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      The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Lori R. Austill presented on May 1, 2019.

Jeasik Cho, Chairperson

Reed Scull, External Department Member

Sara Axelson, Member

APPROVED:

Suzanne Young, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, College of Education;
D. Ray Reutzel, Dean, College of Education

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Abstract

Nearly two decades of research has confirmed that the Community of Inquiry framework has enormous potential to guide future approaches, strategies, and technologies in online learning (Cleveland-Innes, Garrison & Vaughan, 2018). In order to ensure that a Community of Inquiry exists in their online courses, it is suggested that instructors utilize technology-mediated communication as a means to establish social presence. One communication method that is often used is instructor-created asynchronous videos which can be used at the beginning of a course as an introduction to the instructor. Drawing on the experiences of five online instructors, this case study documented the importance of establishing relationships with students in online courses and the benefits of using asynchronous video as a means to facilitate instructor social presence. The data also identified the level of technological support needed by faculty teaching online; the personal challenges with making introductions and revealing one's true self through video; and practical advice to faculty on how to get started using asynchronous video in the online classroom.

Keywords: Community of Inquiry, instructor social presence, asynchronous video, case study, community of learning

ASYNCHRONOUS VIDEO AS A MEANS TO FACILITATE INSTRUCTOR SOCIAL
PRESENCE IN ONLINE COURSES

by
Lori R. Austill

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DEDICATION PAGE

This work is dedicated to my husband, Gary D. Austill. Thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and love. I could not have done this without you.

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Part I: Preface

For over ten years I have been involved in the design and development of online courses as a distance learning specialist, senior instructional technologist, and adjunct instructor. Like many, I started this journey in distance learning out of necessity but with a keen eye toward the future potential of this educational modality. In the early days of my career in distance learning I worked as a distance learning specialist, managing the distance learning network at a community college in Wyoming that broadcasted live lectures to students in rural locations throughout the basin. Students were able to view the lectures and ask questions in real time but instructional materials, assignments, and assessments had to be mailed or faxed between locations which resulted in a delay in meaningful instructor feedback. This type of instruction was labeled *distance learning*.

The development of learning management systems ushered in a new phase of distance learning which has been called *blended learning*. In blended learning, the learning management system is used by the instructor to disseminate instructional materials, assess learning outcomes, and receive and grade assignments while delivering lectures synchronously. In blended learning, students are required to attend lectures at a specific time either face-to-face, or via technology-mediated conferences. As online learning continued to grow along with the educational technology available to facilitate it, educators started transitioning toward courses that were fully asynchronous. This was mainly to accommodate a nontraditional population of students. According to Shearer and Park (2018), while we are seeing traditional-aged college students enrolling in online courses, the primary audience has become the working adult who is balancing career, family, and other life obligations with their desire to educate themselves. These compounded factors often prohibit students from attending mandated synchronous sessions.

My first priority in undertaking this research was to prove myself as a qualitative scholar worthy of the designation as a doctor of education. This project provided an opportunity to apply what I had learned of qualitative inquiry through the core curriculum provided by experts in the field of qualitative research. Completing this project has been one of the greatest challenges in my life but through the process I have grown personally, academically, and professionally. I will be able to apply what I have learned to the research projects that are currently underway, and those that will pique my interest in the future.

After earning the prestigious title of Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration, I plan to continue my work as a senior instructional technologist and accessibility specialist but seek out additional career growth opportunities such as heading up committees, leading research projects, teaching online courses, earning certifications, presenting at professional conferences, and submitting articles for publication to peer review journals. My ultimate career goal is to transition to a leadership position directing the development of online programs within a department at a university or at a community college.

Part II: Manuscript
 Asynchronous Video as a Means to Facilitate Instructor Social Presence in Online Courses

The number of students who enrolled solely in online courses at public higher education institutions increased by 25.5% from 2012 to 2016 and during that same time period, enrollment in "some but not all" online courses increased by 19.7% (Taylor-Straut, 2018). This growth is attributed to the diverse educational needs of students, geographic distances between students and institutions, and the advantage of flexible access (Walter, Grover, Turner & Alexander, 2017). Due to the increase in demand for online education, the number of faculty members who teach online also continues to increase. The *2018 Survey of Faculty Attitudes on Technology* reported that 44% of faculty have taught an online course and another 38% have taught a hybrid or blended course that combined face-to-face instruction with an online component (Jaschik & Lederman, 2018).

The growth of technology-mediated learning opportunities has necessitated a more explicit and active teaching role for faculty, one that endeavors to guide students through an active, engaging, and meaningful learning experience (Cleveland-Innes, Garrison, & Vaughan, 2018). Although the Community of Inquiry framework (CoI) was first introduced by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) in the early days of distance education, it still adequately describes the interactive potential of online learning as a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful, critical discourse and reflection in order to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding.

Nearly two decades of Community of Inquiry research has provided the empirical evidence that the CoI framework represents a respective model for describing a learning experience that is applicable to the constantly evolving realm of online learning (Cleveland-Innes, at al., 2018). The framework provides a way of delivering education that incorporates

engaging and sustainable learning skills that are aligned with 21st century workplace skills and self-regulated yet collaborative learning. According to Cleveland-Innes, et al. (2018),

> The emerging Internet and communications technologies have made communities of inquiry possible, allowing students to interact where and when they choose and collaboratively engage in a purposeful and cohesive group environment. As a result, there is a growing awareness and responsibility in terms of applying technology with greater understanding and purpose. (p. 74)

Those involved in the provision of online learning such as instructional technologists, instructors, administrators, and content developers have a responsibility to apply greater understanding and purpose to their use of technology-mediated instruction. This includes the intentional application of theories and strategies that will set the stage for the development of CoI.

By necessity, online courses must be more structured in order to move students through the materials so that all the learning objectives will be met (Dockter, 2016). Due to the need for structure and the text-heavy nature of many online courses, the means of interaction between instructors and students varies a great deal and could potentially involve no direct synchronous communication (Allen, Omori, Cole, & Burrell, 2018). This perceived lack of interaction and social presence has been identified as one of the shortcomings of distance education and for that reason, researchers suggest that there should be a greater focus on personal interaction in the online classroom (Palloff & Pratt, 1999).

In a learning community, the students and instructors share goals, provide academic and social support to each other, and work together to accomplish the course learning outcomes. The lack of personal connection between students and instructors may result in a detachment from the

learning process and diminish or remove the intrinsic motivation to learn (Richardson &

Lowenthal, 2017; Dron, 2018). That detachment has been attributed to the fact that online

courses tend to be asynchronous with individual students completing their coursework and

interacting with instructors and their peers at a time that is convenient for each individual.

Research conducted by Jaschik and Lederman (2018) documented that seventy-one percent of

online instructors offer fully asynchronous courses with only four percent requiring meetings that

occur at a scheduled time with mandatory attendance.

In the situation of asynchronous-based online courses whereby communication appears to

be one-dimensional, effort is required to change the perception of learning from an inactive

process such as simply watching a video or having PowerPoint slides read out loud, into a more

interactive process in which students exchange thoughts, discuss questions, and offer

explanations based on their understandings of the course material (Allen, et al., 2018).

Proponents of online learning should be less concerned with the technology itself, and place the

focus on the richness of the connection that the technology can facilitate (Dron, 2018).

The challenge for online educators is to go beyond the content and materials in order to

create the social elements necessary for learning (Allen, et al., 2018). This case study will

explore the experiences of five faculty as they endeavored to utilize the technology of

asynchronous video in order to form a rich social connection between themselves and their

students for the purpose of forming a Community of Inquiry and reducing transactional distance.

Distance Education Theories

It is clear from the literature that the development of presence within a community of

learning is essential for learning to occur and for learners to persist (McInnerney & Roberts,

2004; Stavredes & Herder, 2018). In order to describe the role of presence within the online

learning platform, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) developed the Community of Inquiry

(CoI) model as a theoretical framework. The goal of Garrison et al. (2010), in developing the CoI

model, was to "define, describe, and measure the elements of a collaborative and worthwhile

educational experience" (p. 6). The CoI framework was based on John Dewey's belief that

inquiry is a social activity that represents the essence of an educational experience. The CoI

framework consists of the three interrelating components of presence: *cognitive, social, and

teaching*.

