informal language in their syllabi and course materials. P1, another experienced faculty, commented that, "I tend to kind of show humor and pictures about me." These strategies conveyed the personality of the faculty to the students.

P17, also experienced, used an informal tone in her course site. She included comments such as "Can you tell how impressed I am with my consistency?" and addressed her class as "Gang."

When asked about this choice of language, her response was, "I couldn't be more formal. It's

not in my DNA.” P22 was also an experienced faculty, but she commented, “I don’t generally use emoticons as a professor coz I think it’s not really appropriate. But I will use exclamation points” to convey humor. Table 4.1 presents some of these approaches employed by faculty participants. The experience level and discipline categories of the participants is indicated in parenthesis.

Table 4.1  
*Faculty use of communication strategies*

Strategy	Example	Participant
Cartoons, Emoticons	Use of comic strip for self-introduction	P1 (E-AS)
	Funny cartoon in syllabus	P6 (E-PH)
	“Good thing you’ll be writing so much then ;-)”	P3 (N-PS)
	“. . . syllabus ☺”	P14 (E-AH)
Jokes	“I heard an amusing/touching story the other week about a father and son who were texting each other...Dad assumed that ‘LOL’ meant ‘Lots of Love’ and went on to use it entirely inappropriately with his friends and colleagues”	P21 (N-AH)
Informal Language	“My wife is also a xxxx scientist, so she’s not often impressed either (sigh).”	P21 (N-AH)
	“Get yourself in a comfy spot because this is a lengthy syllabus.”	P14 (E-AH)
	“Also, feel free to email me or send us a text (really!) should any concern about the course arise.”	P15 (E-PS)
	Discussion response to student: “That is exactly the sort of reading you should be doing, and I want you to keep it up, <i>hear?</i> ” [emphasis added]	P19 (N-PS)
	“back by popular demand”	P17 (E-AH)

<p>Legend  E: Experienced    N: Novice  AH: Applied-Hard    AS: Applied-Soft    PH: Pure-Hard    PS: Pure-Soft</p>
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Different faculty opted to use different communication styles. What was important to them was that their choice of language reflected their personalities to their students. The experience level of the faculty participants did not affect language choice in any way.

Even as faculty tried to convey their personalities through the online medium, they had reservations about how successful they were. P12 regretted that her online students could not experience her “enthusiasm for the course material.” P9 included synchronous orientation

sessions with her students and provided video introductions for each module that included videos of her discussing the module. Yet, she felt that “when I’m face-to-face I’m more on. There’s more personality. And I guess I can show that through my online but I haven’t quite developed that yet...my online personality.” P6 had a different concern:

I know very well that my dry sense of humor and sarcasm does not work well in an online forum. It doesn’t. No one can see my little smirk when I say something I’m saying as tongue in cheek. So I’m much more moderate in the way I approach it.

P19 felt a disconnect because her students could not experience her physical presence. She expressed frustration that she could not “be there to explain how it works or how do I want them [students] to engage with it. I have to give them or introduce them to concepts without using my voice or the classroom space.” While she did include voice-over Power Points and recorded lectures, it was not sufficient for her.

P1 had the most positive and definitive answer to projecting personality. She commented that when she met her online students face-to-face during conferences, “I’ll say, ‘Does my session or who I am match who I am online?’ And generally I get a ‘Yeah.’ So I think my personality is present in the online environment.”

Faculty participants wanted to be seen for who they were. This was a need shared by both experienced and novice faculty participants across the disciplines. Presence for all of them was linked to how their personalities were comprehended by their students. The personal introductions and communication style were strategies the faculty participants employed to project their selves. In addition to projecting their personalities, faculty participants perceived presence as being available to their students and easily accessible.

## Availability and Accessibility

For the online faculty participants in this study, availability was integral to their perception of presence. They wanted to be present, available to, and accessible by their students. Faculty hoped students would approach them for clarifications with difficulties and problems. This need to be available and accessible was expressed by faculty participants across the disciplines and experience levels.

P11 expressed her motivation as:

If there's something going wrong, they'll come to me hopefully. I try to let them know that if there's something going on, please come to me about it. So I hope they feel comfortable with that. I have had a couple [students] who have approached me about stressful things going on in life or about having a baby.

P3 echoed the same need. He considered availability an important characteristic for online instructors. As he put it:

Just being available. A lot of times students are taking an online course because their schedule is a little crazier so I give students a lot of opportunities to get in contact with me. They can do face-to-face stuff, I've done like Google chat stuff. I always give them my cell phone number so people will text me or call me.

Faculty conveyed their availability to their students in various ways. Some of them such as P3, P5, P16, and P18 provided their personal cell phone numbers to their students. P11 preferred the use of email, "If you need to reach me outside of these hours, my personal e-mail ([xxxxxxxx@gmail.com](mailto:xxxxxxxx@gmail.com)) works best. Please don't be afraid to contact me about any questions or need for clarity involving the course." Yet, she did include, "If special circumstances require it, we can communicate by phone (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or in person at my office in XXXX."



The faculty participants made them accessible in a variety of ways. They offered synchronous meetings through chats, Skype, and other video conferencing software. In her syllabus, P19 added, “E-mail for appointments— in-person, live chat, Skype, teleconference, etc.” Faculty who were on-campus also invited students for face-to-face meetings. P20, in her syllabus noted, “You can also make an appointment to meet me in my office or talk to me on the phone.” P3, in his syllabus, clarified his availability and accessibility thus:

If you have questions, comments, concerns, etc., please do not hesitate to contact me.

My primary mode of communication is e-mail (xxxxxxx@uwm.edu). I check it every day and you can usually expect a reply within 48 hours. Otherwise, feel free to stop by during my available hours or schedule an appointment. Finally, you can call or text my personal phone number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

P21 clarified that he never put his phone number on the syllabus because when his syllabus was vetted by the college, “the college specifically said do not include telephone numbers.”

Providing office hours is a requirement by the institution. The participants were obligated to offer this to their students. But faculty tried to be flexible and more accessible even in this. “I will have regular office hours, probably on Tuesdays, if you are able to come to campus. Once the enrollment has stabilized I will see which hours are most convenient for all concerned” (P7).

P12 iterated the importance of office hours because “sometimes just knowing that it’s available makes students feel like they have a little bit of a safety net.”

P18 was passionate about being available and articulated it as:

I certainly try to make myself very approachable. And I'm religious about, I answer email instantly. Well not instantly, you know, very immediately. There are no rules like “Well I'm not going to look at your email till 10 o'clock at night” or some fool thing like

that. I am very present in the sense of answering emails.

What was important to P18 was,

[R]esponsiveness, not setting boundaries. Just because I don't think you need to. I've tried office hours, I've tried different things. They [students] don't bother you that much. So I think rather than trying to keep people at a distance by creating artificial boundaries, to simply be there and answer their email when you see it.

This level of availability, of being reachable at any time, did place a lot of demands on the faculty. P13 acknowledged that this level of availability,

[s]ometimes it's kind of annoying. It's like I'm in some event socially 11 o'clock at night and I get this beep on my phone. Somebody just sent me an email to say, "Hey, I just missed the deadline for the quiz."

In spite of the time of day, P13 added that if he could, he did respond to those emails immediately as well. As he put it, "No, I don't mind. It's part of the job." P11 laughingly described it as,

I kind of feel like I'm hooked into my laptop all the time. I'm always there and so all my teaching is like I'm always there. I guess sometimes it feels like you never leave the online environment coz you're online half the time.

P15 felt torn between being available to her students and the demands it placed on her.

She stated:

I respond every day, email check a couple of times a day [because] I always feel like there must be something I must be forgetting or there must be something happening or I must be more engaged. I guess I feel I should be doing more. I kind of walk around with a constant sense of guilt like any time I'm not working, I just feel like this oppressive

sense of ‘Oh shit I should be doing something, I should be working.’ I don’t feel like I get to go home from my job. I just feel like it’s always hanging over my head. I feel like I have to be at students’ beck and call.

P15 wrestles with this but to her, being unavailable when her students need her is a greater concern. For these participants, their perception of presence was tied to how available and accessible they were to their students.

### Shared Experience

Another facet of presence for these participants was creating a shared experience. They wanted their students to get a sense that they, as faculty, were actively involved in the learning space. P3 described it as:

The students know that you’re there, you’re on top of things, you’re going along with them reading everything and that doesn’t mean you have to respond to everything like there’s a whole bunch of other ways to make it clear that you’re participating.

The sense of a shared experience came out very clearly in the use of language in their syllabi (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2  
*Faculty use of language in course syllabi*

Participant	Examples from course syllabi
P20 (N-AH)	“I believe that <i>we</i> can all learn from each other. In this course <i>you</i> are a participant, not an observer. <i>I expect you</i> to ask questions and be involved in class discussions. This will create a more interesting and exciting learning environment.” [emphasis added]
P21 (N-AH)	“ <i>I want you</i> to feel that this is your course.” [emphasis added]
P11 (N-PS)	“ <i>We will begin</i> with the premise that film, television, and digital media offer more than ‘entertainment’ and, accordingly, <i>we will engage</i> critically and rigorously with the material.” [emphasis added]
P2 (E-PS)	“ <i>We share the</i> responsibilities of learning; therefore, everyone needs to READ my emails, just as I must read your emails.” [emphasis added]
P4 (N-PH)	“ <i>YOU are part of this team. I need your</i> steady participation over the course of the semester, your collaboration with each other, and your input about what can help you learn.” [emphasis added]

AH: Applied-Hard PH: Pure-Hard PS: Pure-Soft

These participants consciously chose to use first person and first person plural pronouns and second person pronouns. This enabled them to speak directly to their students and include themselves in the learning experience as well.

This conscious choice of language was not limited to course syllabi alone. P17 employed the same language style within her course site. She talked about “working with each one of you [students].” P19 conveyed this shared journey through “I’ve recorded a couple of videos to help us move into week 2.”

The experience level and discipline categories of faculty participants were points of analysis in this study. However, across the disciplines and experience levels, faculty participants perceived presence in terms of projecting their personalities successfully; being available and accessible to their students; and, creating a shared experience with their students. Faculty participants’ experience levels or disciplines did not influence their perceptions of presence in any way.

### **Experience of Presence**

The second research question for this study was “How do online faculty experience presence in the online learning environment?” Findings show that faculty participants’ experience of presence occurred on three levels: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. In the following section, findings related to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral experiences of presence are presented.

#### **Cognitive Experience**

Participants’ cognitive experience of presence was related to faculty sense of knowing their students. P22 claimed that:

It’s important to know what your students know, know what their lives are like. It’s

important that I know who they are because it helps me tailor the course content to helping them understand the course content through examples that are meaningful to them.

Knowing students had two dimensions and P13 clarified it as:

There's two kinds of connection, there's a physical one where you see the student, you know what they look like and what their mannerisms are and there's the other kind of connection where you know the ideological position of a student or a theoretical position of a student and you know that they are going to react this way to different readings and assignments. So I don't think it's right to say that you don't know your students. I think by the end of the semester, you know the details of many of the students.

In the first dimension of “knowing” students, the physical body was an important part of the cognitive experience of presence for the participants in this study. Second, faculty cognitively experienced the presence of their students through the works of their students. Hence, P24 commented that, “[the] sense that I got of them [students], it was more on an intellectual, emotional basis than it was physiological.” Lastly, faculty felt most present when they were engaged in providing feedback to their students.

**Physical embodiment.** Experiencing presence was closely related to the ability to associate a face with a name. As P6 put it, “Not knowing their [students] faces, for me, it's an issue for me. . . . where not having a name and a face to associate with what I'm working with.”

P2 considered the lack of facial recognition a “personal loss.” She continued:

I don't get what I want because I'm used to walking around the community and people coming up to me all the time ‘Remember me from 15 years ago?’ Those in an online course are lost people for me because I can pass them every day, yet maybe had them for

2 classes. I wouldn't know.

P11 described herself as:

a visual learner, I'm just a visual person in general I guess so like remembering names is tough unless I have like a way to associate that name with the face itself. How do I interact with a student I don't know what they look like? Are they older than me? Are they younger? I don't know.

Participants were unsure about how to interact with a person when they had no face to associate with the work they were reading. P20 said, "I didn't have a face to put with a name . . . just kind of had a floating name so it was harder to put a personality to people as quickly." P19 expressed anxiety and unhappiness at this lack of physical recognition:

I encourage them [students] to at least give me a little picture on their profile but I still feel like I've never met them, really, at the end of the experience and so that for me is very frustrating coz a lot of the reason I got into teaching is the joy of the classroom experience. It's not just handing someone some information and having them respond to it which the online environment can feel like a lot to me.

Acknowledging the importance of having some physical representation of their students, other faculty had developed strategies to meet their individual needs. P22 also self-identified as a visual person and her strategy to address this issue was:

I take pictures of the students because I'm a visual learner and I like to think I'm not very good with names. They're hard for me unless I have a visual association and for my online classes, I post a picture of myself doing something non-academic and I ask them to post a picture of them doing something non-academic and then I print that out and I basically make like a full sheet of paper and I have the person's picture and name

underneath of it and then something unique about them. And then when I'm working on my class, reading papers or whatever, I just pull up that sheet with pictures on it. . . . I did have someone post a picture of their cat than of them. But that's ok. It just told me they felt really uncomfortable posting a picture of them but obviously their cat meant a lot to them. . . . I just made up a face. I just pictured somebody who was holding a cat. That just became the reference that I had. There's so and so coz they're holding the cat.

However, not all participants needed a physical representation of the students during the course. P1 emphatically commented, "No. I don't need the face. They're probably walking past me and I don't even know it." P4 also did not require a picture to feel present with the students.

For her:

I feel connected to the students or I think I do but it's so strange to me to be out around [town] having drinks with friends at a bar or something like that and meet someone who is in my class who knows me because I post these videos and they hear my voice in the lecture and I don't know them. Maybe if they give me their name and if the person is very interactive, I'd say, 'Oh yeah, I remember you.' But it's kind of strange because it's one way anonymous. I'm not anonymous but they are at the face-to-face level and that can be a little strange sometimes.

Some faculty shared that they created mental images of their students. P8 suggested that online faculty should, "try and see the student who is . . . reflected in what's posted and what's written and so on. Try and imaginatively visualize that person as a living body." P22 had pictures of her students and at the same time, she commented that:

When I'm reading a post I have the picture either physically up or up in my head. I've already assigned a tone to them. It really is me converting everything to a hearing

environment. Like when I'm reading, I'm hearing someone's voice and it's this person's picture that I have and their lips are moving.

P8 had experiences similar to P22. He laughingly noted:

I can hear voices. It can sound corny but I know the accents that people speak in and also as the semester wears on, I recognize the writing and I can, as it were, hear what they say. Maybe I'm hearing wrongly but that's the sense that I get.

P12 candidly admitted that she did create mental images of her students and "I think our implicit biases and what we think definitely comes up." For P18 the notion of biases and stereotypes worked differently. To her, it was not important to see the faces of her students. As she said, "it's usually better actually if I don't [see student faces] coz I'll form assumptions." She preferred creating mental representations of the students since she thought "it's less prejudiced. It's not drawing on any old hot buttons kind of thing. I kind of don't need. In a way, I don't want."

While some faculty participants did not require a physical representation of their students a majority of the participants found it difficult to connect to students online in the absence of the physical element. They compensated with mental representations.

**Student work.** Another aspect of "knowing" was related to what faculty learned about their students through the work that students submitted and the information that students chose to share. P25 remarked, "[S]ometimes an assignment will trigger something in people and they'll just go Boom and you'll go 'Oh this is really cool. Now I get a sense of who you are and where you're coming from.'" But he clarified that "you get to know some of their attributes." Other faculty also shared their experiences of getting to know their students through the work they did (See Table 4.3).



Table 4.3

*Faculty comments on knowing students through student work*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>What they said</b>
P13 (E-PS)	“I feel that by the end of a period, a semester, I know them, I know most of them. I get to know their background a little bit, I get to know their points of view, I get to know some of their skills, you know, some of them are very good writers, others are not.”
P24 (N-AS)	“When you start reading their responses and how they’re thinking of dealing with a situation, you do get a feel for their personalities.”
P18 (E-AH)	“Some of them [students] are kind of low-key. But most of them, oh yes, I get to know them very well. Part of that is ... I believe in tough honesty. They have weekly search assignments and I mark those up and I comment all over them. So even the ones that come in slightly aloof and expecting poor treatment, expecting very hands-off treatment, they’ll warm up and we’ll get to know each other. It’s really nice.”
P1 (E-AS)	“I feel connected like I said by what they’re sharing. If they’re sharing ..if they’re taking what we’re learning in the text and applying that to their work environment, so that’s what I tend to do in the worksheets. I give them application exercises and when they get it and demonstrate that, I think that’s when I feel connected.”
P20 (N-AH)	“Because I have them do those Glogsters where they made the posters I guess that really helped because I mean the posters they got pretty cool. It was a low-stakes assignment about who they were. With that I started to get more of an understanding of personality.”
P22 (E-AS)	“I’m very connected with them by their projects because I’m reading about them, or chatting about them, they’re talking about them I’m giving them feedback on them.”
P12 (N-PH)	“[Connection] it happens when I’m reading discussion posts” which is when she feels she’s hearing the student’s voice
P5 (E-AS)	Through their assignments, “every week they’re saying, well here’s something that happened to me at work, here’s what I’m going through, I’m really interested in this. So I’m getting to know them pretty well.

