Humanizing advanced communication online writing instruction: developing social presence to communicate, collaborate, and connect

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Humanizing advanced communication online writing instruction:
Developing social presence to communicate, collaborate, and connect

by

Lynn Beth McCool

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rhetoric and Professional Communication

Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2016

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DEDICATION

To Chase, Lauren, Logan, Brigitte, Erin, Amber, and Job, you inspire me everyday.
To our parents, you always encourage me.

…And most importantly, to Dan, you patiently walked beside me. Thank you, my love for making this journey together.
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ABSTRACT

Online writing instruction comes with its own peculiar set of affordances and constraints. One affordance is the flexible nature of learning "anytime, anywhere" while an important constraint (that affects both instructors and students) is transactional distance—the geographical, psychological and emotional distance that occurs when students learn in online environments (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 1999; Moore, 2013). Prior researchers have responded to transactional distance and its influence on student learning and satisfaction by developing the Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 1999; Garrison and Arbaugh, 2007). This instructional design model addresses the non-geographical distances that affect the communication of both instructors and students by establishing three “presences” in the online learning environment (OLE): cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence.

This research project looks at just one of these—social presence—in the advanced communication online writing course to determine how it influences instructors’ and students' abilities to construct knowledge and to connect within the advanced communication course, and as Johnson-Eilola (1998, 2005) alludes, to a larger network beyond the course itself. In the context of this project, social presence is defined as the “the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g. the course of study), and communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities” (Garrison 2010). Social presence is most closely connected to an individual’s ability to form and maintain effective individual and team relationships, both of which are necessary components to
learning in a collaborative environment focused on solving real-world communication problems.

Because online writing instruction occurs online and is mediated in virtual spaces, instructors often do not consider the social nature of learning perhaps in the same way that they do in face-to-face classrooms. This research study aims to examine the social nature of learning within the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC) to determine how instructors and students create, promote, and maintain social presence within the confines of the course and the community of inquiry found therein.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

We believe that online writing instruction (OWI) is composition writ large because OWI enables teaching students to write with, through, and about the next wave of writing technologies (Hewett & Warnock, 2015, p. 547).

My experience with online writing instruction began in 2011 as an adjunct at a small private college where I first ventured into a classroom without walls to teach an online rhetoric course. Later in 2013 as a Ph.D. teaching assistant at Iowa State University, I became an online instructor of technical communication—an advanced communication course for juniors and seniors. In both situations, I discovered as an instructor that teaching online had its own set of affordances and constraints. This made me curious to “see the other side” in the role of the student rather than the role of the instructor in order to understand better what students perceive as benefits and frustrations within the online learning environment.

Interestingly, in my continuing professional development, I also discovered that researchers Beth Hewett and Christa Ehmann (2004) advocated that instructors experience online writing instruction through “immersion” by participating as online students during teacher training sessions. Hewett and Ehmann’s (2004) approach to training teachers in this manner resulted from constructivist, situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which attempts to provide “authentic situations,” where the learner can make more “solid connections between the educational experience and what he or she is to gain from it for future understanding and action” (p.12). According to Hewett and Ehmann (2004), teacher trainers fully immersed in the online environment “experience online instruction…from the perspective of genuine students” (p.12). Immersion, then, accomplishes several ends; first, immersion helps trainees
“move more fluidly” between the traditional and online environment (p.12). Secondly, given budget constraints of many English departments, immersion “helps to initiate new instructors with optimal efficiency” (p.12). Thirdly, immersion helps to create “connections” between what trainees already know and what they are learning (p.12). Finally, immersion facilitates “transforming the ways that participants act and think” via “deeper critical thinking” (p. 11). Based upon these suggestions, I decided to immerse myself as a student, in four online courses as part of my Ph.D. course work. I found Hewett and Ehmann’s (2004) “principle of immersion” to be very effective in my own understanding of online learning from both sides of the desk—teacher and student (p. 11). Consequently from the combined experiences as an online instructor and student, I developed an ongoing interest in online writing instruction research and pedagogy.