Cognitive presence, the most basic of the three components was defined by Garrison,

Anderson, and Archer (2000) as the extent to which learners are able to "construct meaning

through sustained communication and reflective inquiry" (p. 89). Cognitive presence is created

by the instructor through the continuous and proactive shaping of discourse that is consistent

with higher-order learning outcomes, and the intended goals of the educational experience

(Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2018). According to Thompson, Vogler, and Xiu (2017), cognitive

presence is where the real work of forming making takes place.

Teaching presence provides the structure, leadership, and direction that is a requirement

of effective interaction and discourse in higher-order learning (Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2018). It

consists of the three core instructor responsibilities of: designing and organizing the course;

facilitating communication; and providing direct instruction (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, &

Archer, 2001). Teaching presence involves not only the preparation of the online content but also

the ongoing engagement that occurs within the course (Thompson, et al., 2017). Faculty who

teach online are faced with the challenge of presenting concepts in a way that encourages

engagement with the materials, promotes critical thinking around those concepts, and facilitates

collaboration. It is through teaching presence that faculty construct a climate that encourages engagement in a CoI.

The third hub of the CoI framework, *social presence*, has been defined as the ability of participants to identify with the group or course of study in order to communicate purposefully in a trusting environment (Cleveland-Innes, et al., 2018). It involves the development of personal and affective relationships through the projection of individual personalities by way of emotional expression such as self-disclosure and humor, open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison et al., 2010; Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). According to Shea and Bidjerano (2011), "The social presence construct is foundational for online interaction. When students rank social presence as low [in their course], they are indicating that they were unable to interact effectively online" (p. 324). It is the ability of participants to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves to other participants as real people.

It is through the process of building relationships that learners are provided the opportunity to engage in a CoI (Garrison, et al., 2000). The more relationships that are built, the higher the level of trust that is developed which helps learners to feel comfortable with sharing their thoughts and ideas without fear of criticism. "As the level of interaction increases, a great sense of community can occur where learners share their divergent thoughts and perspectives to construct knowledge and understanding" (Stavredes & Herder, 2018, p. 135). Research indicates that interaction is related to students' perceptions of presence, however simply increasing the amount of interaction is not enough (Stavredes & Herder, 2018). The interaction must be focused and strategic so that learners connect with the course topics, find value in them, and see how the content can be applied to the real world.

According to Richardson and Lowenthal (2017), online instructors perform pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical functions in a CoI that are unique only to them. For this reason, they believed that instructors have an additional presence, that of *instructor social presence*. Instructor social presence has been defined as having a presence within the course so that students perceive that the instructor is a real person who is attentive and engaged. In the online classroom, students and instructors are often only represented by text on a screen and the majority of the them they will never meet face-to-face. Therefore, it is up to the instructor to create an effective and nurturing learning environment through communication and social interaction that will facilitate a CoI.

Another theory that remains central to the field of distance education is Moore's (1997) theory of transactional distance which posited that separation between the instructor and students can result in communication gaps and misunderstandings. Moore described transaction as "the interplay of teachers and learners in environments that have the special characteristic of being spatially separate from one another" (p. 91). Moore's theory has also been defined as the space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of the instructor and those of the learner. In other words, transactional distance represents a communication gap (Shannon, 2002).

According to Moore (1997), the nature of the transactions developed between instructors and students in distance learning needs to take into account the factors of dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. These three constructs can be used as the building blocks for interaction among learners, instructors, materials, and technology (Stein, Wanstreet, Calvin, Overtoom & Wheaton, 2005). Dialogue has been seen as the primary tool for reducing miscommunication and misunderstanding between those interacting in the online classroom. Moore (1997) believed that

it is not just the frequency of dialogue but also the quality and the extent to which it is effective in enabling the resolution of problems the distance learner may be experiencing.

The second factor that Moore (1997) referred to is the nature of the course structure. Moore theorized that the course structure should be adaptable to accommodate the individual needs of all students. The third factor, learner autonomy, refers to the sense of both independence and interdependence perceived by the learners as they engage in the course and with the instructor.

It is important to note that Moore's theory asserted that an inverse relationship exists between the three factors so that if one increases, it can lead to corresponding decreases in the others (Falloon, 2010). The increase of transactional distance is commonly evidenced by the confusion and dissatisfaction of the learner since the greater the transactional distance – the more likely that responsibility is placed on the student to become a self-directed learner (Garrison, 2000).

As we apply these theories to future research, it is useful to consider that the transactional distance theory was introduced during the independent study style of distance learning in which the focus was on individualized learning experiences, and the CoI framework was introduced in the early days of web-based instruction with a focus on synchronous, group-based delivery (Shearer & Park, 2018). Despite the evolution of online learning since the introduction of these theories, they both continue to have value across a wide application of online learning.

Garrison et al. (2010) predicted that we will experience the emergence of a new definition of distance education characterized by increased diversity and choice and made possible by new communication technologies. Garrison (1989) believed that distance education should be characterized by an adaptability of design before and during the teaching and learning

process. This can be made possible through affordable, readily available, and highly interactive communications technology such as asynchronous lectures that are simple to create and upload to an online course.

Theories associated with distance education must reflect the purposeful as well as the spontaneous nature of the educational experience. Garrison (2000) summarized it in this way,

> The emerging practice of distance education is incorporating new and sophisticated communications technology. These technologies allow for the creation of synchronous and asynchronous collaborative communities of inquiry. The pressing challenge facing distance education theorists, therefore, is to adapt current theories to these new realities and, where appropriate, create new theory. (p. 4)

The sense of community within an online course does not happen automatically (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Instructors must work toward creating presence through intentional planning and design of the course, and by thoughtfully implementing strategies that will impact learners. According to Lehman and Conceição, social presence cannot be felt without the dynamic interplay of instructor with learners, and learners with other learners as they interact in the online environment.

Instructor as Facilitators of a Community of Inquiry

Designing an online course is not only about establishing learning objectives and then creating learning modules with instructional materials, assignments, and assessments (Thompson, Vogler, & Xiu, 2017). The challenge for online instructors is to present course content in such a way that students are encouraged to engage in the materials, apply critical thinking around the concepts, and collaborate in meaning-making between the instructor and their peers (Barrett, 2010).

For a study on teaching presence and student sense of learning community in fully online courses, Shea, Li, and Pickett (2006) developed the *Teaching Presence Scale* based on the CoI model in order to assess the effectiveness of instructional design and organization, facilitation of productive discourse, and direct instruction. The Teaching Presence Scale was presented to a random sample of over a thousand learners enrolled in online courses at 32 colleges. The survey found that instructor social presence was related to the instructors' ability to draw in the students, create an accepting climate for learning, interject their knowledge and expertise, and confirm student understanding. The study concluded that a strong and active social presence in the course on the part of the instructor was related to the students' sense of connectedness and learning.

Students look to their instructor to be the content expert who clarifies technical terms, engages them in discussions, and highlights and summarizes the key concepts that need to be learned in order to meet the course objectives (Liebhaber, 2010). According to Shannon (2002), the strongest predictors of instructional effectiveness are enthusiasm, clarity, rapport, and interaction and are demonstrated by the instructor's presentation skills, their ability to involve students in the learning process, reacting in a timely manner to student inquiries, and building a rapport with students. Shannon suggested that within the context of each method of delivery whether it be asynchronous lectures, synchronous discussions, or written communication, instructors should ask themselves if they are effectively establishing a social connection between themselves and their students.

Online instructors must be willing and able to create a learning environment where students feel valued and a part of the learning community through interactions that are stimulating, expressive, significant, and implicit (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Lehman & Conceição, 2010).

Martin, Budhrani, Kumar, and Ritzhaupt (2019) interviewed eight exemplary, award-winning online faculty regarding the roles, competencies, and skills of online instructors. The faculty interviewed for that study were in agreement that the most important role of the online instructor is to create instructor social presence within their course. Instructor social presence was identified as "being there" for students and "having a presence that the students felt on the course site" (p. 198).

A specific method of establishing instructor social presence identified by the research participants was to create an asynchronous video in which they introduced themselves to students at the beginning of the course, thereby establishing a personal connection and sharing their expertise in an asynchronous format. *Asynchronous video* refers to a modality used by online instructors to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject in a format that students can view at a time of their own individual choosing. When used in this way, asynchronous video can facilitate the creation of a personal connection in which the instructor bridges the disembodiment potential in online courses. One participant called this *being visible* because it provided a way for students to see the instructor and hear his/her voice.