Legend	
E: Experienced	N: Novice
AH: Applied-Hard	AS: Applied-Soft
PH: Pure-Hard	PS: Pure-Soft

For faculty like P1 and P4, the online environment enabled them to know their students better than they would have in a face-to-face environment. P1 declared, “I can tell you more about my students in my online classes after the first introductory ice-breaker discussion board than anyone else who’s meeting with students face-to-face the first 2 weeks of class.” P4 commented that:

If I were teaching this course as a lecture, I had TAs [teaching assistants] doing the lab

and it was all face-to-face, I think I would actually know the students less. I would know the faces more but I would be less involved in the lab, I would be less involved in their written work and that back and forth. So I think I probably get maybe a little more in the online than I would if I were face-to-face.

For P9, getting to know her students was related to the amount of time she spent with them.

As she explained:

I know them pretty well and I think it's because they're in a program. If I were doing one course in their whole thing, I might not feel as close. But I know them because I admit them to the program, I interviewed them. I know what their job is like, I've interacted with their employers. I know them pretty well, in ways other than just this online course. It's an online program and that's different. It's not even an online program, it's a distance program which is online, has most of its components online and that program is different from a course.

It should be noted that her interactions with her students and the employers, all occurred online. However, the nature of sustained interaction gave her a greater understanding of her students. In P1's program as well, there was opportunity for her to work with the same students through a number of different courses. She explained that, "I generally teach the majority of five courses in the five course certificate so I'm teaching three if not four or five courses. . . . So after the second or third time, there's very much a connectedness."

Faculty also got to know their students through the information that students chose to share with them. P9 voiced that she felt more connected when "[s]ome students choose to share what's going on in their lives where other students are quite business like." P18 thought that, "there's something about online and communicating by email. And people, they tend to be more

open because they're not speaking up in front of people. So they're less intimidated, inhibited.”

P2 described a situation where a student shared the personal experience of losing a child. P1 talked of how in her class:

I know students who disclose their disability. They don't have to in an online environment if it doesn't impact their testing, or they don't need accommodation. They still disclose. They often disclose they're in a chair. I don't need to know that, the other students don't need to know that. They'll disclose.

Student assignments and discussion postings were a good way for the faculty participants to get to know their students. The work that students submitted provided insight into their psyche. The participants got to know their students on an intellectual level. When students opted to share personal information, the connection between faculty and student became stronger. These experiences were shared by faculty across discipline categories and experience levels.

**Feedback.** Faculty participants felt very present and involved in the course and with their students when they were providing feedback. P9 declared, “I feel most engaged when I'm giving them feedback. Because I feel that I am identifying what *they* have done and commenting on their work. . . . So I feel most engaged when I'm dealing with *their* [students'] work” [emphasis added]. Furthermore, P9 related that she felt present and “there” “when they [students] get feedback and they use it. . . . So that affirms my presence. She [the student] learned. She did the task. I gave her feedback, she modified, revised it, and she's going to use it.” P9 reiterated that her experience of presence happens:

Only when there is a feedback loop. So it's sort of like, I give them feedback, they respond to the feedback and they affirm that they used the feedback and it was valuable.

That's the only way that I feel like there was a presence.

P18, mirroring the same importance of feedback, said "I am *huge* on feedback, detailed feedback. That's how I make up for we're not face-to-face."

When providing feedback to students, faculty participants experienced presence. This experience of presence was connected to assessments that provided opportunities for feedback. Not all assessments afforded the opportunity for in-depth feedback. Those assessments that did, were meaningful for the participants.

Styles of assessment were different across the discipline categories. Faculty participants in the pure-hard disciplines used quizzes. They did not choose to use group discussions or group projects. Across the disciplines, all faculty participants included research papers or written assignments as a form of assessment.

**Papers.** Essays and open ended writing tasks were identified by the participants as an effective way to cognitively connect with their students on a deeper and more meaningful level. As P2 (pure-soft) expressed it, "So then that gave me chance, after they did it [write an essay], to then write them and say 'You did a wonderful job but,' and then they'd think about it and write back and then, we started connecting." P13 (pure-soft) noted that, "Some papers . . . have been amazingly good. I see sometimes the intellectual development of some students and they start modifying their discussion posts and becoming much more sharp." P17 (applied-hard) enthused that "I love reading the cases. The feedback that I will write back to them was like 'This was great. I love this answer'."

**Discussions.** Many participants chose to include discussion forums in their courses. P12 (pure-hard) taught an introductory undergraduate level class with 175-200 students. She incorporated discussions in at least 4 modules to encourage interaction and found it rewarding

not only for herself but her students as well. P1 (applied-soft) revealed that “I’m very engaged in the discussion boards.” P15 (pure-soft) mentioned that in her discussion boards, “if there is a student no one has asked a question of, I’ll ask a question.” P13 (pure-soft) commented that discussion boards “tend to promote this anonymity factor and I think students are more honest and less reluctant to express opposing views.” This same sense of anonymity worked in a counter-productive manner for P2 (pure-soft). In her class, “people would say things they wouldn’t normally say to a group of people or to a teacher to their face.” To prevent this, P2 (pure-soft) removed discussions from her courses.

P6 (pure-hard) had a negative impression of discussion boards. He found them “an ineffective means to stimulate conversation. A bad proxy for a discussion.” P21 (applied-hard) shared a similar sentiment. He felt that mandatory discussion posts felt forced and unnatural. He found students interacted more sincerely when discussions were left open. P19 (pure-soft) noted that “online you [students] are required to enter the conversation because you’re required to have so many posts at certain points of time and they need to be substantive. They need to be productive.” This meant that all students needed to participate in the discussion. P19 (pure-soft) did not believe in this. She felt students should have the choice to be silent observers. For P6 (pure-hard) and P19 (pure-soft) therefore, these discussion postings did not draw them into the online environment and did not enhance their experience of presence in any way.

**Quizzes.** Quizzes were one form of assessment that was utilized by some of the participants. There were two types of quizzes that were implemented. There were multiple choice, auto-graded quizzes, and there were short-answer quizzes. All quizzes were set up in the LMS and released on different days. Time limits for the quizzes and number of attempts were set by the faculty. Within the pure-hard discipline area, there was a focus on testing information

acquisition and all participants included quizzes in their courses. A few of the applied-hard courses also shared the same features. Faculty participants tended to use more quizzes and individual assignments in larger introductory level classes.

Quizzes were primarily used to test information acquisition. As P4 (pure-hard) said, “each week there is a quiz on the subject material mostly on the lectures.” P6 (pure-hard) acknowledged that he did not like quizzes as they “were problematic.” Yet, he did have quizzes and as he explained,

As we go through the course . . . they have a quiz that they have to complete. The quizzes are 20 questions, they’re multiple choice, which I despise. So we don’t have any actual exams in the course. With each quiz they have two attempts and they have 60 minutes to complete it which I guess is a bit generous. My concern is . . . the quizzes are based on the textbook readings. . . . They [students] shouldn’t fail the course because they misread something in the textbook.

P2 (pure-soft) included multiple-choice quizzes in her course and like P6 (pure-hard), she too had reservations about the quizzes. She said, “The testing online for me was always true and false and it came from the book, the text. The text did the test. I thought they were horribly hard questions.”

P24 (applied-soft) also included quizzes in his course which, according to him, “really were more to make sure they were reading stuff.” P1 (applied-soft) explicated that her students “get three attempts to complete the quiz. So it’s not a ‘I gotcha’ but you need to know this basic information to do the next assessment which is about applying it and synthesizing it.” P7 (pure-hard) echoed the same rationale as his course included quizzes “to see if they [students] actually did master the material.”

The quizzes had a very definite purpose and some participants saw a need for them. However, these assessments created no sense of presence in the participants. The quizzes were primarily auto-graded multiple choice questions which did not require any monitoring by the participants. The quizzes did not convey any meaningful information about the students to the faculty participants other than knowledge acquisition.

P2 (pure-soft) and P13 (pure-soft) compensated for this lack of presence in quizzes by incorporating other assessment strategies. As P2 (pure-soft) explained, “It’s in the extra credits that I touch them, not the testing.” As she put it, “I will be putting up extra credits at least once a week and if you do an extra credit, I will add X number of points to your test.” The extra credits required students to write papers or longer responses which then helped create presence for her. P13 (pure-soft) elected to administer short answer quizzes. As he explained, “I find multiple choice quizzes are not pedagogically sound. They don’t force a student to think critically about issues.” So his quizzes were “short answer, so I have to go in manually and correct the quiz. Don’t expect the computer to give you a score. Be patient, coz I’ll get to it.” So while he used a quizzing style the longer responses from students enabled him to engage with them.

Quizzes were definitely a contested form of assessment. Faculty participants were not fully happy or satisfied with the assessment strategy but they saw a need for it. Consequently, faculty participants included the quizzes even though the quizzes did not promote a connection with the students or the course environment.

Across all four discipline categories, quizzes were used by faculty participants. But more participants from the pure-hard disciplines used quizzes. This was one area that showed some difference between discipline categories but it was not overwhelmingly so. All participants required some form of longer response or a paper from their students. Providing feedback was

an opportunity for faculty to show their students their commitment and concern for student success. So P1 (applied-soft) mentioned, “When I grade, I tend to try to put a professional or personal comment or tone to it.” When providing feedback, faculty participants experienced presence and felt connected to their students.

To sum up, for the participants in this study, the cognitive experience of presence was directly related to how well they “knew” their students. This knowledge of their students had two dimensions: physical and intellectual. For some participants, a picture or mental image of the students was necessary. On an intellectual level, all participants connected with their students through students’ work and providing feedback.

### **Emotional Experience**

There was an undeniable emotional component to the faculty participants’ experience of presence. Faculty participants responded emotionally to the technological aspect of online teaching, the content of the courses they were teaching, and the overall experience of online teaching. Their emotional experiences strongly influenced their experiences of presence.

**Technology.** In the online educational environment, all communication is technologically mediated. Technology is what makes online education possible. In this scenario, participant’s relationship and emotional response to technology was an important factor in their perception and experience of presence. Faculty who were comfortable using technology and enjoyed playing with technology had more positive online experiences and it had an effect on their experience of presence. As P3 explained it, “I watch these little video essays and stuff like that, and think they’re interesting and fun. And so then me feeling like I’m making them [creating videos] is interesting and fun for me.”

Using technology to create new and interesting materials was in itself engaging and a



rewarding experience for the faculty participants. They were drawn into the course and very present in it when they were involved in this process. P24 identified himself as “kind of a technology interested person. The setting up of that stuff and figuring that stuff out was interesting to me.” When asked if she liked playing with technology, P17 emphatically responded, “Yes, very much so. I just found new software this weekend . . . so I’m very excited about making digital flashcards for my . . . class. Yeah, completely.” P22 shared that “I’m always bringing in other technologies.”

For P5, it was an exciting challenge, “that computer work over the years, I like to do that. It’s kind of fun, it’s a challenge, so I enjoy that part of it. So I think I’ve had a positive experience.” P19 emphasized, “A love of the technology itself is critical. Really wanting to have fun with internet tools . . . I think it changes the experience. I really do.” P12 mentioned that “when presented with something new, I feel I have to go through it, play with it, and eventually I figure it out. I ask questions if I need to.”

These participants were technologically competent and enjoyed working with technology. In all, 13 participants enjoyed the challenge of mastering new technologies and making those technologies a relevant part of their courses. This exhilaration was not shared by all the participants.

***Desire2Leave.*** P9 had a pragmatic view of technology, “I like technology. I don’t like technology when it doesn’t work or when people change things and I have to re-learn. But for the most part, I can use a lot of things to help.” The challenges that participants experienced with technology had an impact on their sense of presence. P1 spoke of how she had adopted Second Life:

So in Second Life, it probably impacted me more than the students. The amount I got

frustrated . . . with the amount of time spent on dealing with the technology issues that took away from me focusing on the students' learning and understanding and appreciating the content.

P20 confessed that she got "easily frustrated when there [were] technical issues." She found it "nerve-wracking" when technology did not work for her students and she was unable to do much to help them. A common problem experienced was with updates to technology. P21 spoke of:

[P]latform problems because when I started doing this [voice-over PowerPoints], it was on a . . . platform and then we moved to something else. What takes me the most time is figuring out what we're using this year and how is it compatible with what I was using before and how is it not. So the technical glitches are probably the biggest single headaches I've faced each year.

P8 did like experimenting with technology and developing new materials. He found the process "creative." Yet, even he found the university's platform frustrating and termed it "Desire2Leave." For P25 the learning management platform was "a universe unto itself and there's somebody who understands it" but, it wasn't him. For him, the LMS was merely "a tool. I would never sit down and have a good time playing with the computer." P11 summed up online faculty relationship with technology as follows:

I think for the most parts it's [LMS] straightforward. I can kind of tell like what information I want to collect from making a quiz or something online. Like they give you a lot of different options. I think for anyone else who's not comfortable with technology, they'd be like, what do I do with all these options? But I'm like, no, no, no, no. I know exactly how I want it created but I kind of, I guess that's probably my

computer literacy being a millennial being able to understand how to work through them, navigate through all of that. But I kind of wonder if it would be different for someone who's not that comfortable with computers and technology.

For some faculty participants, the thrill of technology by itself created a sense of presence. For others, their negative experiences with technology inhibited their experiences of presence online.

**Content.** Faculty participants' experience of presence was also affected by their emotional response to the subject matter, the course content, they were teaching. As P12 commented, "I love the topic matter so it's easy to be enthusiastic. I think it makes a big difference for the dynamic with the students so I love the response that that gets." Love of the subject matter ensured that participants remained motivated to teach and engaged with the course irrespective of other factors. P4 stated that:

Probably helps that I really like the subject material and it changes every year. So I always have to update it and it's a nice excuse to spend time doing something that I would want to do anyway which is learning more about seeing how the science is changing year after year.

In addition, participants were excited to share their content knowledge with their students. For P5:

Higher motivation is, the class is in a very narrow subject area that is my career specialty and this is a way for me to get the good news out and to interact with younger people and say, 'Hey, here's what I've learned over the years, here's what I think you need to know to be successful in your careers'."

P6 expressed it simply as, "I like the course." He continued to talk of how he enjoyed trying to get students to think of the subject and the world differently and to challenge their thinking.

While a love of the content drew participants into their course and created a sense of presence for them, a dislike of the subject matter pushed them away. P15 reported that:

This semester I don't love either of the classes I'm teaching. It's kind of more of a drag than I've had in a long time. So I think I do feel less inclined to get online and interact. But for the most part, I still get their [students'] work returned to them even if I don't have the grades posted right away . . . I don't like the subject. I don't want to teach [this subject]. . . . I feel like a fraud the whole time.

P19 faced restrictions in her teaching as she was required to implement strategies and assessments prescribed by her department. This led to her admitting, "some of the stuff, I don't believe in myself. But I'm a representative teacher [representing the department she teaches in]. So now I'm having to defend what I consider bunk in the first place. And to do it with authority."

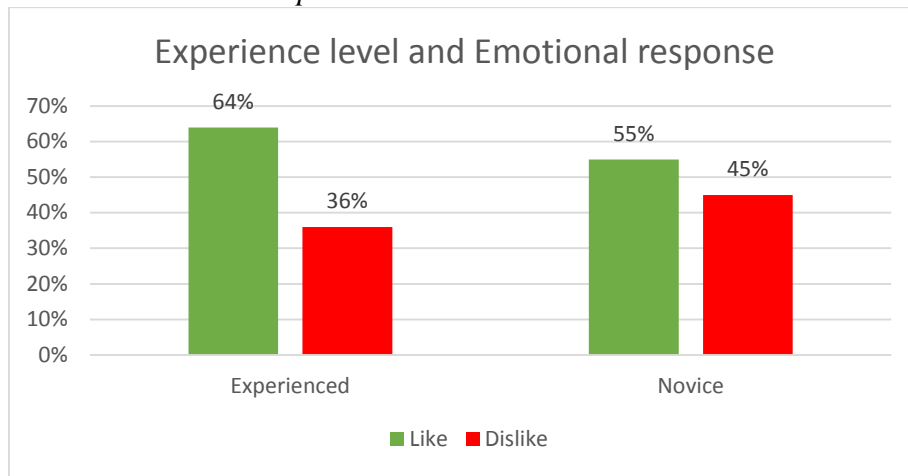
Faculty participants' emotional response to the content that was being taught had a strong influence on the participants' experience of presence. Even when technology frustrated them or students remained non-responsive, these faculty participants experienced presence through the content that they were creating for the course. When they did not believe in the content, it clouded the whole online teaching experience.

**Online instruction.** The whole experience of teaching online elicited very emotional responses from the faculty participants. Their emotional experiences were raw and dichotomous. Faculty either liked the online environment or they hated it. All participants accepted that they liked the online environment for the flexibility it provided them in that they could teach from anywhere and at any time. From the perspective of experiencing presence and connection with their students, it was a different picture. Sixty percent of participants expressed a positive

experience and perception of online presence. Forty percent had a strong negative reaction.

Experienced (E) faculty tended to have a more positive response to online instruction. Only 36% of experienced faculty had a negative response to online instruction. With novice (N) faculty however, it was an almost even split though more enjoyed teaching online. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of faculty emotional response to online instruction and their experience level.

Figure 4.1  
*Experience level and Emotional response*



Faculty emotional experiences were intricately linked to their cognitive experiences. When participants had positive cognitive experiences of presence, they tended to claim that they liked and enjoyed online instruction. P18(E) expressed it as, “I love it. I really love it. The odd thing is, I feel like I develop closer relationships teaching online.” Faculty participants like P1(E), P4(N), P5(E), P8(E), P9(E), P13(E), and P22(E) shared P18’s emotions. They all liked online instruction and felt that they knew their students well. They felt connected to their students and experienced a shared space with them. Conversely, faculty participants who said they did not know their students tended to have a negative emotional response.

P6(E) expressed his emotional response to online instruction bluntly as, “I hate it.”

P17(E) echoed this in, “Honestly, I don’t like it.” P2(E) described the online environment as

“very cold” as it lacked what she termed “touchy feely interaction.” For P24(N) it was, “After about the third week my mindset was, ‘Oh my God do I really have to do this again’?” He explained that he became “kind of bored in some sense towards the end of the semester.” P25(N) felt distanced from his students and did not get a sense of shared space or shared experience with his students. He was very conscious of the physical distance between them, of being in different geographic locations and different countries. He felt he experienced a “detachment from social interaction.” For P19(N), it was a “puzzle that I feel I’m still trying to figure out or a nut that I haven’t yet cracked. In spite of her experience with online courses, P2’s heartfelt comment was, “I always leave with a sense of sadness because I don’t know anybody.”

Some faculty acknowledged that they did not feel presence but they chose to strike a compromise. P12(N) was very matter of fact in her declaration that she did not feel any connection with her students. She compensated for this with the face-to-face classes she taught. This compensation made up for the lack in the online environment. As she put it, “if online instruction was the only thing I was doing, it would probably be an issue.” P25(N) handled it differently. He frankly asserted, “I go to my happy place. Look out the window, we’ll deal with this [teaching online].”

Emotional responses were strong and faculty participants formed opinions based on these emotions. P17’s instinctive response to questions about online instruction was in the negative. She did not like online instruction. However, through the interview, she talked about the high quality of work her students produced in the online class which really impressed her. She commented that her students would never have achieved that quality of work in a face-to-face class. When this was highlighted, she admitted, “I’m really having to separate what I feel from what I know. Because my feeling is Noooo.” On an emotional level, she did not like

online instruction and this clouded the reality of the situation.

This section has showed that the experience of presence had a definite emotional dimension to it. Faculty participants' emotional response to the technology, course content, and the experience of online teaching itself impacted their experiences of presence.

### **Behavioral Experience**

The third aspect of the experience of presence was behavioral. The behaviors of two groups of people affected the faculty participants' experience of presence. Firstly, the personal behaviors of the faculty participants played a role in their experience of presence. Secondly, the behaviors of their students impacted their experiences of presence.

**Faculty behaviors.** Faculty behaviors were exhibited through their course design, their choice of activities and assessments, and their interactions. When students shared personal introductions and pictures, faculty participants experienced presence. But these student actions did not occur in a vacuum. Spaces for these introductions needed to be created by the faculty participants themselves. They also needed to solicit personal information from their students and also model it for them by posting first. Their behaviors directly influenced their experiences of presence. P25 provided no public space for personal introductions which did not allow students to get to know each other or their instructor. It also inhibited his interaction with his students and his overall experience of online instruction was negative. P1 and P20 designed cartoon and poster introductions respectively. This set up a completely different environment in their course compared to P25's. Using cartoons and posters and providing discussion areas for introductions allowed P1 and P20 to interact with their students on a personal level and also allowed students to respond to the faculty participants and to other students. These conscious choices made by the faculty participants impacted their experiences of presence.

Providing spaces for discussions was an effective way for the faculty participants to get to know their students. When course assessments included group discussions, faculty were creating opportunities for themselves to experience presence. P13 commented that,

The group discussions have two purposes. The first one is to show the students' knowledge of the content. That the student actually read the reading, can specify an argument pro and con. And number two, it also allows students to talk to each other and either or disagree on a number of issues and expand on the reading. Frequently what I will do is I will assign a short video and say 'Watch this video of . . . What do you learn from watching this video?' And then I let them interact with each other.

Watching the interactions between students, drew P13 into the course and made him feel more present. P5 noted that if students were to "make fairly substantial initial posts" faculty needed to "pose the discussion question in a way that enabled them to do that." He added that for his discussion posting requirements students were given the opportunity to use personal experiences. P9 used an application oriented approach where "they [students] are to take what they've done and learned and apply it to some aspect of their setting . . . some part of their work." Thereby she incorporated students' personal experiences into the assignment. This enabled her to get to know her students leading to a cognitive experience of presence. P9 added that, "I have them [students] do videos . . . so I see them [students]." The activities that faculty chose to include in their courses had to provide opportunities for students to share something about themselves. These were the activities that were most successful in creating presence for the faculty.

P3 noted that activities could also be boring for both students and faculty. It was up to the faculty to make it interesting. As he put it, "For me even just designing an assignment that they're [students] going to be like 'Oh my gosh. This is going to be so difficult and boring.' To



some extent me just thinking about it, I'm a little bit bored about too.” Therefore, he chose to be more creative with his assignment with, “You need to write a speech. It’s a zombie apocalypse and you need to convince people to let you into their compound.” He clarified that the assignment met all the course requirements but the interesting twist enabled students to be more creative and for him to get a better understanding of them.

Participants like P25 did not provide any space for discussions or even personal introductions. Consequently, he felt he did not know his students. P2 removed discussion spaces from her courses and she also commented that she did not know her students.

Assignments like auto-graded quizzes were also counter-productive in creating presence.

Faculty behaviors in their course design, choice of activities and assessments had a direct bearing on their experience of presence. But, the faculty participants never made this connection during their interviews. They did, however, comment on the impact that student behaviors had on their experience of presence.

**Student behaviors.** Student participation within the online learning space had a tremendous impact on faculty experience of presence. When students actively engaged with the faculty, the content, activities, and other students, the participants got drawn in and felt not only connected and engaged, but also affirmed.

P21 clarified it as:

And it’s the interaction. I act, there is a reaction and that informs what I’m doing. I can’t explain something to a wall because I can’t understand what’s being received and whether I’m being clear or understood. And if I don’t get that back, then I don’t know where to go.

P7 succinctly put it as, “it takes two people to have a conversation.” This interaction between

two parties was important. For faculty, it was the students' interaction, with them and between themselves, which heightened faculty experience of presence. The most disconcerting experience for faculty was when their students were non-responsive. P14 expressed that faculty had "to be very reliant on your students for that back and forth. So in that regard, if they [students] don't do it, you're stuck." When students chose not to respond, it left an impression that "there's a non-entity there" (P21).

Interaction with students and responses from students however, varied. P13 highlighted the different participation levels of students and referred to their activity level on the discussion boards.

I have students who are close to a 100%. They've looked at almost every one [of the discussion posts]. And that's maybe, a quarter of the class. Then you have maybe another 43 or 40% who will look at half to two-thirds of the other posts. But what's frustrating is you have maybe a third of the class that is pretty close to the minimum. You also might have one or two who are at the absolute minimum. I don't know how they do it. Because you require them to make a post to someone else's. And they must go in and find the first post they see and make a response to it and then they're out. So that's very frustrating.

P21 commented that in his classes, "there's another subset of students who enroll in the course. I get very little from them, they don't complete assignments, they don't respond to me and they're frankly lost." P15 felt most connected to the students who:

. . . go above and beyond. They don't just do the bare bones and make some kind of effort and make an attempt to connect . . . the students who actually respond to emails when I write to them. I don't understand why they don't respond but some of them don't.

We'll have some kind of banter which helps too. Like in a discussion forum, we might be talking about a topic and then we might respond to that discussion with something a little more personal and that helps too.

P4 asserted that there was interaction with her students:

Certainly, we have discussion forums and we do go back and forth on there. Some of the students are much more interactive with us [herself and the teaching assistant] than others, regularly participating in discussions, whether or not they're getting credit for it or not. Some students are linking to "OK here's a great article on the subject area, what do you think of this?"

For P21, students' posts to a discussion board "basically assures me that one, they're out there so I have some positive affirmation that they're there and that they've understood what's going on." P24 commented that, "I saw that they [students] were engaging in these discussions and they really gave the impression that they really cared about the topics." Conversely, when there was no activity, P18 commented that she felt lost when there was "a discussion board assignment and nobody's sayin nothin. And it's just everybody's quiet out there and I don't know what's going on." P21 voiced his concern that, "I don't know whether I'm succeeding in engaging people if I'm getting nothing back. Online, if they don't respond to me, I have nothing."

It was important for students to be present and interactive in the online course for the faculty participants to feel present as well. P11 informed that, "I do have my office hours on Skype. No one [students] has added me on Skype." Faculty availability and actions were only meaningful when they received some form of response from students. So while P11 offered Skype meetings, the fact that none of her students had added her on Skype or met with her via

the medium, reduced P11's sense of presence. P12 got to know students who emailed her and, "there are a few students throughout the semester that I'll get to know a *little* bit. For the students it really matters to, they'll seek me out." These interactions only took place with a few students who responded or reached out to the faculty. P5 noted that students "tend to give positive comments to each other and not to me as much." He explained that when he made a comment on the discussion board, "it was pretty rare for students to say 'Hey I hadn't thought about that or that's valuable to know.' Very little of that."

A repeated concern of the online environment was the fact that students could vanish and faculty had no way to address it. P21 talked of "the way students could get lost. If they didn't respond to me they were gone and I didn't have any control and they were simply lost and that was very, very frustrating." P22 added:

I'm a little put off when people drop a course or fade from a course without telling me.

But that's because I've made or tried to make a personal connection with the person.

They just fade away and I find that disturbing.

P7 had the most telling experience. Through the two semesters that he taught his course online, he did not get any responses from his students or have any form of interaction with them. This was in spite of repeated overtures from him. He invited his students to a course orientation with free pizza and no one "wanted to come and most students didn't even respond to the email." He added that he emailed his students files, with his feedback comments, and "they wouldn't answer my questions. They really convinced me they wanted to be as unengaged as possible with the instructor." He remarked that "trying to engage them [students] in any kind of dialogue got nowhere." He saw the online learning environment as a way for students "to avoid personal contact." P7 said that he had conducted the class twice to "be sure the first time wasn't a fluke."

But in both instances:

It was awful. I would never do it again. Because the students are so disengaged and it allows them to avoid their responsibilities. You can't speak with them in the person, they don't feel that they're in the same room with you so that kind of bond is not there.

While students' interaction through emails and discussion posts was important, it was the quality of the interactions that was key rather than the quantity of interactions. So while P6 got the desired number of discussion board postings they were not of the quality he expected. His students responded on discussion boards with comments such as, "Good point." This left P6 feeling dissatisfied as it did not tell him anything about their critical thinking or understanding. P8 on the other hand, enjoyed the experience due to the motivation and high quality of student postings. The impact of quality of interactions was also reinforced by P19. When talking about email communications, P19 asserted:

Usually when they [students] email me, it's to complain or to try to get out of something, or to negotiate. It's usually a negative. The reason that I'm getting the email is not because they really found something effective that they just wanted me to know. It's rather that they're having a problem, an issue. It tends to put me on the defensive. So sometimes, the email exchanges feel, the student becomes even more burdensome to me.

It was only when there was interaction with students and when students were engaged in the course that faculty participants experienced presence the most. The participants accepted that student engagement was on a spectrum. Some students were very engaged and on the other end were students who vanished. Faculty sense of presence was impacted by the level of student participation. When students disappeared, faculty participants also disengaged.

The activities that faculty included in their courses affected their experience of presence.

But even the best and most interactive activities could only succeed when students responded. It was students' behaviors that the participants associated with their experience of presence.

### **Strategies to Create Presence**

The third research question for this study was, "What strategies do online faculty employ in their online instruction to create a sense of presence and why?" There were two key strategies that faculty participants mentioned: (1) experiencing presence in the online environment required a cognitive reframing, and (2) presence was created through one-to-one relationships.

#### **Cognitive Reframing**

In this study, some of the faculty participants revealed a new vision of online learning. They identified the online learning environment as being separate and different from traditional teaching environments. Acknowledging this shift was important to the faculty participants' experience of presence. With her years of experience teaching online, P1 stated that:

I think it [online instruction] does take a switch or cognitive reframing to do well online.

You cannot be taking the sage on the stage and just plopping it into online LMS. So once you figure that out, and you realize it's 5 or 7 days a week for 20 mins to 2 hours, I think it's a very effective way to teach.

Participants identified certain factors that set apart the online learning environment. One was the immediacy of interactions and communicative feedback. P5, when talking about discussions mentioned that:

It's a tradeoff. It's [spontaneous discussion interactions that occur face-to-face] something that, I guess I'm philosophical about it. I know you don't have it. It's just one of the things you don't have when you have an online class. You just lose it to gain the other advantages of the online class.

P22 described that, “it’s a delayed response in the online class, it’s not an immediate thing. It’s just a different way of processing I guess.”

Some participants such as P22 and P1 were able to see online instruction as different from face-to-face teaching. Not only did they acknowledge the differences between face-to-face and online instruction, they also realized that online instruction could not be compared to face-to-face teaching. Others, like P6, recognized that online instruction was different and required a change in mindset. However, they were encumbered by their personal biases and assumptions. P17 conceded:

Your questions are so intriguing to me because I’m really having to separate what I feel from what I know. . . . Because they [students] are not benefitting from having me in the classroom. Yet you point out that I really love the depth that they’re [students] thinking on these cases that they would never get if I did that in class. I don’t know what to tell you. My guess is that you’re right. That it works. Nobody believes that but I think you’re probably right.

P6 admitted that:

For me, it might help to just have a course that I’ve never done before because then I’m not bringing with me this baggage of the face to face course and what my expectations are . . . I do carry a considerable amount of baggage from the face to face experiences.

Recognizing the need for a new way of thinking, P6 considered that, “I guess if I were to redefine how I think about engagement, I mean I could certainly try to work towards that. I could still engage students specifically.” However, he had not reached that point yet. P2 had reached a Zen state of mind with regard to online instruction. The comments below present her view of online instruction and acceptance of it.

We don't do pictures. We don't do Skype, Face Time, or anything like that. Because sometimes it's nice to know the soul of a person and you don't need to see their face. You don't need to see if there's someone that society considers to be beautiful or not beautiful. You don't even need to know what their race is. You don't need to know if they're male or female. You just need to know the spirit that they bring and the spirit that you receive. That's all you need to know. That's the nature of online teaching. Don't try and make it classroom teaching cause it aint. . . . I'm not trying to re-create the classroom. I'm trying to provide something that's an alternative. Like I say, "I don't like to make it about me." So I don't try to re-create what's in the classroom. I try to do something entirely different . . . I always leave with a sense of sadness that I don't know anybody because I would have liked to have gotten to know them. But I accept that as the nature of online. I like online teaching, it has its drawbacks, I accept that."

Being able to reframe online instruction helped the faculty participants. They were able to adapt to the new environment and have a more positive experience. When participants expected experience similar to their face-to-face classes, they were disappointed.

### **A 1 to 1 relationship**

Another strategy to create presence was through one-to-one relationships with students. All the faculty participants in this study talked about knowing their students better and experiencing presence when they were providing individual feedback. When faculty participants in this study perceived being present with their students, or cognitively experienced their students, they were experiencing this on a one-to-one basis. Sixteen (64%) of the faculty participants talked about interacting with individual students through emails or discussion postings. These one-to-one (1-1) exchanges created a greater sense of presence for the faculty



participants.

The faculty participants were relating to individual students or small groups of students. They did not see themselves as being present with the whole class. It was only in individual contexts that they spoke about presence. Some of the faculty participants were conscious of this. As P22 put it:

As a whole class-class, I feel connected to them but in a much more macro sense. I'll have a relationship with each student in the class but collectively, I have a much more macro or removed presence from them. So it's kind of, I have these two levels going on at the same time. So for example, last semester, I had a student who was squirrely. I'll just say that. It was clear that she wasn't engaging with the class in the way that I wanted her to engage. So I would push her, chatted on the phone, we Skyped a few times. . . . she withdrew from the course. But I predicted she would do that because I knew so much about her and what she had been experiencing. . . . So that's what I mean. I have a relationship with some of them.

P11 described it as:

You feel engaged with some students and not so much other students, I guess. For the students who do show up to class and everything, you have a greater sense of group presence. You know, they come on at different times. I guess the thing that I notice with the discussion boards is you'll have the posters who'll get their posts in right away and then they'll respond to other people who are also there. And then you've got kind of probably stragglers who will wait until Saturday and then they kind of interact with each other. So I guess, in some cases, it might not feel like I have an entire group, class, but there's smaller groups, smaller clumps. As far as presence, I do feel that there is

presence, but it's sporadic I guess. But it's in smaller groups so in a way it feels like a discussion group or something.

P22 explained that:

My engagement with students was more in my online class and I know more about the work that they were doing than I did the face-to-face hybrid class. It's almost like that collection of people [face-to-face students] doesn't break apart to the individuals and in an online class everybody's an individual so getting them to be a collective is the challenge.