The competencies identified by the award-winning faculty that are needed in order to be an online instructor were technical skills, the willingness to learn, an understanding of how students learn online, expertise in content development, skills in course design, and the ability to develop methods of assessing student learning (Martin et al., 2019). With regard to technical skills, it was identified that online instructors should be able to create videos on their own and upload them to their course. The competency most mentioned was the willingness of online instructors to learn and grow with respect to both pedagogy and technology skills by taking risks and being willing to make mistakes.

Strategic Communication Decisions

Both students and instructors should be active participants in the CoI with social presence providing a way for learners to perceive their instructors as real people who care about them and are committed to being responsive to their needs (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). However, instructor social presence is not a simple construct because each student will create their own version of who they think their teacher is, based on their previous experiences, interactions with the course materials, and communications (Dockter, 2016). Cavanaugh (2013) noted that, "Interaction is at the heart of online learning. Frequency of interactions in an online course among learners, the course interface, and the instructor has been associated with significantly higher course achievement" (p. 178). It is through each shared interaction that each person gains a perspective as to what the other is like, leading to a more complete sense of that person. For this reason, it is important to design an online course where transactions are plentiful, varied, and occur regularly, thereby lessoning the perceived transactional distance between instructor and student.

As internet-based technology continues to evolve in an ever-present, social direction, the importance of the sense of presence in online learning is magnified. Current research has shown that when there is a sense of presence in online learning, the instructor-to-learner relationship is enhanced (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). The intention of creating instructor social presence is to establish that the instructor is accessible to the learner through communication that is stimulating, expressive, significant, and implicit.

Strategic communication decisions made by the instructor of an online course can help learners to develop a fuller sense of who the instructor is (Dockter, 2016). The main method for the establishment of social presence is communication that is verbal as well as nonverbal with

cues such as smiling, making eye contact, and body language. In the face-to-face classroom,

instructors can take cues from their students' verbal as well as non-verbal interactions, but in the

online course those cues are unavailable due to the asynchronous nature of online learning

(Kebritchi, et al., 2017). Lehman and Conceição (2010) stated that "In the virtual space, presence

needs to be intentionally created" (p. 11).

In their research, *Instructor Social Presence: A Neglected Component of the Community*

of Inquiry, Richardson and Lowenthal (2017) suggested three strategies that instructors can use

to intentionally establish and maintain instructor social presence in their online courses. The first

strategy was to find ways to establish one's personality, or persona by demonstrating authenticity

and unique qualities. Students want to get a sense of who their instructor is as a person which is

more about *being real* than fitting a certain stereotype of what an instructor is or is not. For

example, when an instructor talks directly to the learners in a *talking-head* style video, the

learner can see and hear the instructor and can observe the speaker's appearance and gestures

"thereby making it less likely to be misunderstood" (Dockter, 2016, p. 83).

The second strategy was for faculty to design their online course so that it is a reflection

not only of their personality, but of their instructional values. For example, the instructor could

provide examples of the types of online interactions that are expected of students through the

posting of netiquette guidelines. The final strategy was to communicate with students in a variety

of ways. Communicating with students is still the number one way that instructors establish their

instructor social presence and that communication can take the form of announcements, personal

emails, discussions, and videos (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). Providing additional

opportunities and methods for students to create meaning can aid them in knowing who their

instructor is as an actual person. Asynchronous videos created by the instructor could be utilized

as the platform for achieving all three of the suggested strategies for establishing instructor social presence.

Lehman and Conceição stated that, "When a course is designed with presence in mind, the experience comes alive and the learning process is driven by the interplay between thought, emotion, and behavior" (2010, p. 10). Asynchronous videos created by an instructor could potentially serve the purpose of disseminating information, providing a sense of instructor social presence in the online course, and encouraging scholarly engagement (Borup, West, & Graham, 2012; Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). Asynchronous videos provide an avenue for the instructor to share his or her knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject, in his or her own style, with the communication of emotion and energy in their voice and demeanor (Dennen, Darabi, & Smith, 2007).

It is important to incorporate asynchronous videos into an online course in a manner that will not interfere with the learning process (Kebritchi, et al., 2017). According to the multimedia learning theory developed by Mayer (2014), three instructional design approaches should be employed: less-is-more, more-is-more, and focused-is-more. The less-is-more approach relates to the reduction or elimination of extra material that may be a distraction from learning. The more-is-more approach is focused on the addition of features such as graphics, organizational labels, and detailed assignment descriptions that will increase the motivation to interact with the course materials without adding too much and creating a distraction. The focused-is-more approach endeavors to create a balance in which using added features such as asynchronous videos, interactive learning tools, and discussions is strategically utilized to focus the students' attention on the course and its instructional content.

When used in a focused-is-more approach, asynchronous videos can provide students with the opportunity to master course materials without the need for the instructor to repeat the same material multiple times (Miller, 2014). Asynchronous videos in formats such as narrated PowerPoints, screen-captured demonstrations, and recorded short lectures can be produced relatively quickly and easily through the use of computer software and/or web-based products. The asynchronous videos can then be uploaded directly to a learning management system or uploaded to a video hosting service such as YouTube or Google Drive and then linked within the course. The use of these *transparent technologies* will result in students and faculty spending less time learning how to use the technology (Wheeler, Kelly, & Gale, 2005).

The production of instructional materials that will provide a more creative and successful engagement between faculty and students will provide the interaction that is needed to form an active community of learners (Miller, 2014). In order to increase the benefit of multi-media tools such as asynchronous video, they should be introduced early on in the class (Niess & Gillow-Wiles, 2013). McInnerney and Roberts (2004) called this a *warm up* period that allows students to become familiar with the instructor's communication style, online personality, and level of commitment. An introduction video may be used as the first item of the *warm up* period in order to make the students feel comfortable communicating with each other and with their instructor.

Dockter (2016) suggested that one of the advantages to providing alternate communication methods such as an asynchronous video is that students may be able to construct a clearer sense of who their instructor is, resulting in a richer and more complex connection. The location that a video is recorded in may help students fill the gaps of teacher presence by revealing visual details about the instructor. Rather than fitting into a particular stereotype of professor, faculty should strive to be authentic and real by showing their personality and

uniqueness to their students. Instructors should not be afraid to record a video in their home

office with their children's artwork taped to the wall behind them or their favorite hat collection

in the background, since this allows students to observe elements of the instructor by interpreting

his or her surroundings.

Research Questions

Theory, research, and practice all illustrate the importance of instructor social presence in

the forming of a CoI and based on the strategies that can be found throughout the literature on

best practices in online instruction, many instructors have incorporated asynchronous video into

their online courses (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). Very little research has been conducted on

the experiences that faculty have had in the creation of asynchronous videos and their

perceptions of the effect that the videos have had in establishing social presence in their online

courses. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What level of importance did the faculty place on developing their social presence early

   on in their online courses?

2. To what degree did the instructors believe that asynchronous video was an effective tool

   for establishing instructor social presence?

Method

Overview

The goal of this research was to contribute to the understanding of best practices and

pedagogical processes in the service of improving the quality of online course design and

delivery in a fully asynchronous learning environment. The researcher employed case study

methodology to explore the experiences and perceptions of online faculty as they endeavored to

facilitate instructor social presence within their courses through the creation of asynchronous introduction videos.

Research Design

A qualitative case study methodology was utilized for this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This methodology was chosen because of the researcher's sincere interest in learning about the experiences of faculty as they utilized the educational technology of asynchronous videos to enhance their online courses (Stake, 1995, 2006). According to Yin (2003), a case study methodology is appropriate when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because they believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study. The context of the study is based on faculty members' personal and professional experiences with incorporating asynchronous videos into their online courses. While the context is related to online courses, it is not confined to a specific department or subject.

One of the strengths inherent to utilizing a qualitative approach to research is that the researchers assume that human behavior and perspectives are significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs—in this case, the online classroom. "The qualitative approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 6).

Conducting qualitative research is not about putting together a puzzle with a picture that is already known (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). It is about interpreting and constructing a picture that takes unique shape as a number of parts are systematically collected and reflectively examined through data analysis. The systematic case study method is intended for use in the case

of multiple sources of data with the formal analysis beginning early in the study and completed

by the end of the data collection (Stake, 2006).