P1 pointed out:

I think it's individualized if the student reaches out to me or if I can pick up on their cues where they need assistance. As opposed to my face-to-face class of 60, I can't really pick up who has needs early. Wherein in an online environment, with weekly assessments, I can quickly kind of see who might be, you know, technologically struggling or content struggling.

P25 also felt he engaged with students “individually, yes. Not as a group.”

These participants succinctly conveyed the 1-1 relationships that existed online. While all the participants talked about individual students and individual relationships, they were not cognizant of the changed relationship. P22, P11, P1, and P25 were cognizant of this shift and expressed it well. These participants highlighted the need to think of online teaching differently.

### **Experience and Discipline**

This study aimed to understand online faculty perceptions and experiences of presence. Two variables were introduced into the study: experience level of faculty and the disciplines that faculty taught in. The intention was to see if experience level or discipline affected presence in

any way. To incorporate these variables, faculty were recruited from across the disciplines based on their experience levels.

## **Experience**

Ulmer et al. (2007) found that experienced faculty generally had a positive response to online instruction and its efficacy. Experienced faculty tended to have a more positive response to online instruction. Only 33% of experienced faculty in this study had a negative response to online instruction. With novice faculty however, it was an even split.

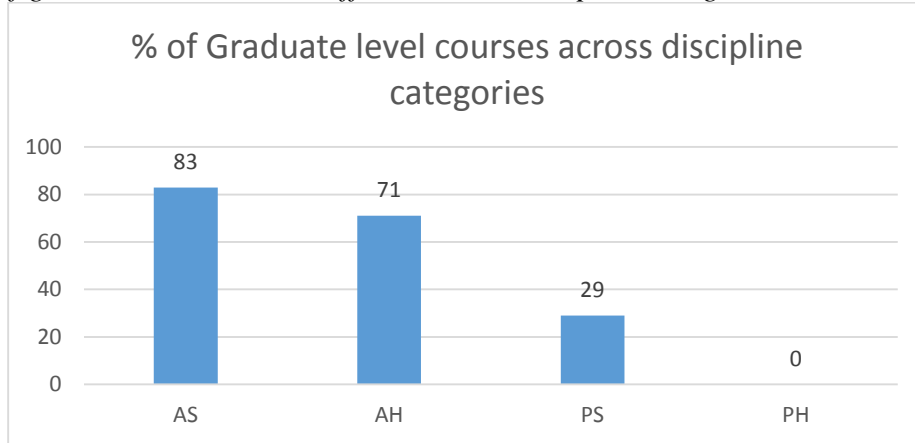
The study conducted by Lloyd et al. (2012) revealed that experience minimized perceived barriers to online instruction while less experienced faculty tended to perceive more barriers. Similarly, in this study, experienced faculty who had a positive response to online instruction perceived very few barriers. Their concerns were about students who vanished. They were comfortable with the level of interaction they had with their students and felt they knew more about their online students because they were able to interact with them on an individual basis.

## **Discipline Categories**

A point of comparison in this study was the course discipline. Findings from this study revealed certain differences between the discipline categories, which were related to course levels, class sizes, and assessments. While discipline categories did not directly affect faculty sense of presence, student demographics, class sizes, and assessments did.

**Academic levels.** There was a difference in the academic levels offered by the four discipline categories (See Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2  
*Percentage of graduate level courses offered across discipline categories*



All the online courses offered by faculty participants in the pure-hard (PH) disciplines were for undergraduate level courses. These were introductory level courses that satisfied GER or program specific requirements. Faculty in these disciplines did not think that graduate level courses in their subject areas could be offered online. P4 commented that,

We don't teach any major level or any advanced courses online. Larger enrollment introductory courses are kind of what we do and none of them are required for the major.

In fact, I don't think we offer an online version of the courses required for the major.

These are all kind of electives, General Ed courses. I think we have 4 or 5 of them.

It was also noted that the online environment would not be suitable for graduate level courses, as they required specialized materials that students would not be able to access in their homes.

Undergraduate and graduate level courses were offered in AS and PS disciplines. These categories also offered fully online master's programs.

Shea and Bidjerano (2009) discovered that students of various academic levels had different experiences of social presence and instructor presence. This difference based on academic level was also reflected in the experiences of the faculty. Faculty revealed that graduate students seemed to be more motivated and involved in the courses. Therefore, they

participated more often and responded to the instructor more as well. Undergraduate students however, were less responsive and had a greater predisposition to vanish during their courses. P15 noticed this in her mixed academic level class that had one undergraduate student enrolled. He was the only student who did not reply to her emails or complete his assignments. This implied that faculty who taught more graduate level courses had better online experiences and experienced a presence to a greater degree.

**Assessment styles.** Assessment styles was another point of difference between the discipline categories. Within PH, there was a focus on testing information acquisition and all participants included quizzes in their courses. A few of the applied-hard (AH) courses also shared the same features. These were larger introductory classes with more quizzes and individual assignments. Smith et al. (2008) found that, what they call, Test and Pool tools were utilized more in the PH disciplines. These Test and Pool tools equate to the quizzes that participants in this study used. Arbaugh (2013) noted that the harder disciplines tended not to focus as much on collaborative activities such as groups discussions and group projects. The findings of this study echo those of Arbaugh (2013). While faculty like P4 and P12 did include discussion boards in their courses, students were only required to respond to a faculty question and make a response to two of their peers. There were no group discussions or group projects implemented by faculty in PH. The faculty in AS and PS discipline areas rarely included quizzes as assessment strategies and preferred to incorporate group discussions and group projects. Though P1, P2, and P13 were from the “softer” disciplines, they used quizzes in their courses and as with faculty in the “harder” disciplines, they included quizzes to test knowledge acquisition.

**Class sizes.** Class sizes for the PH courses were all medium or large with the smallest

class size at 40 students. Whereas, courses in the applied-soft (AS) and pure-soft (PS) disciplines all had small class sizes. Aragon (2003) comments that for successfully creating social presence for students, a class size of 25 to 30 is optimal. Orellana (2006) explains that there is no clear criteria for the classification of class sizes. Furthermore, her research did not show a significant relationship between class size and interaction level.

This study was focused on faculty sense of presence. While class size, level of students, and assessment strategies did influence faculty sense of presence, discipline categories themselves did not.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

In this study, data was collected through three modes: interviews, observations, and document analysis. This methodology was adopted for triangulation of data. While data for the findings were drawn from data collected from all three methods, interviews were the most effective. The interviews were the most informative. The faculty participants enjoyed the opportunity to share their online teaching experiences.

The course syllabi that were collected for document analysis conveyed a lot of information with regard to the personality of the participants. The syllabi revealed the communication style of the faculty participants through their language choices. The syllabi also showed how the faculty participants were making themselves available and accessible to their students.

The observation of the course sites did not provide much in the form of new information. The observations confirmed what the faculty participants had shared during their interviews. The observations provided a firsthand look at the strategies that the faculty participants utilized in their online classes. As with the course syllabi, the language choices and communication

styles of the participants were clearly visible in the online environment. The faculty participants' need to reveal their personalities was obvious in their interactions with their students online.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the research conducted. I showed how the faculty participants perceived presence in their online classes. I also looked at participants' experiences of presence on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level. I then presented the strategies that faculty participants were employing to create presence, which required a re-conceptualization of the online learning environment and the relationships created therein.

In the next chapter, I will analyze these findings in detail. I will also consider the implications of the findings, limitations of this study, and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

In the field of education, the concept of presence has primarily been studied and researched from the perspective of the student. Researchers have considered topics such as students' perception of presence (Zhang & Zigurs, 2009), predictors of student experience of presence (Bulu, 2012), and the influence of presence on student satisfaction (Hassell et al., 2009). Presence from the faculty perspective has been under-researched. There has been a study by Rosselli (2014) who researched nursing faculty experience of presence in a synchronous learning environment. Given the dearth of studies in this area, there is a need for more research on faculty experience of presence and this study aimed to fill this gap.

This study considered faculty perceptions and experience of presence. Leading from this, the study looked at the strategies faculty utilized to create presence. The context for this study was a public four-year university in the Midwest where faculty conducted online courses in synchronous and asynchronous environments. At this university, faculty designed, developed, and offered their online courses autonomously. Faculty were the instructional designers of their course and hence had control over creating presence within the course environment. The perceptions of presence revealed in this study suggest that, for faculty, experiences of presence and satisfaction in online education require a mental reframing.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief overview of the findings. I then analyze the findings using the framework of dramaturgy. Following the analysis, I present a new representation of online instruction and the significance of this study within the literature of presence and online instruction. Implications of the findings are then considered along with limitations of the study. Suggestions are made for future research and the chapter ends with a personal reflection on the



study and the findings.

### **Sense of Presence**

The aim of this study was to better understand the sense of presence as perceived and experienced by faculty teaching online courses. Chapter four presented how the faculty participants perceived and experienced presence in their online courses. The main findings are as follows.

- 1) More than half the faculty participants perceived presence in terms of how they, as instructors, were seen by their students. It was important for the faculty participants that their students got a sense of their true personality.
- 2) Presence for the faculty participants meant being available to their students.
- 3) Presence required a shared experience between faculty and students.
- 4) Faculty participants experienced presence when they had some form of physical representation of their students.
- 5) It was when reading students' work or when students shared their lives with the faculty that the faculty experienced presence.
- 6) Faculty participants also experienced presence when they were providing feedback to students.
- 7) Student engagement was a strong influencer of presence for these participants.

This study was conceptually framed by dramaturgy. The following sections will provide an analysis of these findings through a dramaturgical lens.

### **Teaching – A Performance Art**

Erving Goffman (1959) applied the metaphor of a staged play to all human interactions.

He proposed that everyone enacts a variety of roles in different situations and people utilize their

bodies and the materials around them to manage the impression they present to the people around them. Some of the faculty participants used the metaphor of a dramatic presentation to explain their teaching process. Participants P18, P19, and P21 envisioned traditional teaching in a face-to-face environment as a dramatic performance. P19 referred to teaching as a performance art.

Pineau (1994) comments that there is a tendency to view stage performances as “actor-centered” (p. 6). However, as mentioned in chapter 3, the dramatic performance in this study is not perceived as teacher-centered. The performance is participatory and P21 clarified that the “audience is a part of [the] presentation.” The metaphor of a play therefore, becomes an appropriate framework of analysis.

While these faculty participants did use the analogy of a performance, they visualized the performance in a shared space of physical proximity. So their image was a performance enacted in a face-to-face interaction as Goffman (1959) originally conceptualized it. Physical proximity was key to the performance as Goffman and these participants envisioned it.

In the online learning environment, the performance of teaching is conducted in a virtual space. Though the faculty participants did not see it, they were enacting performances for their students in this virtual environment.

### **The Online Performance**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the growing popularity of social media, Goffman’s metaphor has been applied to the study of online personae. The online environment lends itself to the analogy of a performance space. Rettie (2009) and Jenkins (2010) present the case that with new technologies, such as synchronous media, mediated interaction can simulate face-to-face interaction. Based on this, Kien (2015) delineates the aspects of dramaturgy as played out in the

online environment. Kien (2015) places the front setting as the interaction platform, the “cyber space in which both actors share with each other” (p. 78), such as Facebook. In this space, the personal front is the profiles that users share. Wilson, Gosling, and Graham (2012) from a review of 412 research articles on Facebook note that a Facebook user profile “serves as a stage on which users make . . . presentations of themselves” (p. 210). Kien (2015) elaborates the dramaturgical approach and suggests that the back is where the “individual presents her/his truer self” (p. 79).

The online learning environment therefore, can also be seen as a performance space and analyzed from a dramaturgical perspective. In this study, faculty were the unit of analysis and the analysis focused on their performances. They were the actors and their performance in the educational setting was the act of teaching to a body of students who functioned as the audience.

### **Dramaturgy of Online Instruction**

Goffman (1959) claimed that through the perspective of a theatrical performance we can: consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may or may not do while sustaining his performance before them. (Preface section)

Within the context of this study, the individual actor is the faculty participant. The work situation they are involved in is their teaching. The ways in which faculty control the environment and their actions guides the impression they want to create for their student audience.

The following section will present the various elements of the performance of online instruction. I will describe the actors, front of the stage, the play being performed, the back of

the stage, and the audience in this performance.

### **Actors**

The actors in this study were faculty involved in online instruction. All the participants were recruited from one university, UX. These participants were solely in-charge of their online courses. They developed their courses including the syllabus and all the activities. They were also the instructional designers of the course. Finally, they taught their courses and interacted with their students. P4 and P14 had teaching assistants to help them since their classes were large.

A point of analysis in this study was the experience level of the participants. Prior research identified differences in faculty response to online teaching based on faculty experience level (Lloyd et al., 2012; Ulmer, 2007). Hence, participants with differing experience levels were recruited for this study. Fifty six percent of the participants were experienced online instructors having taught more than three fully online courses. The other 44% were novice faculty who had taught only one or two online courses.

Ulmer et al. (2007) found that experienced faculty generally had a positive response to online instruction and its efficacy. The results from this study confirm their finding. Sixty four percent of experienced faculty participants were positive about their online experiences and commented that they loved it. Only 55% of novice faculty expressed the same emotion.

In this study, the focus was on how experience level impacted the faculty sense of presence. The findings show that experience alone was not a deciding factor. Experienced faculty who had a positive response to online instruction experienced a greater sense of presence. They were comfortable with the level of interaction they had with their students and felt they knew more about their online students because they were able to interact with them on an

individual basis. Experienced faculty who responded negatively to online instruction, like P6 and P17, perceived barriers to connecting with their students and their experience of presence was affected. These findings are similar to those of Lloyd et al. (2012) who revealed that experience minimized perceived barriers to online instruction while less experienced faculty tended to perceive more barriers.

Novice faculty like P3, P19, P24, and P25 felt they did not know much about their students. They were unhappy with their online teaching experiences and were not sure if the barriers could be overcome. P3 and P19 were willing to try different strategies in future to improve their teaching experiences. P24 and P25 were more resistant. They said they would teach online courses if they had to but they would much rather not. At the same time, novice faculty like P4, P11, P20, and P21 were happy with their online teaching and in general, expressed a sense of presence.

These mixed responses suggest that experience level of the faculty participants, by itself, was not a strong factor in the experience of presence. Participants' emotional response to online teaching had a greater effect on their sense of presence.

From the actors, we move now to the main performance area, the front of stage.

## **Front**

Goffman (1959) defines the front as “the place where the performance is given” (p. 66). There are two elements to the front: the setting and the personal front. The setting refers to the stage and stage props. The personal front includes appearance and manners employed by the actor. The setting and personal front are both manipulated by the actor to the ends of impression management.

**Setting.** In this study, the stage occupied by the faculty participants was the online

technological platform of the learning management system. The performance of teaching was enacted in this space and was bound by the parameters of the platform. At the study site UX, the learning management system offered functionality for synchronous and asynchronous interactions. The participants in this study chose to use the platform solely as an asynchronous platform.

The stage props in a performance comprise of the furniture, décor, and other paraphernalia that surround the performer in the performance space. For the faculty participants in this study, their stage props consisted of the technologies that they chose to leverage to enhance their performances.

Faculty participants employed technological props in various ways. P22 regularly conducted video conferences with her students; P4 and P9 recorded videos; P21 created animated PowerPoint presentations; and, P8 and P13 included current event videos. Audio lectures were a common strategy and P9 and P15 also added audio feedback. P23 utilized specialized hardware to enhance her teaching. Technologies that incorporated audio and video were a way for faculty participants to project their personalities to their students. Students could hear and see their faculty through these technologies. Wei et al. (2012) claim that social presence is enhanced by media rich environments and these faculty participants tried to incorporate various technologies to create such environments for their students.

Successfully exploiting the technological props depended on participants' familiarity with the technologies and their comfort in using them. So, P2, who did not consider herself technologically savvy, used the bare minimum of the facilities available to her. Participants like P1 and P23, who were comfortable with technology and enjoyed trying new technologies, were more adventurous. P1 had tried Second Life and Voki as part of her courses and was

anticipating trying out PowToons. P23 incorporated Bamboo software and P22 noted that she had been using Skype since the beginning of Skype.

Lehman and Conceição (2010) identify technology as a determinant of presence for learners in an online learning environment. This study shows that technology was also a determinant in faculty experience of presence in the online learning environment. But there was a difference. Lehman and Conceição (2010) contend that technology needs to become transparent for the users. In this study, all the participants were aware of the technology surrounding them. For P19, “[t]he internet interface has almost felt like a boundary wall where I cannot connect.” The technology never became transparent for these participants.

Awareness of technology affected participants’ sense of presence positively and negatively. For some of the faculty participants, their sense of presence was heightened by their interest in technology. It was the excitement of using new technologies that energized them. They were inspired to try out and “play” with new technologies. P17 and P1 had heard of new software and were looking forward to spending time with the software and discovering its potential. They felt more present in the course environment when they were working on the technologies.

Technology also had the potential to be a frustrating force for the participants. This frustration led to a decrease in participants’ sense of presence and the participants became overwhelmed and distracted by the technology itself. When technology did not function as intended, it became a frustration for the participants (Regan et al., 2012; Sword, 2012). P21 noted that he spent most time familiarizing himself with updates to technologies. P1 chose to abandon the use of Second Life and Voki because of the problems both she and her students encountered while using it.

Since technology was always present, the perception of presence as telepresence was absent for the participants in this study. P25 commented that he could not “make it across that screen” and it was the same for all the participants. They never felt physically transported to another place or that they were in a shared virtual space with their students. Presence in terms of telepresence (Minsky, 1980) or “being there,” was not experienced by these participants. Nurse faculty in Rosselli’s (2014) study were immersed in the online environment and were able to mentally picture themselves in a virtual space with their students. The technology became transparent for them and they experienced a sense of “being there.” Rosselli’s (2014) participants also expressed the notion of “coming here,” where students were perceived as coming to them. This was an experience that eluded participants in this study. The participants in Rosselli’s (2014) study conducted their courses primarily in a synchronous format which might have influenced their experience. The participants in this study used asynchronous media as their primary mode of interaction with their students which heightened the temporal and spatial distances between them and their students. None of the participants were able to see past the technology. It was a fourth wall that they were unable to breach.

But in this study, the awareness of the technology cannot be qualified as detrimental to the sense of presence. Technology needed to be present and visible for some of the participants to really engage and feel present in their course environment. They wanted technology to be transparent for their students. Personally though, there was a nuanced relationship between the faculty participants’ interests, their technological prowess, and the technologies. This relationship influenced faculty sense of presence.

In addition to the stage and props, Goffman’s (1959) front stage also included the actor’s personal front.



**Personal front.** Impression management was very important to the faculty participants in this study and the personal front played a key role in this. Personal front is the “face of an individual that appears before audiences” (Kien, 2015, p. 78). The participants in this study were very aware of their personal front. They wanted to successfully project a front to their students that portrayed their true selves. They wanted to be “perceived in whatever they [were] doing” (Goffman, 1963, p. 17). The faculty participants wanted their students to be able to see them as human and understand their personalities. To accomplish this, they shared pictures and personal information about themselves through introductions. This was similar to Bullingham and Vasconcelos’ (2013) study which found that bloggers attempted to present an online image of themselves that was a true representation of their real life personalities. Sharing personal details and pictures was one way for the participants to share a part of themselves with their students, just as the bloggers in Bullingham and Vasconcelos’ (2013) study.

**Appearance and manner.** Dramaturgically, appearance includes clothing, sex, age, gender, race, and size. Manners, refers to facial expressions, speech patterns, posture, and gestures among others. In this study, appearance and manner played an important role in impression management for the faculty participants. P22 talked about the frustrating element of the online environment, which for her was “having to get dressed.” She included a few synchronous Skype sessions with her students and for them, she “got dressed.” While it was an annoyance, “Oh damn, I have to put make up on,” the impression she wanted to project to her students was clearly important enough for her to make the effort. The appearance she presented was an integral part of her impression management strategy. The significance of appearance was also apparent in P11’s struggle with revealing her age to her students. Appearance could also be seen in the pictures that the faculty participants chose to share with their students. Some

participants put up pictures of their pets, others chose family pictures, and some elected to share pictures of themselves in more professional settings. P2 consciously chose not to share her appearance with her students. So many of her students were not even aware of the gender of their instructor. It was important for P2 to be perceived in the absence of appearance and through manners alone.

Impression management and identity projection have been researched in the context of corporate organizations on social media (Richey, Ravishankar, & Coupland, 2015). Managers of corporations create impressions of their organizations through the texts they post on social media such as Twitter or Facebook (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the text-based asynchronous online learning environment of this study, faculty participants employed similar strategies.

Participants' manners were limited to language and communication style. The language choices and style of writing that faculty used clearly conveyed their personalities to their students. Some faculty chose to include emoticons to convey a lighter tone to their communication and express a friendly personality. P22 however felt that it was inappropriate for her to use emoticons in her messages as it was not in keeping with the professional impression of professor that she wanted to project. P17 and P21 incorporated jokes; P6 included images; and, P1 used emoticons. With these mannerisms, faculty participants managed the impression they created on their students (Goffman, 1959).

***Availability and accessibility.*** The success of interactions between actors depends on their presence in the environment which Goffman (1963) called "co-presence." Goffman (1963) explained co-presence in terms of physical proximity with face-to-face interactions. In the modern mediated world, co-presence has been expanded to encompass the virtual world (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Bulu, 2012; Sivunen & Nordbäck, 2014). Goffman proposed

two characteristics of co-presence: one, that persons must be accessible, available, and subject to one another; and two, persons must be “perceived in whatever they are doing” (Goffman, 1963, p. 17). In their personal front, participants in this study perceived presence as co-presence. Therefore, they created impressions of themselves as approachable and available to their students.

Faculty made themselves accessible to their students through a variety of mediums including emails, video conferencing, instant messaging services, telephone, and face-to-face. Almost 50% of the faculty participants were willing to share their personal cell phone numbers with their students and all participants encouraged students to reach out whenever they needed to. Availability and accessibility created in faculty a perception of co-presence.

Greater accessibility meant that faculty availability to their students increased (Mastel-Smith et al., 2015; Otter et al., 2013). Turkle (1995) calls today’s society, “always on” and asks, “When is downtime?” (p.157). Increased accessibility and availability created an environment where faculty were always “on.” There was no time at which the act of teaching ended. Goffman (1959) uses the term performance to “refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers” (p. 13). In the online environment, time and space boundaries for this performance ceased to exist and the faculty presentation became an on-going performance. Participants like P4 and P14 chose to identify hours in a week when they would not be available. P15 mentioned that she would not check her email during the weekends. However, she provided her cell phone number to students to enable them to text her in-case of emergencies over the weekend. P8 indicated available hours primarily because of time zone differences. P18 and P13 did not believe in what they viewed as artificial boundaries. Their priority was in being available to their students and it

was in this availability that they perceived presence.

The findings from this study show that the act of being available was an important aspect of presence for these faculty participants. Therefore, they used a variety of strategies to convey this impression to their students. It was a part of their personal front that they wanted their students to understand about themselves.

## **Content**

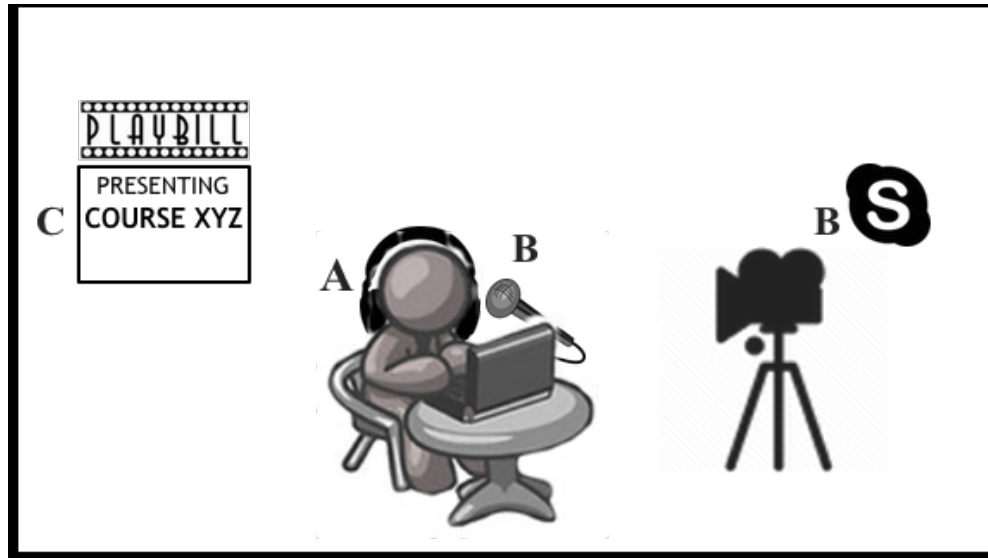
The performance of teaching is governed by the requirements of each specific performance. So, as an actor's performance changes with the different plays, faculty performance shifts with the courses they teach. For these faculty participants, the course content was the specific play they were performing.

Faculty response to the courses they were teaching had an impact on their sense of presence. Faculty like P1, P4, P5, P9, P12, and others loved the courses and the content they were teaching. They were excited about sharing their passion for the subject with their students. This was a big part of their commitment to online instruction. Faculty who did not enjoy the content material or subject matter of a course felt a level of disconnect.

Content was an aspect of teaching that had a deeper impact than some other factors. Participants were willing to tussle with technology and find ways to make themselves accessible to their students. But when they disliked the topic they were teaching, as in the case of P19, their enthusiasm for the whole teaching process was dampened. On an intrinsic level, she was not taken in by her own performances (Goffman, 1959). She did not believe in her performance and felt cynical as Goffman (1959) defined these performances. She was concerned about the beliefs of the students and "guide[d] the conviction" (Goffman, 1959, p. 10) of her students. She wanted to make sure that the students never doubted the authenticity of the performance.

Using the analogy of the staged performance, the faculty actor, online stage, and course being taught can be diagrammatically represented as in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1  
*Front stage*



- A. Faculty on stage working in the online environment
- B. Stage props – the various technologies that faculty can use in their courses
- C. The course that is the frame for the particular performance

## Back

Goffman (1959) identifies the back as the region where “the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (p. 70). In the online learning environment, the back is the region that is hidden from the students. The actions that faculty undertake in this region are not made known to the students. Nevertheless, the actions that occur in the back facilitate, inform, and enhance the performance in the front region. For the participants in this study, the back was the region where they received training and support and also where they engaged in activities such as grading assessments.

**Training.** Faculty participants in this study had access to training through the institution’s technology center though all the services were optional. Eighty percent of the faculty participants had attended some form of training program for their online teaching.

Participants in this study spoke of two kinds of training: technical and pedagogical. Seventy-six percent of the participants had attended some form of technical training but only 60% had attended pedagogical training. Participants who had attended pedagogical training sessions seemed happier about teaching online and were happy with their students' work. P17 spoke of how the pedagogical training she had attended had had a transformative influence on her online teaching.

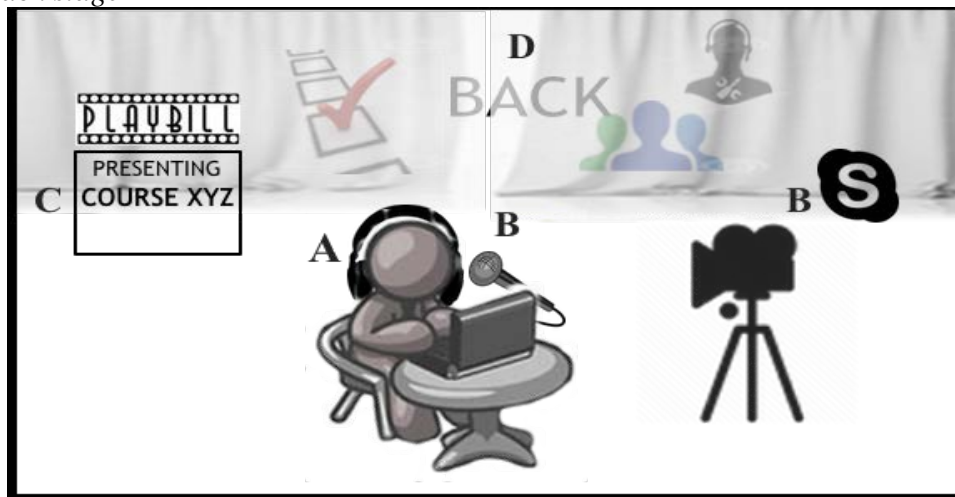
**Support.** The support that faculty participants received was varied. The institution's technology center not only provided training but also provided technical support. In addition, the institution had a Help Desk that all participants could call as necessary. Support also took the form of mentors. P1, P4, and P19 had mentors and they highly valued the mentor relationship. They felt that the mentor was the most significant contributor to their success in online teaching (Vaill & Testori, 2012). P3 was part of a departmental peer group that met regularly to discuss their online teaching experiences. A departmental peer group also existed for P6 though their discussions were more restricted to course materials and assessment strategies.

P4 and P23 were part of a national community of practitioners in their field. The members of this organization shared resources with each other and this enhanced their teaching practice. Heinrich and Oberleitner (2012) researched a teacher-scholar program and encourage faculty to "turn teaching activities into scholarship" (Discussion section). P23 was actively involved in this. She incorporated various teaching strategies into her online courses, collected data on the efficacy of these strategies, and then presented them to her peers at national conferences. She was enthusiastic about this and eager to research the success of other strategies.

While support and training enhanced the teaching practices of the participants, none of

them associated their training in any way with their experiences of presence. What was in the back region in their performance, remained in the back for these performers as well. In the framework for designing online courses with a sense of presence (Lehman & Conceição, 2010), support is one contributor to creating a sense of presence. However, their model was developed with the learner as the focus. The determinants were identified on the basis of how they contributed to a learners' sense of presence. In this research, faculty were at the center, and the aim was to understand the elements that contributed to faculty sense of presence. The findings from this study indicate that while support and training enhanced the teaching experience, they did not play a role in faculty sense of presence. Figure 5.2 represents the front and back stage of the online teaching performance.

Figure 5.2  
*Front and back stage*



- A. Faculty on stage working in the online environment
- B. Stage props – the various technologies that faculty can use in their courses
- C. The course that is the frame for the particular performance
- D. Back stage – Occupied by training, support services, and administrative activities like grading. Back stage is behind the stage curtains and invisible to the audience. Faculty actors are aware of the backstage though not all elements in the backstage affect their sense of presence on-stage.

**Assessment.** MacFarlane (2007), applying the metaphor of a performance to teaching, includes assessment as an off stage activity. It is abstracted from the audience and can be seen as occurring in the back. Faculty participants in this study experienced presence when they were reviewing students' work and providing feedback to their students. Assessments where they could provide feedback enabled experiences of presence. Hence, papers submitted by students were situations where the faculty participants could provide detailed feedback. In the process, they were drawn in and felt very present. All courses, across the disciplines, incorporated papers in some form or the other. Therefore, all participants had the chance to provide feedback and therefore experienced presence to some degree.

### **Audience**

The student audience was a very important component in the participants' sense of presence. Lehman and Conceição (2010) identify the instructor's role as one element of the determinants of presence. Their model placed the student at the center. In this study, with faculty at the center, students' role was a determinant of presence for the faculty participants. While faculty were the primary performers, the students were the audience and were expected to be "co-participants" (Goffman, 1959, p. 8) in the performance. DeLuce (1995) analyzed the role of audience in a play and noted that "the audience completes the performance . . . it is itself a performer in that work" (as cited in Panteli & Duncan, p. 429). In order to experience presence, the faculty participants needed to have an awareness of their students as physical entities. They also needed their students to be engaged in the learning process.

**Physical embodiment.** The faculty participants in this study needed to be aware of their audience and feel like they knew them in order to experience presence. The participants were experiencing presence in terms of social presence and needed the "salience of the other person in



the interaction” (Short et al., 1976, p. 65). For a few of the participants like P8 and P22, their experience of social presence was high and they were able to create “mental models of virtual others in mediated communication” (Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003, p. 34). They assigned voices to their students and imagined them speaking when they were reading the students’ postings. Other participants did not achieve this level of social presence. In order to experience presence, they needed a physical representation of the students. Hence they requested that students post pictures of themselves. In the absence of the physical image, participants like P11 and P19 were unable to experience a sense of presence.

**Being together.** The study participants also experienced social presence through a sense of being together. Lowenthal (2009) commented that the majority of definitions of social presence tend more towards the perception of “being there” and there is minimal attention paid to the emotional or interpersonal connection. In this study, participants experienced presence only in terms of an emotional or intellectual connection. Even when they used synchronous technologies, the experience of “being there” eluded them. It was through their communication with students and the work of students that faculty felt a connection to their students and experienced social presence.

Faculty wanted to create an environment where students would feel included. They wanted to convey the idea of a shared space and experience. This was important given the distance between faculty and students. Faculty created the impression of being together via the manners they used. They used language that incorporated first person, second person, and first person plural pronouns. The use especially of the “I” and “we” conveyed, not only an impression of the faculty but also, an impression of a learning experience shared between faculty and students. Newman, Guiney, and Barrett (2015) in their research found that the use of the

“we” indicated a collaborative relationship. It was this relationship that faculty were trying to create through the use of their language. Since participants were unable to bridge the technology gap and experience “being there,” they used language more as a tool to create a shared experience rather than a shared space.

The participants needed to get a sense of their students and they created spaces for social presence where they could all come together. But it required reciprocation from the students.

**Engagement.** Students’ level of engagement with the faculty was a major contributor to the faculty sense of presence. When students actively interacted with the instructor, with their peers, or the content, faculty participants experienced a high degree of presence.

Participants found that some of their students were willing to share personal details with them. The sharing was voluntary and it made an impact on the faculty. P1 and P2 talked of instances when students shared personal details of their lives with them. These stories made the faculty feel socially present in the online environment and present with their students (Sung & Mayer, 2012). The pictures that students chose to share even if it was of their pets, gave faculty a sense of their students and enabled them to see their students as human (Sung & Mayer, 2012). These instances of sharing were important to the faculty participants. These details made them feel they knew their students on a deeper level and they felt more engaged with the students. These interactions were especially meaningful when they were shared voluntarily by the students. Unsolicited and heart-felt sharing was meaningful. Even mandated sharing as in required introductions, reflections, or discussion postings, helped participants get to know their students better and thereby experience a sense of presence.