Researcher-as-Instrument

As a nontraditional, graduate student I personally experienced first-hand the pros and

cons of distance learning. I received my educational background and knowledge of the pedagogy

of instructional design and technology as a master-level student in the online Instructional

Technology Program at the University of Wyoming. While pursuing my master's degree, I was

appointed the position of senior instructional technologist at a Blue Sky University (pseudonym)

where I have had the opportunity to apply sound instructional design principles as I work one-

on-one with faculty to assist with the development of blended and fully online courses. In my

instructional design work, I place a strong emphasis on the development of instructional

materials that incorporate Universal Design for Learning principles in order to ensure

accessibility for all learners. I have also enjoyed opportunities to design, develop, and teach

blended and fully online courses as an adjunct instructor. In addition to my formal education, I

am a certified Quality Matters peer reviewer and have completed their Online Teaching

Certification program. I continuously immerse myself in the use of the Quality Matter Rubric as

a workshop facilitator and course reviewer.

Admittedly, because of my educational background and professional experiences, I have

strong opinions regarding what is considered to be a quality online course. It is important to me

to provide research-based advice and assistance in the development of online course. Over the

years, I have watched tenured faculty struggle to adapt their face-to-face lecture style to this new

format. The solution for many instructors was to simply add an audio recording of themselves

lecturing over PowerPoint slides just as they would have done in their face-to-face classroom.

This approach resulted in extremely long lectures that did little to facilitate the social presence of the instructor and thereby encourage the development of a Community of Inquiry. As an adjunct instructor, I also utilized this method and when I asked my students to provide feedback regarding my lectures, they were frank in telling me that I sounded unenthusiastic about the subject and that my lectures were boring. As I continued to work in the field of instructional technology, it became apparent that the missing element was personal interaction. Instructors who thrived on the daily interactions with their students told me that they missed the stimulating discussions that had naturally developed in their classrooms. Just like their students, they found online delivery to be uninspiring and isolating and struggled to keep their students and themselves engaged in the course.

As the arena of distance learning continued to develop, research emerged on the best practices in online education. Many of the faculty that I worked directly with were willing to try the various community building techniques that were suggested in the literature. They were diligent in incorporating discussion forums into their courses so that there were opportunities for student-to-student interaction. They added a variety of resources such as YouTube videos, online articles, links to websites, TedTalks, interactive lessons, and adaptive learning software in order to provide multiple ways for students to interact with the course content. However, the one area that continued to be lacking was in social presence and instructor-to-student interaction.

In the traditional classroom setting, on the first day of class the instructor introduces himself or herself in order to build rapport with the students. As the semester progresses, students interact with the instructor and with each other through class discussions and group work thereby naturally forming a community of learners. Likewise, in the online setting, the instructor is the first point of contact for students but due to the asynchronous format and the

prevalence of text-based communication and instruction, the instructor must strategically implement ways of providing the audio and visual cues that are essential for the formation of social presence. Today, Internet technology is ever-present and completely woven into our lives. We communicate via the Web without even noticing (Lehman & Conceição, 2010). Faculty can leverage students' familiarity and comfort with technology-based communication to facilitate social presence within their courses.

In recent years, as I worked with faculty in the development of their online courses, I began confronting two issues: the long, narrated PowerPoint lectures; and the lack of instructor-to-student interaction. I started challenging faculty to consider shortening their lectures to only include key information, personal experiences, and topics that would lead to robust discussions and assign students to read the PowerPoints and textbook materials on their own. As instructors started embracing the idea that they did not need to record entire lectures, I additionally challenged them to think about how they could make personal connections with their online students and establish themselves as real people in the course. While most faculty were comfortable hearing their voice on a recording, they were reluctant to video their face so as a starting point, I suggested the creation of brief (3 to 5 minute) introduction videos. The introduction videos would serve as a means to reveal their personality and passion for the subject, demonstrate that they are approachable and available, and establish their social presence within the course.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements to complete a doctorate in education, I applied a case study methodology to explore and chronical the experiences of myself and five of the faculty members who followed my advice to include introductory videos in their online courses. I chose this research topic because social presence in online learning is a challenge that I work

with every day and on a grander scale, should be on the minds of every online instructor and

instructional designer.

Participants

The study took place at Blue Sky University (pseudonym), a public university with an

enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. In order to gather rich, informative data, I selected

five faculty members (see Table 1) from Blue Sky University whom I had worked directly with

to provide instructional design assistance. I purposefully chose these five participants based on

their interest in improving their online courses, their use of asynchronous video to introduce

themselves to their students, and their willingness to participate in the study (Patton, 2015).

According to Morrow (2005), qualitative sampling is always purposeful and participants are

deliberately selected to provide the most information-rich data possible. Selection was also

criterion-based in order to work with individuals who have experienced the particular

phenomenon under study.

Table 1
Profile of Participants (with pseudonym)

Participant	Professional background	Teaching Position	Online teaching experience
Dave	Over 30 years as a CEO of a regional hospital, MBA	Visiting instructor for the College of Business, Health Care Administration program	1 year
John	Long-term care management, MBA	Visiting instructor for the College of Business, Health Care Administration program	3 years
Jerry	US Army Veteran, Field Intelligence Officer, PhD in Political Science, Fulbright Fellowship at Oxford University	Associate Professor for the College of Business, Informatics program	4 years
Angela	Department Chair of Economics and Finance, Ph.D.	Professor of Finance	Over 38 years
Amy	Experimental Psychologist	Assistant Professor of	3 years

with extensive research background	Experimental Psychology,

In order to follow Institutional Review Board guidelines, at the beginning of the interview participants were informed that that were no foreseeable direct benefits to them for participation in the research and participants in turn indicated their informed consent. The researcher completed the mandatory human subjects CITI Training and received expedited approval to conduct the study from Blue Sky University's Human Subjects (IRB) Committee. The informed consent forms and IRB approval verification are on file in the researcher's office.

Sources of Data

The interviews were semi-structured as *a conversation with a purpose* with the researcher asking ten open-ended questions intended to collect in-depth qualitative information (see Appendix A). Overall, the questions were based on the results of the literature review, which included articles pertaining to the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010); Moore's theory of transactional distance (1997); the teaching practices of award-winning online faculty (Martin, et al., 2019); creating a sense of presence in online learning (Lehman & Conceição, 2010); strategies to support student persistence (Stavredes & Herder, 2018); and many more. In order to focus on issues that directly impacted teaching in the online environment, questions were also adapted from the Online Faculty Satisfaction Survey (OFSS) developed by Bolliger & Wasilik (2009) (see Appendix B).

Each participant was formally interviewed one time with the interviews lasting thirty minutes to an hour. I encouraged the participants to answer the questions, but also initiate their own topics and issues related to his/her experiences with asynchronous lectures in order to receive rich data filled with statements that revealed each persons' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Creswell, 2013). Morrow (2005) instructed that the fewer

questions one asks, the more likely one is to elicit stories and deeper meanings from participants which was my intent.

The interviews with John, Jerry, Dave, and Angela that took place face-to-face were audio-recorded using an iPad application. The interview with Amy was conducted via the Zoom conference tool and video recorded. I later personally transcribed the interviews verbatim which resulted in a total of forty pages of transcribed Microsoft Word documents.

In order to situate the sample, it is important to note that when I developed the interview questions for this study, I did not account for the fact that all of the participants had high levels of knowledge and experience in their areas of expertise but none of them had formal education in the area of educational pedagogy. After the first interview, I realized that pedagogical terms such as *Community of Learning* and *Instructor Social Presence* held little meaning to the participants. For this reason, the interview questions were adjusted during the interview so that the participants could respond in their own words and with their own understanding of the online teaching experience.

Data Analysis

In order to make full sense of the impact of asynchronous video on the establishment of instructor social presence in an online course, I followed the steps in the systematic case study analysis (Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2003): First, the interviews were conducted and transcribed and second, the transcripts were read from beginning to end multiple times in order to search for patterns and consistency. The multiple readings facilitated immersion in the data to the point that I could move immediately to various locations of the interviews in order to retrieve verbatim examples and statements of the phenomenon (Morrow, 2005).

Third, the emerged patterns were grouped into reoccurring themes and a textual description of the participant's experiences was formed which included verbatim examples and statements (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Fourth, a composite description of the phenomenon was written that incorporated the textural descriptions of the five emergent themes. The description is intended to inform the reader of what the participants had experienced with the technology used to record the asynchronous videos; their perceptions of the usefulness of the recordings in creating instructor social presence; and how they used asynchronous lectures to communicate with her students in order to form a community of learners. And finally, the data were carefully scrutinized for disconfirming evidence in order to avoid researcher bias and an overly simplistic interpretation of the data (Morrow, 2005).

Data credibility was provided through opportunities to have prolonged exposure to the phenomenon under study within its context so that rapport with the research participants could be established (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Through the provision of instructional design support, the researcher had sufficient opportunity to build working relationships with the participants. For example, the researcher trained the instructors on the use of Zoom as a tool for recording their videos; facilitated the closed captioning of the videos; assisted with linking the videos into the online courses; and offered advice on the suggested length and content of the videos.

In order to facilitate member checking for the purpose of validating the data, the researcher's interpretation of the data was shared with the participants so that they had the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretations and contribute any additional perspectives on the issue under study.

Results

The theory, research, and practice documented in this study illustrated the importance of instructor social presence in the forming of a Community of Inquiry. In addition, the strategies that can be found throughout the literature on best practices in online instruction, have advised instructors to incorporate asynchronous video into their online courses (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). However, very little analysis has been conducted on the first-hand experiences of faculty who utilized asynchronous video as a method of establishing their social presence within a course. The intent of this case study was to evaluate the level of importance that the research participants placed on the development of their own social presence early on in their online courses; and to what degree they believed that asynchronous video was an effective tool for establishing their social presence.

In the designing and teaching of distance education courses, faculty must make decisions about the objectives, technology, course materials, assignments, and assessments among other things, but few of those decisions remain neutral in their impact on the course participants (Thompson, 2018). Some scholars have even asked the question of whether caring relationships and social presence are possible in distance education environments. However, research has verified that when online instructors made highly transparent strategic communication decisions in which both they and their students were active participants in the CoI, it was possible to establish meaningful social connections. Thompson (2018) stated that, "Ethical teachers have the obvious responsibility to be knowledgeable in their disciplines and skilled in communicating about them, but they also will lead by example in the development of learning communities characterized by responsibility, authenticity, and presence" (p. 199).

Each of the faculty interviewed for this study expressed their commitment to providing quality online instruction and their desire to make a personal connection with their students. As

the instructors described their personal experiences, five major themes emerged related to the importance of establishing a relationship with students and utilizing technology-mediated communication such as asynchronous video.

Theme 1: The Importance of Establishing Relationships with Students

After the preliminary demographic questions were addressed, participants were asked how important they believed it was to establish a relationship with their online students. Amy admitted that due to her previous background in research rather than teaching, she initially did not see the value in establishing a relationship with her online students but came to the following realization:

> *Instructor social presence was not something that I had initially strived for, but I have come to realize that it was deeply important for the current cohort of students that they feel a connection because the nature of online learning is so apt to be anonymous.*

Amy's acknowledgement of the anonymous nature of online learning relates back to the importance of establishing presence which is foundational for online interaction and the sense of belonging to a learning community (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012),

When asked about the importance of relationships, John stated emphatically that establishing a relationship with students was "extremely paramount." He expounded on that belief with the following reflection:

> *Getting engagement in classes is probably my one thing that I try to obtain as much as possible and the only way that you're really going to get engagement is to actually make them feel like they know you. When I first started teaching online, I didn't understand the effect of that engagement. At first, I didn't do any videos at all. I just posted my bio and a link to my LinkedIn profile, but now I do a welcome video. The initial talking about*

myself and why I'm teaching this course has actually gone over well. And the reason is

that students liked the real-life experience because it made me a real person for them.

Richardson and Lowenthal (2017) defined instructor social presence as having a presence within the course so that students perceive that the instructor is a real person who is attentive and engaged. That definition was echoed through John's experience.

Dave excitedly related his experience of how his presence was extended even beyond the online classroom in the following excerpt:

I had an occasion to go to a dinner for student and faculty that was sponsored by my

department and I met Pam (synonym). I've known Pam is a sharp student because of her

work in my courses, but I had never met her in person. I was assigned to sit at her table

and that was just a fun opportunity to put a name with a face. She knew me right away

from my videos and of course I knew her by name only but as soon as I saw her name, I

was able to say, "You are one of the brightest students in the class." Because she really

is. It was fun that we were able to connect the names and the internet experience face-to-

face.

Dave's experience confirmed the idea that while physical separation of instructor and students may make it more challenging to create social presence, it should not be considered an absolute deterrent (Gnanadass & Sanders, 2018). In the case of Dave and his student, a social connection had already been established long before they had the opportunity to meet face to face.

In the case of Amy, she did not start out with the intention of establishing a relationship with her online students but came to see the value of it as the course progressed. John saw the

importance of reaching students in a manner that they would respond to; and Dave enjoyed the opportunity to extend the relationship beyond the online classroom.

Not all of the participants related positive experiences. Angela, who was an early adopter of educational technology, having taught online for approximately thirty-eight years, had a different opinion regarding the formation of learning communities as she related her experiences:

> *I have really struggled with my online students because they don't want to be present in the same way. I've tried just about everything to create an online learning community from requiring discussions, to me physically being somewhere once a week. The problem is there's a lot of students who take an online class because they're overwhelmed in other aspects of their lives. If they're taking an all online degree then they're doubly overwhelmed and so it's really hard for me to create an online community where they engage with each other. I have to tell you that in an undergraduate level course, engagement is very risky. And it's very risky because in the last say, 2 to 3 years I've come to realize that the level of what I would consider inappropriate or unsupportive hostility that we see on Twitter or Facebook has increased. Despite how hard I try it is difficult to teach students how to positively engage with what I'll say are initially strangers.*

Despite Angela's struggles with getting her students to engage with each other in positive ways, she was still passionate about the importance of forming relationships with her students. She expressed her commitment to forming relationships with students in this way:

> *I feel like the most important thing for a student is to understand that I'm accessible. I'm engaged, and that they're not alone. The thing that concerns me is that students seem to*

act kind of like they're on their own so I let them know that I will be responsive to their

needs and their questions.

Theme 2: Support with Technology

One of the obstacles that I had experienced in working with faculty who are considering the use of asynchronous video, is their lack of familiarity with educational technology. In order to determine the level of difficulty that the research participants may have experienced with the use of technology to create the asynchronous videos, they were asked what type of training and/or technical assistance they had received. Three of the instructors said that they had received just enough technical assistance to get started using Zoom as the recording tool for their videos and were aware that they could contact the university's instructional technology resource center for assistance if they needed it. Jerry stressed how important he felt it was to have technical training and assistance available as he related his experience:

> *I received about eight to ten hours of one-on-one instruction through the university's*
>
> *instructional technology resource center and I also benefited from looking at other*
>
> *faculty's experiences. But frankly, a lot of it is just getting familiar with the technology*
>
> *and having someone to ask questions. The most important thing is that I felt supported in*
>
> *an environment that encouraged innovation.*

In a study conducted by Jaschik & Lederman (2018), nearly three-quarters of online instructors who have taught online believed that the experience taught them skills that improved their teaching both online and in the face-to-face classroom. The skills identified by the faculty in that study included better use of multimedia content, improved communication with students, and critically thinking about how to engage students with course content. Faculty support for the expanded use of technology was attributed to their own enjoyment of trying new technologies,

their past success using educational technology, and their belief that students learn better when they are engaged with effective technology tools.

The availability of technical support was important to all of the research participants, but in addition John expressed why he felt it was important for faculty to learn how to use the technology with minimal assistance from educational technologists:

We as online professors have a much more difficult time of providing proper education because we have to be on point with not only the materials, but we have to be on point with the current events that are going on and how that could affect everything. In order to accomplish that, we have to be fluid in the process and understand how to use the technology. I want to be taught how to do this. I don't want someone else to do it for me.