P21 did not have any required discussion postings as he felt they were forced and artificial. He chose to leave the discussion postings open. When students chose to make

postings, they were far more meaningful for P21. P4 also appreciated the comments and resources her students shared of their own volition. In addition to authentic sharing, faculty participants also valued the level of students' interaction.

A number of faculty participants like P1, P2, P13, and P18 talked about how they got to know their students well through the work that they submitted. P25 did not like online teaching but even he conceded that he got to understand his students through the assignments they submitted. These assignments gave the faculty participants an understanding of the students on an intellectual level. As P13 commented, he got to understand his students' theoretical perspectives and their thought processes. How well the faculty participants got to know the students depended on the work that the students submitted and the level of their engagement with the assignment.

P13 and P21 talked about the difference in students' interaction and engagement levels. They noted that there were usually three kinds of students. Some students interacted at a high level with the faculty, the discussion boards, and with their assignments. Some students were not effusive but they did meet the minimum requirements of the course. Finally, there were the students who never participated or interacted in the course. These students were the most disconcerting for the participants.

Faculty felt completely distanced and disconnected when students assumed roles of passive observers. Participants talked of how it was easy for students to vanish in the online environment and they had no control over this. Faculty felt most disconnected when their students "vanished." This was a perplexing experience for the faculty participants and it is when they felt least present. Casey and Kroth (2013) found the same concerns in their study. As with the participants in Casey and Kroth's (2013) study, participants in this study repeatedly reached

out to their students. When they emailed their students, they expected some response. P21 explained it as, “I can’t explain something to a wall.” The importance of communication from students was highlighted by the situation experienced by P7. When faced with completely non-responsive students twice, P7 decided to abandon online instruction completely.

The audience was key to the success of the performance. Faculty enjoyed their online teaching experiences when they could sense their students especially in a physical way. The faculty created shared spaces, such as discussion areas, so that students would feel included in the learning environment. But faculty actions alone were insufficient. Faculty participants needed responsiveness from their students to feel present and connected.

### **A Cognitive Reframing of Online Teaching**

The experience of presence and a general sense of satisfaction was achieved by participants who cognitively reframed online instruction. As P1 noted, online instruction cannot be compared to traditional face-to-face teaching. P2 repeated often that the online learning environment was different. It had a different set of rules. P23 also shared the same opinion. These faculty participants were happier and more engaged in their online classes than say P6, P19, P24, or P25, to name a few. P1, P2, P22, and P23 did not attempt to replicate a traditional face-to-face classroom online. They appreciated that this new medium worked with a new set of rules. P6 was encumbered by the expectations he brought with him from his face-to-face classes. He acknowledged that this was proving to be a disadvantage and hindering his ability to change his mindset. P6 was conscious that a mental shift needed to occur. P24 and P25 had not even made it to this point.

The interactions with students and the effect of the interactions on faculty experience of presence revealed a new conceptualization of the online learning environment. In the traditional

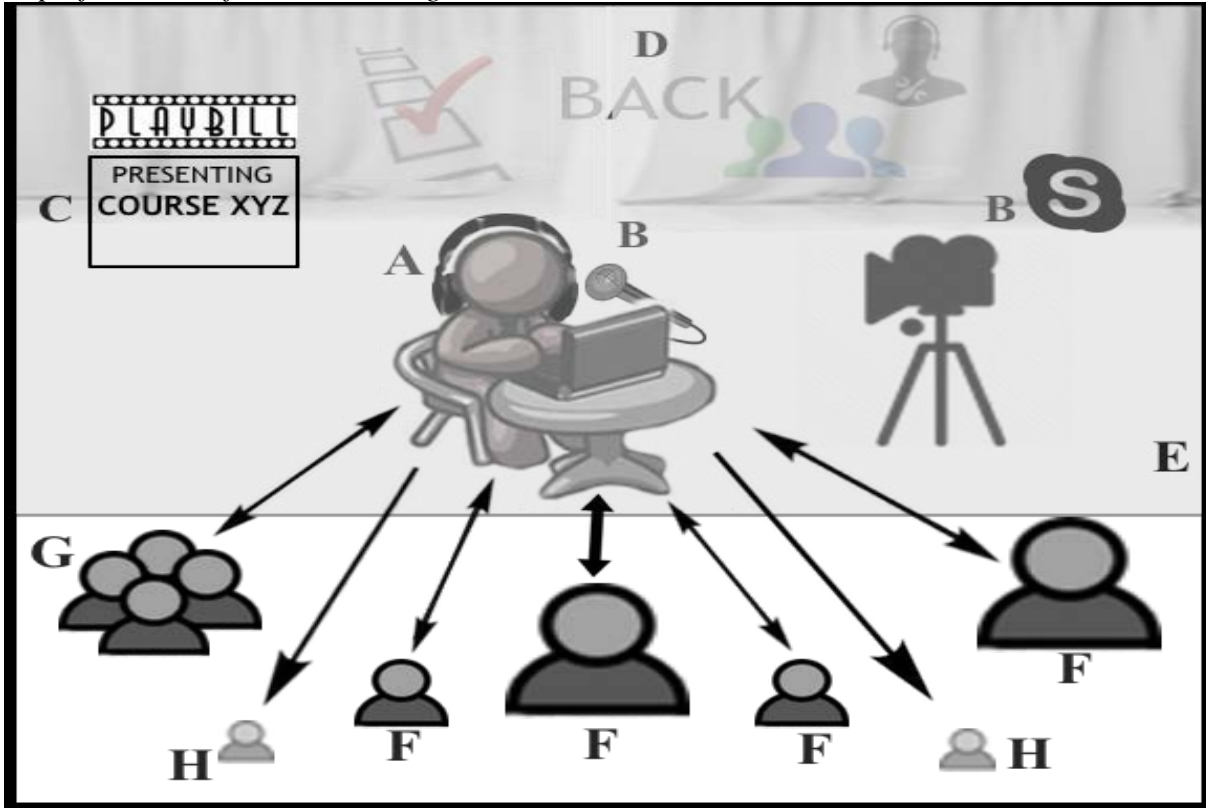
learning environment, there is a one-to-many (1-many) relationship: one instructor interacting with many students simultaneously. The faculty participants viewed the traditional class as a collective and presence was seen as being present in front of this collective or an entire group. This experience could not be duplicated in an asynchronous online learning environment. The online classes that these faculty were participating in were characterized not by a 1-many relationship. Rather it was a collection of many one-to-one (1-1) relationships. Participants needed to cognitively reframe their understanding of the online learning environment as an environment of many 1-1 relationships.

### **Moving From “1-many” to “many 1-1s”**

Faculty like P1, P4, and P22 acknowledged a shift. They realized that they knew individual students or small groups of students very well. They had a better understanding of these students on this 1-1 basis. They were teaching and working with individuals versus a traditional class where they worked with the collective. In the online environment, the collective did not exist. This online learning environment comprised of numerous 1-1 interactions.

Presence was created for the faculty participants when there were frequent and quality 1-1 interactions. Hence, the faculty participants had a greater sense of students who participated more often or shared meaningful information. Students who did the minimum of work or vanished were not present to the faculty. These findings, conceptualized as a performance, can be depicted as figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3  
The performance of online teaching



### A. Front

The front comprises of the stage and the faculty performer. At the institution where this study was conducted, faculty were solely responsible for the creation and delivery of their courses. Hence, in the model, faculty occupy the stage alone. When teaching assistants help the faculty in a course, the teaching assistants assume the role of supporting actors. Their function is to assist the faculty to ensure a successful performance.

### B. Props

On the stage, faculty are surrounded by props that enhance their performance. In an online course, the props are the technologies that are available to faculty. This includes technologies such as Skype, instant messaging services, as well as video and audio recording.

The purpose of these technologies is to enhance the performance of the faculty actor.

### **C. Content**

Every online course is governed by specific content that is the frame for the particular performance. Faculty relationship with the content influences their experience of presence while teaching online.

### **D. Back**

Backstage is occupied by support services and administrative activities. Various services support the faculty actors in their performances. Support can be in the form of training, technological support, or support from peers, mentors, and other sources such as workshops and conferences. This support occurs backstage, behind curtains, invisible to the student audience. Back stage is also where the faculty conduct other activities like grading assessments and providing feedback. These activities are also hidden from the audience.

### **E. Online environment**

In the online learning environment, the front is abstracted from the audience by time and distance. The grey layer between the front and the audience represents the separation of faculty and students.

### **F. Individual interactions**

Interactions in this online learning environment are primarily 1-1. Some students interact with the instructor more than others. In such cases, there is a two-way interaction between faculty and student as indicated by the double-sided arrow. These interactions give faculty the sense that they know these students well and hence the students are represented as larger and more defined.

### **G. Group interactions**

In some courses, faculty interact with small groups and get a sense of their students

within this context. The success of this relationship is also dependent on two-way communication.

#### **H. Non-responsive students**

In an online course, there is communication from the faculty as denoted by the arrow. However, some students do not respond or participate in the course. The interaction becomes one-sided from the faculty. There is no reciprocation from the students. These students become faint and distant to the faculty.

To summarize, this section presented the need for a cognitive reframing of online instruction and a new way of conceptualizing the online learning environment. The next section will present the major findings of the study and their significance to the field of online education and the understanding of presence.

### **Discussion and Contributions to the Field**

This study framed presence from the perspective of online faculty. The findings build on existing notions of presence. They also contradict some definitions of presence. More importantly, these findings reveal new conceptualizations and understanding of presence and teaching in the online environment. The main findings that this study highlights are:

1. Presence is “being seen,”
2. Presence has an emotional dimension,
3. Presence requires cognitive reframing, and
4. Online teaching is a performance art.

#### **Presence is “Being Seen”**

“It’s very much about them [students] getting to know me.” (P19)

This study, through the voices of 25 online faculty, presents the unique online faculty



perception of presence. For the participants in this study, presence, first and foremost, implied being perceived by their students for who they, the faculty, truly were. They wanted their students to see the persons they were when they stood up in front of a face-to-face class of students. For these participants, projecting their personalities was important so that their students could get to “see them.” Based on the stories of these participants, I propose that, in the context of online faculty, presence is “being seen.”

In this study, faculty consistently associated presence with the idea of “being seen.” Faculty participants wanted their students to get a sense of their personalities. They wanted to “be seen” by their students. Not only did they want to be “perceived in whatever they [were] doing” (Goffman, 1963, p. 17), they also wanted to be perceived for who they were. It was important to them that their students knew and recognized them as individuals.

Garrison et al. (1999) defined social presence as the “ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally, as ‘real’ people (i.e., their full personality), through the medium of communication being used” (p. 94). The participants in this study frequently talked about projecting their personalities. They wanted to show that they were human and real people. But projecting their personalities did not establish presence for them. They needed their students to “see” this projection and thereby see them, the faculty.

The heightened need to “be seen” and the experience of presence as “being seen” was a product of the online environment. The participants experienced the mediated environment as a fourth wall that separated them from their students. They were unsure of whether the students could see them and how well their “real selves” could be perceived across the online environment.

The online environment allows for people to assume roles and personae that are different

from their “real life” selves (Turkle, 1995). Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) note that the online environment makes it possible for people to create new personae of themselves and engage in “role playing” (p. 1818). This however, was not the case in this study. In fact, it was the exact opposite. The faculty were committed to conveying to their students that their online personae were not roles they were playing. They sought to strongly affirm that their online identities were their “real selves.” And they needed their students to *see* their “real selves.”

In a position paper on gaming and online virtual worlds, Pearce (2006) proposes the idea of “seeing and being seen.” She introduces this concept in relation to the use of avatars in massive multiplayer online games (MMOG). The act of seeing their avatars on screen and having their avatars be seen by other players created a sense of presence for the *Myst* (a MMOG) players she was studying. In a similar way, the participants in this study needed to “be seen” to experience presence. But it was not in terms of an avatar they created or a persona they had developed online. They needed their students to sense the “real” people they were interacting with, people who were committed to their students’ success.

Lowenthal and Dunlap (2010), online faculty, talk about creating their social presence through exposing their personalities and voices, explaining their teaching approaches, and clarifying educational values. They discuss how they adopted digital storytelling because they were “dissatisfied with how our students perceive us online” (p. 71). Like the participants in this study, they too express a need to be perceived, to “be seen,” by their students for who they were.

The participants wanted their online persona to be a true representation of themselves because they wanted their students to get to know “them.” Not a textual or diluted “version” of them. To ensure this, they incorporated various self-presentation strategies. For example, faculty participants included personal introductions at the beginning of a course and employed

informal language in their interactions. The use of informal language and emoticons have been shown to improve social presence (Delfino & Manca, 2007; Tu & McIsaac, 2002). In this research, the faculty participants employed these techniques for another purpose. They consciously incorporated informal language, personal stories, and emoticons as an expression of their personalities.

The first contribution that this study makes to the literature on online learning and presence is to propose the idea of presence as “being seen.”

### **Presence has an Emotional Dimension**

The literature review in chapter two noted that presence is commonly associated with physical, cognitive, and social dimensions (Bulu, 2012; Cui, Lockee, & Meng, 2013; Garrison et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2011). Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) and Lehman and Conceição (2010), from research on students, have argued that there is an emotional component to presence. The current study confirms an emotional aspect to presence. This study adds to the literature in that the emotional dimension of presence is exhibited in the context of faculty.

The faculty participants in this study loved or hated the online environment. These emotions were connected to their cognitive experiences and there was a dynamic interplay between their thoughts, emotions, and behavior (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). This finding contradicts Cleveland-Innes and Campbell’s (2012) conclusion that emotional presence is separate from cognitive and social presence. For these participants, their cognitive experience of presence affected their emotions. When they “knew” their students, the faculty felt happier with online instruction. When they claimed that they did not know their students, their overall emotional response to online instruction was negative. These emotions then informed the strategies they included in their courses. P6 was unhappy and he had stagnated in his online

courses. He was using the same strategies that did not work but was not sufficiently motivated to make a change. At other times, the strategies implemented affected cognitive and emotional experiences (See Figure 5.4). P17 incorporated new course design and discussion forum strategies into her online course. The response from students was positive and the quality of their work improved. This in turn boosted her morale and she was excited to try other new strategies.

This study indicates that an interplay of thoughts, emotions, and behavior (Lehman & Conceição, 2010) occurs not only in students, as previously identified in the literature, but in faculty as well.

Figure 5.4  
*The dynamic interplay in faculty*



### **Presence Requires Cognitive Reframing**

Experienced faculty, who were happy with their online teaching experiences, shared that teaching online requires a cognitive reframing. According to them, teaching online could not be thought of in the same way as traditional face-to-face teaching. Their responses indicate a move from the one-to-many (1-many) concept of traditional teaching, to the online teaching concept of many one-to-one (many 1-1) relationships. Dykman and Davis (2008), in a white paper, noted

this change and characterized online teaching as a “series of individual tutorials than a normal group situation. Communications are inherently and mostly one-on-one” (p. 159). However, there is no research base to support this claim. This study, through empirical data, proves that communications in the online learning environment are indeed mostly 1-1. But these 1-1 communications create individualized relationships between faculty and student. These 1-1 communications also provide the faculty with opportunities to get to know their students better. These 1-1 communications have far more depth than the individual tutorials that Dykman and Davis (2008) refer to.

This study adds to the current presence literature to show that for the faculty participants, presence was experienced through these many 1-1 relationships. Their experiences of presence were connected to their ability to cognitively reframe the online learning environment. When participants expected a 1-many relationship online, they were prone to dissatisfaction with online instruction. P6 confessed that his unhappiness with the online environment was rooted in his traditional experiences. P19 and P25 believed in the performative nature of teaching and could only conceptualize it in terms of a traditional learning environment. P1, P13, P18, and P23 through experience had successfully reframed their ideas of the online learning environment.

This study also expands on the idea of many 1-1s to show that there exists a variety of 1-1 relationships; some strong and some non-existent. In their mental reframing of the online learning environment, experienced faculty were able to objectively discuss their vanishing students. P22 could predict which of her students would drop out, based on their online behaviors. These faculty did not take these student actions personally as they recognized this as a facet of this new online learning environment.

The cognitive reframing in this study is not presented merely as a “basic principle”

(Dykman & Davis, 2008) of online teaching. The faculty participants conveyed that a cognitive reframing is necessary to set up realistic expectations of teaching online. Applying the expectations of a traditional face-to-face classroom to the online learning environment leads to disillusionment. The faculty participants also communicated that a cognitive reframing enhances experiences of presence.

### **Online Teaching is a Performance Art**

Goffman's dramaturgical framework has been utilized in various research contexts. Dramaturgical analysis has guided the research into online identities (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Sugiura, 2013) and organizational management (Boje, Gardner, & Smith, 2006). In the area of education, Smith and Hansen (1972) use the metaphor of teacher as actor; Sims (2014) mentions the performance of education. The faculty participants themselves applied the metaphor of teaching. But, literature into the metaphor of the classroom as a staged play is sparse. Barbuto (2006), in a white paper, recommends role assumption for instructors in leadership. MacFarlane (2007) actually applied the metaphor of acting to teaching, both face-to-face and online. He argues for a holistic approach when analyzing teaching and he proposes the pre-performance, performance, and post-performance phases. Again, MacFarlane's (2007) proposal is a white paper. It is not grounded in any empirical research.