An extensive literature review conducted by Kebritchi, Lipschuetz and Santiague (2017) documented that online instructors must have the ability to facilitate student-centered instruction, communicate effectively, and utilize technology. According to the authors, "The shift from faculty-centered education (faculty lectures) to a more student-centered approach (students decide how they wish to learn) produced a new role for the instructor as facilitator" (Kebritchi et al., 2017, p. 16). In the role of learning facilitator, instructors must make adjustments in how they will deliver course content to their online students in an evolving interactive environment.

The experiences related by the instructors suggested that it was important to have proper training on the use of the recording technology, to feel that there is support available, and to learn how to be independent users of the technology in order to exercise fluidity with content development and course delivery.

Theme 3: Instructor's Comfort Level with Introducing Themselves Via Video.

After overcoming the technology challenges, the next obstacle identified by faculty in the use of asynchronous video was getting comfortable introducing themselves via a video. All of the faculty were experienced with giving public presentations and lectures, but it took some practice to get used to talking to the camera instead of a live audience. The general consensus among the study participants was that it started out being difficult, but once they were familiar with the format, their confidence level ramped up very quickly. Dave admitted the following about his initial experience with recording asynchronous video:

> *It's not my favorite thing in the world. I struggled with what color shirt to wear, where I appear in the camera, and playing with the camera depending on what time of the day it is so that I got the right light on my face so as not to be too dark. And so it doesn't come easy for me, but I think that's what I'm hired to do is to make it as appealing to the students as I can.*

With a mixed feeling of anxiety and accountability in mind, Dave summarized his stressful, but progressive experience by making a strong professional claim, *"I feel that students are paying a lot of money to go to college and they ought to get their money's worth. If I was in their shoes, I would want to know my professor and that is why I do it."*

The above statement provided by Dave demonstrated his commitment to producing a quality video that would build a personal connection with his students. For that reason, he put a lot of thought and effort into making sure the video was done well. By the same token, John had a similar experience when he first started creating asynchronous video:

> *I will admit that at first it was way awkward and I botched the first recording – stumbling and stuttering and trying to figure out the process. But when I went back and watched the*

video, I was able to laugh at myself and because of that, some of the anxiety went away when recording subsequent videos.

During the interview John also emphasized his belief that in order to establish a relationship with his students, he needed to get outside his comfort zone and communicate with them in a way that would be appealing to them:

Online, if there's no personal interaction – if there's none of it and we don't continue to bring that in and bring that forward, I think our education is going to have significant issues. Our students understand the online world. They're more open to online communication, not just in forums but in videos and Zoom. They're willing to put their information out there and have those conversations because they've grown up being on social media constantly and they have no qualms about doing selfies and posting. They're not scared of technology. I am not a social media guy so for me to do that first video, I had to work myself up to it. But once I did it that first time, it wasn't that big of a deal after that. It didn't change who I am, I'm not posting stuff on social media now because I did this. I'm still the same person. It's just in my mind now that it's one more opportunity to teach these guys and there has been a drastic difference because we get better conversations and better communication as a whole in the class.

Through the provision of training in the use of the recording technology used to create the videos, I witnessed some the struggles that the instructors faced in becoming familiar with the technology, however, it was very informative to hear them express the level of personal anxiety that the participants experienced. The stresses that they expressed, directly and indirectly, during the interview process were awkwardness, fear of failure, unfamiliarity with the use of social media, learning to use new technology, and self-consciousness. The literature

review identified a willingness to make mistakes and learn from them as one of the key competencies for successful online instructors. Making mistakes can result in demonstrating to students a level of humanity that is not possible through a perfect video or written text (Dockter, 2016).

The statements made my Dave and John also demonstrated their acuity in realizing that millennial students demand a more interactive and collaborative learning environment (Gnanadass & Sanders, 2018). Since millennial students make up such a large portion of the online higher education population, it is important to examine the communication expectations of that population and make strategic decisions to reach them.

During the interview, Angela joked about how after watching her first few videos, she came to realize that the video camera was picking up the sound of her office chair squeaking. She laughingly said, "The rude sound is not what you think it is, it's my chair." Angela voiced the importance of taking risks and demonstrating one's humanity in the following reflection:

My voice quality is going to improve with my new microphone and I have removed the squeaky chair (smiling). I think all of those things are important but the other thing that's important is just to chill out. Because you know, you need to understand that if you're going to commit to teaching an online class, you may go through several beta versions and you need to take risks and you need to be willing to fail. But you need to reflect and learn from those failures.

According to Tunks (2012), the instructor is the single most important factor in determining student success in an online course. The instructor's ability to communicate with students, form a Community of Inquiry, and deliver course content effectively makes all the difference in learning outcomes. "A teacher's humanity is invisible in an online course, but

through the purposeful use of multiple modes of communication, there is less to imagine

resulting in a more realistic sense of who that teacher is" (Dockter, 2016, p. 83).

Theme 4: Challenges with Revealing Your True Self through Video

One of the strategies for creating instructor social presence suggested in the literature was

to utilize asynchronous video to establish oneself as authentic with unique qualities and a distinct

personality (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017). Amy sincerely expressed the belief that recording

herself via asynchronous video was helpful in coming across as a real person:

> *It is important to have that personal touch of having my students being able to see me.*
>
> *I've gotten feedback in the past in other online courses that that makes a huge difference*
>
> *and students appreciate being able to see my face and seeing my hand gestures and they*
>
> *find it much better than a voice-over PowerPoint. I think that the more they see you, the*
>
> *more they can humanize you as well!*

With a smile on her face, Amy passionately expressed her pedagogical approach to

making her recorded lectures personalized for her students by including a picture-in-picture of

herself as she talked about the content represented on the PowerPoint slides. She felt confident

that the videos were effective in helping her students to see her as a real person while still having

the benefit of seeing the information on the PowerPoint slides as well.

John was very deliberate about planning his recordings, and rather than using PowerPoint

slides as the background, he took this approach:

> *I have received feedback from my students that they liked hearing about my personal*
>
> *experiences. Making videos in which the students are looking at a PowerPoint and*
>
> *there's just a voice overhead is like Oz behind the curtain talking to them. In my videos,*
>
> *even though I do not particularly like seeing myself on screen, I purposely tried to keep*

the video on myself rather than sharing my desktop and PowerPoint because I found that

I got a better reaction from the students with that method.

Indeed, receiving positive feedback from the students is something that all instructors hope for. It is clear that in today's courses, the addition of video for faculty introductions and communication can provide an enhanced sense of presence not previously available to students in distance education courses (Shearer & Park, 2018). The enhanced ability to be "real" in a virtual environment may facilitate an increased satisfaction with online learning and a perception of reduced transactional distance.

However, with that being said, there is a drawback that online instructors could encounter with this technology. An example of that can be seen in John's experiences. Although he believed that the asynchronous videos were useful in sharing his personal experiences with the students, he expressed frustration at having to sit at his desk while recording:

I'm pretty well known in my face-to-face classes for running up and down the aisles and

pounding on desks in order to get students to engage in the discussions. I try to get more

animated in the asynchronous videos, but it's really hard when I'm just sitting at a desk

so I figure the videos capture about 75 to 80 percent of my true personality.

John felt somewhat constrained in expressing his true personality due to the lack of mobility and the inability to elicit a strong, immediate response from his students due to the asynchronous nature of the video. Likewise, Angela expressed disappointment with the limitations of presenting her true personality and interacting one-on-one with her students when using asynchronous video:

I don't want to sound monotone in my videos so I try to enthusiastically bring the same

passion to the videos as I would to the classroom. One real disadvantage for me is that in

the classroom I crack jokes all the time, but that doesn't really work in an online course.

That's always kind of a sad thing for me because people will laugh in my classrooms and

I let them laugh at me too. I make mistakes and I encourage them to laugh with me,

mainly because it lightens the mood and I also like them to realize that learning is a

series of correcting your mistakes.

Angela related her belief that it is important for students to know that making mistakes is

part of the learning process and she was able to demonstrate that through humor in her face-to-

face classrooms but had to find other methods of expressing that in her online courses due to the

asynchronous delivery format.

The experiences related by the research participants revealed that communicating

asynchronously through recorded videos can be somewhat challenging in terms of portraying an

instructor's preferred lecture style, but they are effective tools for coming across as an authentic

and real person (Richardson & Lowenthal, 2017).

Theme 5: Advice on Getting Started Using Asynchronous Video

At the conclusion of the interviews, I asked each participant if they have any advice for

faculty who were thinking about incorporating asynchronous video into their online courses.

Several were enthusiastic in their responses such as Dave as he provided this sage advice:

Just go for it even though it's uncomfortable, even though it may be a little unsettling,

just get used to the technology and hope that the ones you do next week or next month or

next semester are better than the ones you started with.

Dave's encouragement may serve the purpose of motivating instructors to overcome their

misgivings and experiment with the use of asynchronous video as the means by which instructors

are socially present in the online setting. At the same time, some instructors may regard Dave's

"Just go for it" suggestion as too impulsive and may find Amy's advice to be more practical

when she encouraged faculty to "Try to use the videos as an opportunity.to come across as caring

and sharing, compassionate, available, helpful, and all of that." Jerry also provided some

practical considerations in getting started with asynchronous video:

> *People need to understand that technology enhanced learning is not easy—it requires*
>
> *you to think through your objectives and structure your material. This is a change agent*
>
> *model of learning. Participate in some training on teaching online, develop a*
>
> *relationship with a "technology enabler", and be prepared to relearn how to teach.*

Discussion

The most profound expression of the importance of establishing an instructor social

presence was expressed by Angela as she articulated her motivation for teaching online:

> *I believe I've been put on earth for a reason and I found out that that reason is I'm not a*
>
> *surgeon--I don't fix people's hearts or brains, but what I can do as a teacher is change*
>
> *hearts and minds. I think this is a people business and you always have to remember this*
>
> *is not just a process, it's not just a content business; people come to class with fears,*
>
> *hopes, and dreams. You know, I just want people in all of my classes to be able to move*
>
> *forward to make better decisions both individually and in their future professional lives.*

Angela's honest and heart-felt statement cuts through the pedagogical and theoretical

reasons for establishing instructor social presence within an online course. Research has

established that instructor social presence is at the intersection of social and teaching presence as

applied within the CoI framework (Garrison, 1989, 2000; Garrison et al., 2010). This additional

description of presence is necessary as a means to identify the important role that instructors

have in the development of a community of learners in the online learning environment.

Although the majority of the participants were not familiar with the CoI framework and the concept of social presence, they did acknowledge the importance of establishing relationships with their online students. The faculty interviewed for this study whole-heartedly believed that their instructor introduction in the form of an asynchronous video was an effective method for presenting themselves as real people who wanted to make connections with their students.

While other research studies have looked at community-building strategies such as using synchronous web-conferencing sessions and chats, sending welcome emails (Berry, 2019), providing audio feedback (Borup et al., 2012), and participating in discussion forums, this study focused only on the use of asynchronous video as a method of establishing the instructor's social presence during the first week of class. In this case study, the participants indicated that they were successful in developing relationships with their students as a result of the asynchronous video introductions.

Through the examination of the experiences of the five online instructors, it came to light that there is a learning curve with the recording of the videos. Recording an asynchronous video involved preparation and strategic placement of the person in front of the camera in order to achieve a quality outcome. Faculty stressed the importance of knowing that there is technical assistance available should they need it when they are learning to use educational technology such as Zoom to record their videos.

The instructors in this study agreed that asynchronous videos are an effective method of presenting themselves as real people to their students. They articulated the belief that it is important to utilize technology to interact with students in a way that students are accustomed to even if it means stepping outside of their own comfort zone. As the study by Martin et al. (2019)

identified, some of the competencies needed to be exemplary online instructors are technical skills, a willingness to learn, and an understanding of how students learn online.

As Lehman and Conceição (2010) pointed out, in the online learning environment, it takes intentionality to create instructor social presence. Asynchronous videos have the potential to incorporate nonverbal cues such as smiling, excitement, and hand gestures, but as the instructors experienced, there are some physical limitations to the videos. Those limitations will require instructors to make adjustments in how they deliver course content (Kebritchi et al., 2017). The key is to provide interactions that occur regularly and are plentiful and varied (Cavanaugh, 2013).

Conclusion

Distance education and online learning has proven to be the most transformative and pervasive initiative an institution can undertake. In order to manage as well as maximize the growth potential, it is essential that educational leaders place an emphasis on the theoretical underpinnings of distance learning as well encourage faculty to develop best practices in the development of online courses. Mohr and Shelton (2017) stated that,

> Technology has forever changed the higher education landscape through enriched learning environments, because of this, faculty need tools and resources to help successfully facilitate learning in online educational environments. (p. 123)

The tools that Mohr and Shelton (2017) are referring to are not just technology, software, and conferencing platforms, although it is certainly important that faculty are provided with proper training and support in their use. Rather, it is essential that online faculty provide training on how to leverage educational technology in such a way that they are successful in building a Community of Inquiry within their online courses. According to Palloff and Pratt (2007), "Just as

the technology used to deliver an online class should become transparent in the learning process, so should it become transparent in faculty training" (p. 237). Technology-mediated materials such as asynchronous lectures will come and go so it important that we do not become excited about this particular mode of communication and lose site of the potential and power of online learning. When online learning is developed and facilitated in a way that incorporates community into the process, we are able to promote a generation of empowered instructors and learners who can successfully navigate the technology in order to form a community of learners.

Nearly two decades of research has confirmed that the Community of Inquiry framework has enormous potential to guide future approaches, strategies, and technologies in online learning (Cleveland-Innes, Garrison & Vaughan, 2018). In addition, the rich diversity of modern communication technologies allows for the production of materials and the development of applications that on the one hand benefits many but are also sufficiently flexible to be made relevant to each individual learner (Moore, 2018). Through our endeavors to promote the utilization of technology-mediated communication such as asynchronous videos as a means to facility the development of social presence within a Community of Inquiry, not only are we helping to shape the creation of empowered, lifelong learners, our participation as equal members of a group of learners supports us in our own quest for lifelong learning. "For us, this is the power of online distance learning" (Palloff & Pratt, 2017, p. 238).

Part III: Project Conclusion

I. Becoming a Change Agent in Online Learning

In my current position as a senior instructional technologist I enjoy working one-on-one with faculty and guiding them in the design and delivery of blended and fully online courses. When I am working on aligning the learning objectives with the course materials, technology, activities, and assessments, the instructional technology geek in me comes out. I am able to let the creative juices flow as I apply the academic knowledge that I have obtained through graduate coursework, literature reviews, Quality Matters training, and professional conferences. Nothing pleases me more than a well-designed course that adheres to the Quality Matters Rubric, is visually appealing, fully accessible, and incorporates the elements necessary for the formation of a Community of Inquiry (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000).

Although I find great personal and professional gratification in my current position, I have a desire to make a larger impact in the world of online learning. I get frustrated when I see the low priority that administration places on ensuring that our online courses are meeting quality standards and are fully accessible to all learners. Working with one faculty member at a time seems like just a drop in the bucket when I know that it is going to take an institutional mandate from the administration to make quality online courses a priority. I would like to be one of the change agents in an arena of online education and that will involve moving to administrative positions where I can have a larger impact.

II. Becoming a Doctor of Education

I chose the Ed.D. in Education, Higher Educational Administration program because it is intended to prepare graduates for leadership positions in adult education, postsecondary education, and related fields. As an educator, I always use the learning outcomes to gauge

success as I look toward the conclusion of my doctorate education. I used the General Program

Outcomes of the Ed.D. Program as an assessment of my completion:

1) Academic Knowledge:

   a. Outcome: Demonstrate a deep understanding of knowledge related to the nature,

      function and scope of adult and continuing education; historical, philosophical

      and sociological foundations; adult learning and development; program processes

      including planning, delivery, and assessment/evaluation.

   b. Demonstration: I have a deep understanding and familiarity with the foundations

      of higher education, especially in the field of online learning. I draw on this

      knowledge on a daily basis as I work with faculty to develop online courses that

      meet quality standards in online learning.

2) Practical Competence:

   a. Outcome: Demonstrate the ability to translate academic knowledge into expert

      practice related to their professional roles and specialized area of interest.

   b. Demonstration: Through core courses such as "Leader as a Change Agent"

      (EDAD 5720) and "Leader as Direction Setter" (EDAD 5850) I was able to

      discover the qualities and proficiencies necessary to be a leader. I adhere to the

      servant leadership philosophy in which the servant leader shares power and puts

      the needs of others first in order to help people to develop and perform as highly

      as possible (Greenleaf, 2002).

      i. I look at every new job responsibility as an opportunity to translate academic

         knowledge into expert practice. When my supervisor asked me to develop a

         system for ensuring accessibility of educational materials, I immersed myself

in learning about ADA and WCAG standards. I attended professional

conferences and obtained specialized training and certifications in order to

position myself as the Accessibility Specialist for my department.

    ii.   Due to my interest in quality assurance in online learning, I became certified

in the application of the Quality Matters Rubric which is an essential tool in

the development of blended and online courses.