This research study, through empirical data, shows that the metaphor of a play can effectively be applied to online teaching. MacFarlane's (2007) argument for a holistic approach to teaching is strongly supported by the findings in this study. Teaching, for these faculty participants, automatically included course design, planning, material development, and technology incorporation. It was clear that all these elements influenced their experiences of presence and their emotional responses to online teaching. These "pre-performances"

(MacFarlane, 2007, p. 56) were critical to the teaching performance.

The current study shows that the performance of teaching is intricate and not as simple as lectures and workshops (MacFarlane, 2007). It involved impression management as the faculty participants presented their personal front to the students. Faculty were conscious of their appearance and manner as presented to their students. Within the text-based online learning environment, the performance of teaching moved into many 1-1 relationships with students. The faculty participants were providing more individualized attention and got to know their students better. But this was only when there was a robust back and forth relationship between faculty and student. The teaching experience came alive and the faculty participants became more present when their students engaged in a reciprocal relationship and interacted with them. This meant that faculty-student relationships varied based on student engagement.

This study also refutes MacFarlane's (2007) proposed "post-performance" (p. 56). While this might be applicable in a face-to-face teaching environment, it was not borne out by this study. For these faculty performers, there was no post-performance. They made themselves available to their students 24x7 and they responded quickly to inquiries, be it day or night. They commented that they were always "on." Some participants even felt guilty when they switched out of this role and participated in personal activities. For these participants, the performance lasted the duration of the course they were teaching.

The pictorial representation of the online learning environment, as presented in this study, encapsulates all aspects of the performance and clearly depicts the nuances of the performance such as audience response. Furthermore, it enables readers to immediately visualize the online learning environment as different from traditional face-to-face learning environments. It is an effective tool to facilitate a cognitive reframing of the online learning environment.

To summarize, this study has challenged the idea of “being there.” Instead, the concept of presence as “being seen” is identified. The existence of an emotional dimension to presence has been indicated by this study, specifically in the context of faculty.

This study proposes that online teaching requires a cognitive reframing. The data in this study indicate that experiences of presence in online teaching are enhanced when faculty participants re-think the teaching environment. They need to re-cast online teaching as many 1-1 relationships. Finally, this study has shown that the environment of online teaching can be best depicted as and understood through the metaphor of a staged performance.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

The findings arising from this study have implications for research. The understanding of presence as “being there,” “being together,” and “being available” has a long history and has been researched extensively. Rosselli (2014) suggested “coming here” as a corollary to the perception of “being here.” The notion of presence as “being seen” has not been considered, especially in the field of education. For students, conveying personality in the online environment is a part of establishing social presence. For the faculty participants in this study, conveying their personalities successfully online was very important to their perception of presence. They needed to “be seen.” This perception of presence as “being seen” merits further research.

The emotional dimension of presence also needs to be explored in greater detail. Lehman and Conceição (2010) proposed that thoughts, emotions, and behaviors were interconnected. The empirical data gathered in this research seem to confirm this. But further research is called for since Cleveland-Innes and Campbell’s (2012) findings contradict this. The prior studies were also aimed at the student population and not faculty. So studies need to be conducted in the



context of faculty, not just students.

The idea of cognitive reframing is intriguing. While Dykman and Davis (2008) make a passing reference to the 1-1 relationships, there is no research into whether experienced faculty have adopted this mindset. We do not know if the transition to the online teaching environment can be easier when approached with different expectations. How would/does such a cognitive reframing affect practice? The 1-1 relationships also seem to suggest 21<sup>st</sup> century social media communication style. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a number of relationships and interactions occur online through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter among others.

In YouTube, Twitter, or Facebook, content is posted by the content generator. Viewers choose to interact with the content generators through posts. These interactions become vibrant when the content generator responds to the comments and a dialogue is created. Rapport in these environments is created through “frequent personal interactions” (Rotman & Preece, 2010, p. 326). Social media is built on the concept of many 1-1 relationships. The many-1 model of publishing information is fast fading as seen by the move of media organizations and corporations to social media. Research is needed to see if the online learning environment is mirroring this new communication style. It is worth considering if students’ interaction style in online classes reflects their general perception of online communication.

In addition to providing new research avenues, the findings from this study also have practical implications. This study has revealed that faculty experience greater satisfaction with online instruction when they are able to cognitively reframe the environment. This enables them to set up new expectations and better understand the interactions that occur in the online learning environment. This study has also shown that a greater number of experienced faculty seemed to have developed this different perspective of online instruction while novice faculty had not. This

finding suggests that novice faculty need to be made aware that the online learning environment functions differently. Training programs and workshops that prepare faculty for online instruction talk about how online teaching is different in terms of technologies, pedagogies, and time commitments. They also need to convey the information that relationships and interactions that occur online are also different.

The participants mentioned various forms of support they had received. They identified the technology center, peers, professional networks, and mentors. Of these, mentors were noted as being the most influential. The participants appreciated having someone to share their unique problems. Some mentors worked closely with the participants to design and set up their first courses and the participants appreciated this. Institutions should consider providing mentors for new faculty moving to online instruction.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Two main limitations can be identified in relation to this research study. Limitations within the study sample and the data collection need to be mentioned.

### **Study Sample**

This study was designed around the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methodology. IPA requires a homogeneity of sample to ensure in-depth analysis of a phenomenon. However, this homogeneity is also a drawback. Any findings from this study can only be seen as possible trends within a very narrow demographic. In this instance, the study findings are limited to online faculty who autonomously design and conduct their courses. Training was a personal choice and not mandated by the institution. The findings in this study cannot be generalized to online faculty who fall outside these parameters. Faculty who delivered courses that were pre-designed by instructional designers might not fully benefit from this

research.

Selection of participants was on a voluntary basis. Faculty from across the university were solicited via email to participate in the study. Participants who responded were primarily those who were interested in online education, wanted to learn more about online education, and in general had favorable feelings. The participants in this study mentioned other faculty on campus who taught online but did not respond to student emails or interact with their students. They mentioned colleagues who had very negative experiences and opinions of online teaching. These more reluctant online faculty might not have been willing to share their experiences (Myers & Newman, 2007) and hence, this population could have been under-represented in this study.

This study included tenured, tenure track, non-tenured full-time, and adjunct faculty members. But their experiences were not differentiated based on their employment status. Green et al. (2009) studied these different groups of faculty and identified differences in the factors that influenced their decisions to teach online. Since faculty participants in this study were not grouped on their employment status, differences in their experiences of presence remains unexplored.

The faculty participants in this study had varying levels of workload. Some were not teaching any online courses during the time of the interview, others were teaching up to four online courses, and some were teaching both online and face-to-face courses. The effect of workload on sense of presence was not considered in this study.

### **Data Collection**

Three forms of data were collected for this study: interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. Each of these methods had their own idiosyncrasies. The interviews

were open to a self-reporting bias. Participants might not have felt comfortable sharing experiences that would have portrayed them in a less than flattering light.

Observations of course sites were conducted for triangulation of data. Information observed from the course site observations was illuminative. However, observations were limited to course sites of five participants and for courses conducted in one academic semester.

Some of these limitations can be addressed in future research.

### **Future Research**

The section on implications for research discussed a number of research areas that need attention. The suggestions for future research are informed by the limitations that were identified in the study. The following are some suggestions for future research.

- The participants in this study were required to have autonomously designed their courses. The findings are from their perspective. The experiences of presence in the context of faculty who teach courses designed by others, such as instructional designers, might provide a different perspective.
- While participants represented a variety of employment status, their experiences were not differentiated on this basis. So, experiences of presence can be analyzed on the basis of the employment status of the faculty such as tenured, tenure-track, non-tenured full time, and adjunct.
- Through the interviews, it was revealed that two participants had teaching assistants. The influence of this factor needs to be studied in greater detail.
- A longitudinal study which included observations of course sites over more semesters should be considered in future. This might highlight differences in faculty behavior based on the changes in their students.

- In this study, class sizes and student demographics were identified as influencing the faculty participants' experience of presence. These factors need to be considered in greater detail.

### **Conclusion**

Presence as a concept has been shown to improve student satisfaction in online learning. However, the concept of presence as experienced by faculty remains under-researched. The intention in this study was therefore, to understand faculty perceptions and experiences of presence. The interviews revealed that perceptions and experiences were influenced by how the faculty conceptualized the online learning environment as a whole. They described how online teaching was characterized by many one-to-one relationships. When they began to understand and accept this, their personal experiences online were more positive. Their stories also revealed their need to be seen. When faculty stand up in front of a traditional classroom, they are seen by their students and their presence is acknowledged. The participants wanted to feel this in their online classes as well.

Through the study, I found myself affected in my roles as instructional designer and instructor. The variety of course formats that the participants taught and the number of students in their classes has made me re-think my assumptions about instructional design. My design process is now informed by what these participants shared with me. Their stories broadened my understanding of online teaching and what constitutes best practices. From the perspective of an instructor, I learned new pedagogical strategies from these participants. I had not thought of online instruction in terms of a collection of many 1-1 relationships. This was eye-opening. We see this form of online communication all around us. Yet I had not seen the similarities. I realized that like my participants, I was also comparing my online teaching to my face-to-face

teaching experiences.

During my interviews, two things struck me. Firstly, participants' experiences were similar across disciplines. They faced similar challenges and appreciated an opportunity to talk about them with me. As they did so, it became clear that they felt isolated in these experiences. They had not shared these challenges with anyone and assumed it was a problem unique to them. Second, the interview made the participants reflect on their practices and through the process they started questioning their own beliefs about online teaching. It suddenly struck them that a lot of what they thought were primarily assumptions. I felt that these participants needed an opportunity to share their experiences with others in a safe, non-judgmental environment. They could support each other and learn from each other but they did not have that.

Even as the study answered my research questions, it raised a number of issues that need to be considered in depth. It became clear that the area of faculty experiences offers rich research opportunities. There is so much that we do not know or have not considered. Limiting studies to issues of faculty satisfaction and retention, I think, does them a disservice. Furthermore, the landscape of online teaching is changing. Millennials are entering the work force and teaching online is their first teaching experience. These are individuals who are comfortable using technology, social media, and identify themselves as part of the "always on" culture. Current research has not kept up with this. Literature is still looking at faculty transitions from face-to-face to online teaching. This might soon become irrelevant as faculty begin their teaching careers with online teaching rather than face-to-face.

In his famous speech, "Changing Paradigms," Sir Ken Robinson (RSA, 2010) remarks that we continue to follow the factory model educational paradigm that was set forth during the Industrial Revolution. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are still comparing online education to this

traditional model and judging online education on this basis. The faculty participants in this study talk about a cognitive reframing of online instruction. I think it is time to cognitively reframe our conception of education as a whole and this study has started me on this journey.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Categorization of Academic Disciplines

	<b>HARD</b>	<b>SOFT</b>
<b>PURE</b>	Astronomy Physics Mathematical Sciences Mathematical Statistics Geosciences Chemistry & Biochemistry Geography	Africology American Indian Studies Anthropology Arabic Latino Studies Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Studies Linguistics Art History Celtic Studies Chinese Classics English Ethnic Studies French German Spanish Hebrew Studies History Japanese Jewish Studies Russian Scandinavian Studies Women's Studies M.A. in Language, Literature, and Translation Philosophy Sociology Communication Comparative Literature Urban Studies Political Science Psychology Music Film, Video, Animation and New Genres Film Studies Foreign Languages & Literature Dance Art & Design Communication Sciences & Disorders Global Studies

	<b>HARD</b>	<b>SOFT</b>
<b>APPLIED</b>	Mechanical Engineering Architecture Atmospheric Science Electrical Engineering Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering Biomedical Sciences Conservation / Environment Sciences Computer Science Kinesiology Biological Sciences Information Studies	Business Administration Business Management Theatre Music Education Curriculum & Instruction Educational Policy and Community Studies Educational Psychology Exceptional Education Library and Information Sciences Translation and Interpreting Economics Nursing Therapeutic Recreation Public Administration Social Work Nonprofit Administration Nursing Occupational Therapy Public Health Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies Criminal Justice Health Care Administration Counseling Health Sciences

## **Appendix B: Email invitation to participate in research study**

Professor \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral candidate at the UWM School of Education and my dissertation is on faculty in the online environment. I am therefore, seeking faculty who have taught one or more online courses to participate in my research study.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how faculty perceive the concept of “presence” and how they experience it within their courses in the online environment. Data will be collected through a 60-90 minutes long interview and a review of your course syllabi.

Understanding how faculty conceptualize and experience “presence” can be beneficial for online students, instructors, instructional designers, researchers, and other interested parties in the field of distance education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anita Samuel

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Administrative Leadership

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education

Tel.: 414-678-8847

## Appendix C: Email request for course syllabi

Prof. \_\_\_\_\_,

I would like to thank you once again for agreeing to participate in my research study. In preparation for our upcoming interview, I would like to request a copy of any two of your course syllabi.

Thank you,

Anita Samuel  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Administrative Leadership  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education  
Tel.: 414-229-5771  
ajsamuel@uwm.edu

## Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Participant Pseudonym:

Date:

Time:

Interview Location:

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Section 1

- 1 What is your perception of online instruction?
- 2 How do you feel about online instruction?
- 3 What do you like best/least about online instruction?
- 4 What are your experiences with online instruction?

#### Section 2

- 5 What would you say are the most important qualities an instructor needs to bring to the online classroom?
- 6 At what moment in this week did you feel most engaged with your online class?
- 7 At what moment in this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening in your online class?
- 8 What action that a student took did you find most affirming or helpful?
- 9 What occurrence in your classes did you find most puzzling or confusing?
- 10 What about your classes this week surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or anything else that occurs)

#### Section 3

- 11 “Presence” has been defined as a sense of “being there” and “being together.” What is your experience with this?
- 12 What is your opinion about the significance of presence in online instruction?
- 13 Could you explain how these elements feature in your courses?
  - a) **Content** (Process / Content focus)
  - b) **Format** (Self-paced, group-based, mix)
  - c) **Strategies** (Discussions, case studies, role-plays, team projects, scavenger hunts, debates, interviews, guest experts)
  - d) **Instructor role** (designer, facilitator, tutor, mentor, catalyst, supporter)
  - e) **Technology** (synchronous, asynchronous, type of technology)
  - f) **Support** (instructional, technical)
- 14 Which of these is the most important to you and why?

## Appendix E: Consent to Participate in Research Interview

**Study Title:** FACULTY PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF “PRESENCE” IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

**Person Responsible for Research:**

Anita Samuel, Doctoral Candidate  
Simone C. O. Conceição, Professor, School of Education,  
Department of Administrative Leadership

**Study Description:** The purpose of this research study is to investigate how faculty perceive and experience the concept of “presence” within their courses in the online environment. Approximately 8-16 subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview. This will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time.

**Risks / Benefits:** Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There will be no costs for participating. Benefits of participating include an opportunity to reflect on your personal teaching practice and to further research.

**Confidentiality:** Identifying information such as your name, professional title, and email will be collected for research purposes. The interview will be recorded. Your responses will be treated as confidential and all reasonable efforts will be made so that no individual participant will be identified with his/her answers. The research team will remove your identifying information after transcription and all study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Data from this study will be saved on a non-networked, password-protected computer off-campus for 2 years. Only the PI and graduate assistant will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study’s records.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives available to participating in this research study other than not taking part.

**Who do I contact for questions about the study:** For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Anita Samuel at [ajsamuel@uwm.edu](mailto:ajsamuel@uwm.edu).

**Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?** Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or [irbinfo@uwm.edu](mailto:irbinfo@uwm.edu).

**Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:**

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix F: Consent to Participate in Research Observation

### Study Title: FACULTY PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF “PRESENCE” IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

#### Person Responsible for Research:

Simone C. O. Conceição, Professor, School of Education,  
Department of Administrative Leadership  
Anita Samuel, Graduate Assistant

**Study Description:** The purpose of this research study is to investigate how faculty understand and experience the concept of “presence” within their courses in the online environment. Approximately 8-30 subjects will participate in this study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an observation. The researcher will observe your online teaching through your D2L course site. The course observed will be ongoing in Fall 2015.

**Risks / Benefits:** Risks that you may experience from participating are considered minimal. There will be no costs for participating. Benefits of participating include an opportunity to reflect on your personal teaching practice and to further research.

**Confidentiality:** Identifying information such as your name, professional title, and email will be collected for research purposes. Observations will be in the form of investigator notes. No information about students or their interactions will be recorded. The observation will be transcribed. The transcriptions will be treated as confidential and all reasonable efforts will be made so that no individual participant will be identified through their behaviors. The research team will remove your identifying information after transcription and all study results will be reported without identifying information so that no one viewing the results will ever be able to match you with your responses. Data from this study will be saved on a non-networked, password-protected computer off-campus for 2 years. Only the PI and graduate assistant will have access to your information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study’s records.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. There are no known alternatives available to participating in this research study other than not taking part.

**Who do I contact for questions about the study:** For more information about the study or study procedures, contact Anita Samuel at [ajsamuel@uwm.edu](mailto:ajsamuel@uwm.edu).

**Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?** Contact the UWM IRB at 414-229-3173 or [irbinfo@uwm.edu](mailto:irbinfo@uwm.edu).