3) Reflective Inquiry:

    a. Outcome: Demonstrate a reflective stance toward their professional practice and

competence with diverse, critical and global perspectives and key tools of inquiry

to this field of study.

    b. Demonstration: Essential to obtaining the designation of Doctor of Education is

the ability to apply tools of inquiry in order to continue to gain knowledge in the

field and also to contribute to the field through scholarly research and writing.

The culmination of this outcome will be publication in a peer-reviewed scholarly

journal (more on that below).

4) Democratic Commitment:

    a. Outcome: Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between adult and

continuing education and the complex process of democracy and a commitment to

pursue this process with a focus on equal learning opportunities.

    b. Demonstration: I am fully committed to equal access to learning opportunities and

will continue to be an advocate for equality opportunity for all people, especially

those with disabilities. I have a strong commitment to ensuring that all

instructional materials meet ADA and WCAG accessibility standards and will

continue to participate in the committee on campus that is working toward the advancement of that initiative.

5) Professional Engagement:

    a. Outcome: Demonstrate intellectual engagement with adult and continuing education practices through creative and scholarly pursuits, participation in professional associations, and related activities.

    b. Demonstration: In order to be professionally engaged, one must be continuously looking for opportunities to learn more, contribute more, and participate more. I will demonstrate my continued professional engagement by pursuing opportunities to present at conferences; to collaborate with colleagues on scholarly research projects; to participate on committees that are focused on the advancement of online learning and accessibility; and to become involved in a professional organization such as the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

III. Becoming a Published Author

Why Case Study Research? I chose to pursue an Ed.D. because of the available options for completion. The final applied project option that most intrigued me was that of a local case study which was described as: A descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory analysis of a person, group or event.

I love reading and writing qualitative research and through the research courses that I took as a graduate student at UW, I was exposed to the various types of phenomenological research. Just like any doctoral student, at first, I struggled with narrowing down a research topic. But last year I was talking to Angela, an early adopter of educational technology having

taught in distance education for over thirty-eight years. I witnessed her commitment to her students and the work that she put into communicating with her students. She spent countless hours preparing and recording instructional lectures and ensuring that they were of high quality and fully accessible and designing her course so that it met quality online standards of delivery. I asked Angela what her motivation was for putting in the extra time and effort for students that she would likely never meet in person and her reply had a lasting impact on me. I can't quote her word for word, but essentially, she said that she was put on this earth to be an educator. She acknowledged that she would probably never be directly involved with saving someone's life like a doctor would, and she would never be given any accolades from the administration for her commitment to quality online instruction, but her purpose in life was to help her students to be successful in their personal and professional lives through the instruction that they received directly from her. I thought to myself, "Yes! This is why I also chose to work in the field of education! I wanted to make a difference in the lives of people."

My conversation with Angela caused me to wonder if other online faculty had similar feelings and if they placed a priority on impacting the lives of their students. In order to narrow the focus of my case study research, I chose the modality of asynchronous video as the common factor among the research participants since it is a technology that I work with on a daily basis.

Submission to the Journal of Interactive Learning Research (JILR). The JILR is the official journal of the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). The JILR publishes papers related to the underlying theory, design, implementation, effectiveness, and impact of interactive learning environments in education and training. I believe that my research would be a good fit for this journal because it frames the effectiveness

of using asynchronous video within the Community of Inquiry and Moore's Transactional Distance Theories as well as describes practical design and implementation of the technology.

The Journal defines a learning environment that is *interactive* as being able to navigate through it, select relevant information, respond to questions using computer input devices, solve problems, complete challenging tasks, create knowledge representations, collaborate with others near or at a distance, or otherwise engage in meaningful learning activities with the primary function of support learning within the contexts of education and training. With this focused approach, the Journal is a good fit for my area of expertise as an instructional technologist and accessibility specialist.

The Journal encourages the use of alternative research methodologies such as qualitative case studies and they are especially open to submissions that involve alternative methods such as qualitative and critical theory, which according to the journal's scope, seem to be underrepresented in more traditional publications. It is exciting to see that they also encourage less common methodologies such as observations, diaries, and narratives which are types of research that I would like to pursue in the future.

Based on the Journal's goal classification scheme, I believe that my research would come under the category of development, which focuses on invention and improvement of creative approaches to enhancing human communication, learning, and performance through the use of technology and theory.

The Journal encourages authors to post a paper to the JILR World Wide Web site for public critique in order to make revisions to the paper based on the feedback before it is subjected to peer review. This is an option that I would definitely utilize since I have no prior experience with submission to peer reviewed journals.

The Journal has a # 4 ranking in "Learning Research" (H-Index). Although they do not explicitly state who their target audience is, one can surmise that based on their mission of advancing Information Technology in Education and E-Learning research, development, learning, and its practical application, the audience would be anyone involved in the advancement of those initiatives.

The Journal is published quarterly. Manuscripts are accepted at any time and the review is carried out as promptly as possible. The manuscript is reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Review Board through a double-blind process, which takes approximately five months. When a decision for publication or rejection is made, the senior author is notified and at the time of notification, the author may be asked to make certain revisions in the manuscript. The journal does not require a specific style, but it does require APA formatting of headings, tables, figures, citations, references, and other details.

IV. Next Steps

1) Confirmation from the committee that I have successfully completed this project to their specifications.

2) Uploading the final project to the Mountain Scholar Digital Collection as required for the completion of the EdD program.

3) Preparing the case study for submission to the JILR which will include removal of all extraneous content; and fastidious application of APA formatting to the manuscript.

4) Collaboration with Dr. Cho and Dr. Scull to revise the manuscript so that it is publication ready.

5) Submission of manuscript to the review board of the Journal of Interactive Learning Research (JILR).

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Appendix A
Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching online courses?

2. What level of course are you currently teaching? Undergrad, grad, or combination?

3. How important do you believe it is to establish a relationship with your online students?

4. What do you know about the concept of online presence or building a community of learning?

5. What do you perceive as the benefits of building a community of learning in your online course(s)?

6. What are your plans to increase your instructor social presence?

7. What type of training (if any) did you receive on how to use software/technology to record your videos? Did the training make the process easier?

8. What was your motivation for creating asynchronous videos?

9. Describe your experience with producing your asynchronous video, i.e. was it easy or difficult to use the technology?

10. What was your comfort level with introducing yourself via video?

11. How much time would you estimate that you spend preparing to record a video?

12. To what extent do you feel that your personality and enthusiasm for the subject came through in your videos?

13. What, if anything would you do differently?

14. How effective do you perceive that the asynchronous video or videos that you uploaded to your course were in the establishment of instructor social presence?

15. How has your opinion changed regarding the use of asynchronous video?

16. What advice would you give to faculty who are thinking about incorporating asynchronous videos into their online courses?

Appendix B

The following original questions from the Online Faculty Satisfaction Survey (OFSS) were adapted from the interviews:

1) The level of my interactions with students in the online course is higher than in a traditional face-to-face class.

3) My online students are actively involved in their learning.

5) The technology I use for online teaching is reliable.

7) I miss face-to-face contact with students when teaching online.

13) I have to be more creative in terms of the resources used for the online course.

14) Online teaching is often frustrating because of technical problems.

15) It takes me longer to prepare for an online course on a weekly basis than for a face-to-face course.

16) I am satisfied with the use of communication tools in the online environment.

18) I am more satisfied with teaching online as compared to other delivery methods.

19) My online students are somewhat passive when it comes to contacting the instructor regarding course related matters.

23) Technical problems do not discourage me from teaching online.

25) Not meeting my online students face-to-face prevents me from knowing them as well as my on-site students.

27) Online teaching is gratifying because it provides me with an opportunity to reach students who otherwise would not be able to take courses.

28) It is more difficult to motivate my students in the online environment than in the traditional setting.