#### Research Subject’s Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older. By signing the consent form, you are giving your consent to voluntarily participate in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **Appendix G: Observation Outline**

Participant Pseudonym:

Date:

Time:

Location:

### **Researcher thoughts/opinions:**

Content:

Format:

Instructor Role:

Strategies:

Technology:

Support:

## Appendix H: Document analysis

<b>Biographical Details</b>	
Department:	<input type="checkbox"/> Pure/Hard <input type="checkbox"/> Pure/Soft <input type="checkbox"/> Applied/Hard <input type="checkbox"/> Applied/Soft
Participant Pseudonym:	
<b>Factual Details</b>	
Course organization (# of modules):	
Objectives:	
<b>Content Analysis</b>	
<b>Content</b> (Process / Content focus)	
<b>Format</b> (Self-paced, group-based, mix)	
<b>Strategies</b> (Discussions, case studies, role-plays, team projects, scavenger hunts, debates, interviews, guest experts)	
<b>Instructor role</b> (designer, facilitator, tutor, mentor, catalyst, supporter)	
<b>Technology</b> (synchronous, asynchronous, type of technology)	
<b>Support</b> (instructional, technical)	

## Appendix I: Participant Information

This appendix provides more information about the individual participants and enhances the demographic information presented in Chapter 4.

<b>P1</b>	Female, AS, more than 10 online courses
<p>P1 has been teaching online for a number of years. She was one of the early adopters of online environment in her department. She is comfortable with the environment and enjoys teaching online. She has found her face-to-face teaching affected positively by her online teaching.</p> <p><b>Training:</b> She originally received training from an experienced mentor. Later, she accessed training through the institution. She also attends conferences and picks up new strategies and tools.</p>	
<b>P2</b>	Female, PS, more than 10 online courses
<p>P2 has been teaching online for a number of years. She teaches online at a few institutions and has experience on different platforms. She is not comfortable with technology and the strategies she implements are affected by this.</p> <p><b>Training:</b> She has received training for all the software platforms she teaches on. She receives re-certification for this as well. The training has all been through the institutions and focused mainly on technology.</p>	
<b>P3</b>	Male, PS, taught 2 online courses
<p>P3 has recently started teaching online. While he enjoys the flexibility and understands the need for online education, he says he missed the face-to-face contact of a classroom. He enjoys trying new aspects of technology.</p> <p><b>Training:</b> He did not receive any training in technology but had a mentor in his department. The online faculty in his department meet regularly and share experiences.</p>	
<b>P4</b>	Female, PH, 2 online courses
<p>P4 teaches an introductory course to large undergraduate classes. She enjoys the online environment and enjoys trying new technologies. She does have a Teaching Assistant but prefers to be actively involved in the course and grading by doing most of these tasks herself.</p> <p><b>Training:</b> She has received training from the institution and from a mentor within her department. She also has access to resources created by a national community of her peers.</p>	
<b>P5</b>	Male, AS, more than 5 online courses
<p>He has been teaching online for a long time and enjoys it. When he taught a face-to-face class after a while, he found he had been positively influenced by his online teaching. He had worked in the computer industry for a long time and he said that he enjoyed</p>	

	playing with technology. <b>Training:</b> He has participated in a variety of training programs at different times. He does this to ensure that he keeps updated with new technologies and new online teaching pedagogies.
<b>P6</b>	Male, PH, 5 online courses
	P6 has offered the same course in different academic sessions. He has taught the same course in a face to face format with up to 195 students. The department he is in tries to have consistency in course offerings so that every student who goes through the class has a similar experience. Hence, activities are collaboratively decided and there are restrictions. <b>Training:</b> He had attended no workshops or formal training sessions. His training was in the form of informal conversations with colleagues.
<b>P7</b>	Male, PH, 2 online courses
	P7 taught an introductory level undergraduate course twice. He received no interaction from his students for both the course offerings and he stopped teaching it. However, others in his department do teach the same course. <b>Training:</b> He did not attend any formal training sessions. He was comfortable with technology and figured it out himself. He was not happy with the platform offered by the institution and chose to host his course on another platform.
<b>P8</b>	Male, AH, more than 5 online courses
	P8 has offered the same course in different academic sessions. He was located on another continent and the interview was conducted via Skype. He has been involved in distance education since the 1980s and has experienced distance education in the form of correspondence education. <b>Training:</b> While he did receive some training from the institutions training center, he considers that he primarily figures things out himself. He also noted that since he was located at a distance, it was not possible for him to leverage the courses/workshops offered by UX.
<b>P9</b>	Female, AS, more than 10 online courses
	The program P9 teaches in is specialized and she works with the same students in different courses through their program. Her interaction with these students is over a span of a number of courses. <b>Training:</b> She did not go for any training before she started teaching the online course. However, over the years, she has attended various training workshops and also obtained a certificate in online teaching from her institution.
<b>P10</b>	Female, PS
	She found online instruction very flexible. She was located in another state and her interview was conducted over Skype. She feels that the school has not supported her enough or provided the information necessary for instructors. She cares a lot about her

	students and was concerned that she was not providing them with the best services due to her lack of information. <b>Training:</b> She has accessed online training provided by the institution. Independently, she has read books to improve her teaching. She has also set up one-to-one sessions at the technology center and found the training helpful. However, she feels what is provided is not sufficient.
<b>P11</b>	Female, PS, 2 online courses
	She was the youngest participant in the study and identified herself as a millennial. She enjoys teaching online and is very comfortable using technology. Her first teaching experiences have been online and she feels stressed teaching face-to-face. <b>Training:</b> She has had pedagogical training outside the institution. She found the training helpful.
<b>P12</b>	Female, PH, 2 online courses
	She has taught an introductory undergraduate level course twice. She has misses the face-to-face interaction with students but enjoys the flexibility. She tries to incorporate new strategies to improve the interactivity in her course. <b>Training:</b> the only training she has received is some advice from a colleague. She is comfortable enough with technology and does not see a need for technological training.
<b>P13</b>	Male, PS, more than 10 online courses
	P13 was an early adopter of online education at the institution. He enjoys teaching online and has incorporated strategies that enable him to have a good level of interaction with the students. <b>Training:</b> He has attended training at the institution's technology support center. He has found it very helpful.
<b>P14</b>	Female, AH, 2 online courses
	P14 was handed a previously created online course. She has made modifications to it over the two times she has offered it. She worked with a Teaching Assistant where the TA did a majority of the grading based on the guidelines provided by her. She was the only one who had this sort of relationship with her students. <b>Training:</b> she did not receive any training for teaching online. She had taught the same course in a face-to-face format. The course had been created for the online environment by an instructional designer in her department and she was given the course to teach when he left.
<b>P15</b>	Female, PS, more than 5 online courses
	P15 teaches in a fully online program. She enjoys the flexibility of online teaching but does miss the face-to-face interaction. She feels she has a better relationship with the students she meets face-to-face. She likes to try new technologies and uses the technical support provided when necessary. However, she prefers to try out technologies by herself first.

<b>Training:</b> She has attended training at the institution and has received a certification of online teaching. She also receives tips and strategies from her peers and subject area organizations.	
<b>P16</b>	Male, PS, 2 online courses
P16 has taught the same course in a face-to-face and online format. He tends to try out strategies he has used in face-to-face sessions in his online courses. He likes to follow a trial and error method. He tries out a strategy and depending on how it works, he changes it or improves on it. He prefers this form of personal learning.	
<b>Training:</b> He has not attended any formal training for teaching online. He was familiar with the LMS and hence felt comfortable trying it out on his own. He identifies himself as being tech savvy.	
<b>P17</b>	Female, AH, 5 online courses
Offered the same course in different academic sessions. She has taught the same course in a face-to-face format. This course is part of a specialized program where students move together in cohorts. So she has met them face-to-face in other classes. She also met them during the course of the online course they were taking with her. However, these meetings were not in the context of the online course. She was included in the study as she had taught the same course with students from another university whom she had never seen. She, therefore, had the experience of a fully online course.	
<b>Training:</b> She did not go for any training before she started teaching the online course. However, she was dissatisfied with the way the course was progressing and hence, visited the institutional training center.	
<b>P18</b>	Female, AH, 10 online course offerings
She has taught online 10 times though it was only 2 courses. She lives out of state, on the coast. Hence, her interview was conducted via Skype.	
<b>Training:</b> Her only training for teaching online was through conferences she attended and workshops she chose to attend. As with P8, she also iterated the inability to take courses with UX technology center due to the distance.	
<b>P19</b>	Female, PS, 2 online courses
P19 is new to teaching. She is uncomfortable in the online environment and feels it is not the optimum environment for her. She is still trying to figure out the best strategies for teaching different elements of her course.	
<b>Training:</b> She received no training before she started teaching. The most guidance she has received has been from a mentor though she wishes the help could have been provided earlier. For one course, she has received no departmental support at all.	
<b>P20</b>	Female, AH, more than 5 online courses
She is comfortable with online teaching. It was her first teaching experience and found it unstressful. She has developed strategies by which to connect with her students.	

<b>Training:</b> She received training from the institution. She is comfortable with technology and tries out new technologies that will enhance her teaching.	
<b>P21</b>	Male, AH, 2 online courses
P21 has been teaching and has been involved in distance teaching. He has taught 2 fully online courses. He feels there is a place for online education and that it suits some students but not all.	
<b>Training:</b> he has received technical support from the institution. He is comfortable with technology.	
<b>P22</b>	Female, AS, more than 10 online courses
She is an early adopter of online education and has been teaching online since 2005. She was not available on campus and her interview was conducted via Skype.	
<b>Training:</b> She worked with an instructional designer for her first course. This was provided by the institution. She has also attended a training session which focused on pedagogy which she did not find particularly helpful. She also gets technical assistance.	
<b>P23</b>	Female, PH, more than 5 online courses
She is an early adopter of online education in her department. She enjoys online education and has been a mentor to other faculty in her department as she encourages them to adopt online education. She enjoys trying out new technologies. She is also involved in research on online teaching strategies.	
<b>Training:</b> She did attend some training at the institution. She also learns about new technologies from her peers.	
<b>P24</b>	Male, AS, 2 online courses
P25 has been teaching for many years. He has taught only 2 online courses. While he is willing to teach more online courses and try new strategies, it is not a medium that he enjoys. He feels that his subject content is not successfully conveyed to his students through the online medium.	
<b>Training:</b> He attended training on using the LMS.	
<b>P25</b>	Male, AS, 2 online courses
P25 was very similar to P24. He had also been teaching for a number of years. He has taught only 2 online courses. He is more reluctant to teach online though will do so if it is required of him. He is willing to try new strategies though it is not a medium that he enjoys. He needs face-to-face interaction and tries to manage his emotions in the online environment.	
<b>Training:</b> He did attend training on how to improve his pedagogical skills.	

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### EDUCATION

- 2016** **Ph. D., Urban Education**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA  
**Specialization:** Adult and Continuing Education  
**Focus:** Online Education and Instructional Design  
**Dissertation Title:** *Faculty experience of “presence” in the online environment*
- 2012** **M.S. Administrative Leadership**, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA  
**Specialization:** Adult & Continuing Education
- 1996** **M.A. English Literature**, Stella Maris College, Chennai, India
- 1994** **B. A. English Literature**, Lady Doak College, India

### CERTIFICATIONS

- 2014** **Graduate Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages**  
UW-Milwaukee, USA
- 2013** **Certificate in Teaching & Learning in Higher Education**  
UW-Milwaukee, USA
- 2004** **Access Certificate in English Teaching**  
City & Guilds, UK
- 1997** **Postgraduate Diploma in Software Technology**  
NIIT, India

### AWARDS

- 2014** **Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award**, UW-Milwaukee, USA
- 2013** **Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award**, UW-Milwaukee, USA
- 2005** **BASIL WIJAYASURIYA AWARD for Best Teacher Presenter**  
14th International MELTA Conference, Subang, Malaysia



## SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2015**    **Leon Howard Sullivan Scholarship**, UW-Milwaukee
- 2014**    **Elsie Egan Scholarship**, UW-Milwaukee
- 2013**    **Kuehneisen & Eiserlo Scholarship**, UW-Milwaukee
- 2013**    **GMF Donald Timm Fund**, UW-Milwaukee

## WORK EXPERIENCE

- Adjunct Faculty** **Spring 2016**  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Department of Administrative Leadership  
AD LDSP 707: Using Technology with Adult Learners
- Graduate Project Assistant** **August 2013 – May 2016**  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Department of Administrative Leadership
- Tutor** **2012-2015**  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Writing Center
- ESL Instructor Intern** **Spring 2015**  
Milwaukee School of Engineering
- English Lecturer** **2008**  
Taylor's University College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Head of School of Languages** **2003-2008**  
Fairview International School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Lecturer of Computing Studies** **1998-2000**  
NIIT, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

## PUBLICATIONS

Samuel, A. (2015). Adding Some TEC-VARIETY: 100+ Activities for Motivating and Retaining Learners Online by Curtis J. Bonk and Elaine Khoo. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 29(2), 150-152.

Conceição, S. C. O., Biniiecki, S. Y., & Samuel, A. (2015, May 19-22). Application of concept maps for conducting research in adult education. In J. Zacharakis & R. A. Collings (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. Paper presented at 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference, Manhattan, KS (138-143). Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University.

Samuel, A. (2015, May 19-22). Faculty perception of “Presence” in the online environment. In J. Zacharakis & R. A. Collings (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research*

Conference. Paper presented at 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference, Manhattan, KS (138-143). Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University.

Samuel, A. (2014, September 19-20). Engaging international Asian students in online collaborative activities. In L. Risley, K. Barnes, J. Daws, R. Lilly, & M. Glowacki-Dudka (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Research-to-Practice (R2P) Conference in Adult and Higher Education with Ball State University's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Adult, Higher, & Community Education Research Conference*. Paper presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Research-to-Practice (R2P) Conference in Adult and Higher Education, Muncie, IN: Ball State University.

Samuel, A. (2014). Creating Student-Centered Online Courses. In *The Third International Conference on E-Learning and E-Technologies in Education (ICEEE2014)* (pp. 154-160). The Society of Digital Information and Wireless Communication.

Conceição, S. C. O., Samuel, A., & Filz, J. (2013, September 19-20). *Issues with the Use of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory in Adult Education*. Paper presented at Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education, St. Louis: MS. Retrieved from <http://www.lindenwood.edu/r2p/docs/ConceicaoSamuelFilz.pdf>

Samuel, A. (2013, September 19-20). *Creating inclusive online learning environments: addressing microaggressions*. Paper presented at Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education, St. Louis: MS.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Samuel, A. (May, 2015). Faculty perception of “presence” in the online environment. 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference. Manhattan, KS.

Conceição, S. O., Binięcki, S. Y., & Samuel, A. (May, 2015). Application of Concept Maps for conducting research in adult education. 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference. Manhattan, KS.

Samuel, A. (November, 2014). How do faculty create presence in the online environment? 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual AAACE Conference. Charleston, SC.

Samuel, A. (September, 2014). Engaging international Asian students in online collaborative activities. 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education. Indiana.

Conceição, S. O. & Samuel, A. (August, 2014). Reconceptualizing feedback from the student's perspective. 30<sup>th</sup> Distance Teaching & Learning Conference. Madison, WI.

Samuel, A. (March, 2014). Creating student-centered online courses. 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on E-Learning and E-Technologies in Education. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Samuel, A. (December, 2013). Creating inclusive online courses. iNACOL Committee Meeting.

Samuel, A. (November, 2013). Strategies for creating culturally inclusive online programs. Global Education Conference Online Webconference.

Samuel, A. (November, 2013). Microaggressions and the disruption of the online sense of presence. AAACE 62nd Annual Conference. Lexington, Kentucky.

Conceição, S. O., Samuel, A., & Filz, J. (September, 2013). Issues with the use of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory in Adult Education. 32nd Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education.

Samuel, A. (September, 2013). Creating inclusive online learning environments: Addressing Microaggressions. 32<sup>nd</sup> Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education. St. Charles, Missouri.

Samuel, A. (August, 2013). Converting face-to-face content to an online environment. ePoster session, 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Distance, Teaching & Learning. Madison, WI.

Samuel, A. (June, 2007). Inciting creative thinking in the classroom. 13th International Conference on Thinking. Norrköping, Sweden.

Samuel, A. (June, 2007). NLP in the English classroom. 5th Asia TEFL International Conference. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Samuel, A. (May, 2006). Multiple intelligences in the English classroom. 6th Malaysia International Conference on English Language Teaching. Melaka, Malaysia.

Samuel, A. (May, 2005). Six Thinking Hats in the English classroom. 14th International Malaysian English Language Teaching Association Conference. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## **SERVICE**

**2015**      **Scholar participant, Interview a Scholar program**  
UW-Milwaukee, WI

**2015**      **Writing Lab Coordinator**  
Hamilton High School, Sussex, WI

**2015**      **Panel Speaker at Spotlight session**  
Distance Teaching & Learning Conference, Madison, WI

**2014**      **Panel Speaker**  
Addressing the experiences of graduate women students, UW-Milwaukee, WI

**2013**      **ESL Instructor**  
International Language Center, Milwaukee, WI

**2013**      **Guest speaker**  
iNACOL Committee Meeting, Online

**2004**      **Chapter Leader**

MELTA KL Chapter, Malaysia

**ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP**

<b>2014-Present</b>	<b>American Association for Adult &amp; Continuing Education</b>
<b>2015-Present</b>	<b>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</b>
<b>Life member</b>	<b>Malaysian English Language Teachers Association</b>