**Composition and the Digital Shift**

Since the end of the last century, composition researchers have been theorizing about the ways in which writing practices shape and are shaped by new technologies. In 1998, Johndan Johnson-Eilola suggested that postmodern composition was moving from a product-centric process pedagogy “to a notion of composition that values arrangement and connection/disjunction” which is more highly valued in an “emerging digital society because it focuses on problems easily applicable to rapidly expanding information spaces and because it embraces…knowledge *production* in cultural rather than cognitivist-individualist ways” (p.22). As twenty-first century writing continues to shift from printed page to interface (Brooke 2009; Johnson-Eilola, 2005) and from traditional written composing to multimodal composing (Palmeri, 2012; Shipka, 2011), theorists examine new ways of thinking and composing within online spaces (Hewlett et
al., 2015). Equally important, the shift in composing practices from traditional to online spaces has resulted in new affordances and constraints in which students are asked to compose and for which instructors are asked to facilitate writing instruction online.

**Online Writing Instruction**

By definition, online writing instruction (OWI) is “using computer technology to learn writing from a teacher, tutor, or other students and by using it to communicate about writing, to share writing for learning purposes, and to present writing for course completion purposes” (Hewett 2015, p. 36). Moreover, fully online writing courses “occur entirely online and at-a-distance through the Internet or intranet, and students respond from geographically distributed sites whether they meet from short (i.e. campus-based) or long (i.e. across state/international borders) distance” (Hewett, 2014, p. 196). This is in contrast to hybrid writing courses that meet partially face-to-face and partially in a geographically distributed modality. Furthermore, the distributed networks established within the online writing course (OWC) and the communicative connections made both within and outside of those networks correspond with Johnson-Eilola’s post-process model of composition pedagogy for technical communicators (1998; 2005).

**OWI in Context**

To set online writing instruction within a larger framework and to begin to understand how students’ connective relationships might be increased within the online learning environment, it is important to highlight key statistics about online instruction in general. First, according to the Department of Education’s report *The Condition of Education 2015*, “about 4.6 million undergraduate students participated in distance education, with two million students (11% of total undergraduate enrollment) exclusively taking distance
education courses” (Kena et al., 2015, p. 97). During this same time period, the Babson Research Group also reported that “more than 6.7 million students, or 32% of total higher education enrollment in the United States, took at least one online course in Fall 2011—an increase of more than half a million students from the prior year” (New Media Consortium, 2014). Subsequently, Babson Research Group has reported an increase of “7.1 million American students engaged in online learning of some form” (New Media Consortium, 2015).

Currently, what is not reported is the percentage of online writing courses that contribute to the overall total of courses offered online as well as the breakdown of varying levels of instruction from first-year composition (FYC) to advanced composition courses (ACC). Rather, instead of pinpointing these types of statistics that show part to whole, much of online writing research has been concentrated on the pedagogical aspects of facilitating first-year online composition courses (Rendahl & Breuch, 2013), teacher training that effectively migrates course content from face-to-face instruction to online (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004; Warnock 2015), and strategies designed to maximize student engagement (Gillam & Wooden, 2013; Mehlenbacher, 2010; Warnock 2009).

Next, to place OWI within its historical context, I briefly summarize the CCCCs investigation into the “what” and “how” of writing online.

**OWI and CCCC**

In 2007, members of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) formed a committee to investigate online learning with the idea of creating a set of “best” or “effective” practices for online writing instruction (Hewett, 2015). At that time
the committee took “no position on...whether OWI should be used and practiced in postsecondary settings because it accept[ed] the reality that OWI is used” and practiced in such settings (Hewett et al. 2011). Their initial report (2011) revealed data collected from instructors and scholars in the field who were already teaching composition online. From this research the CCCC’s committee (2013) produced A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI). The fifteen principles within this position statement address OWI issues such as the need for accessibility, a focus on writing instruction as opposed to technology instruction, a call for appropriate onsite composition theories and pedagogies (that might be migrated and adapted from face-to-face instruction), and the development of new theories and pedagogies (specifically for the online classroom). Additionally, these principles outline accompanying issues such as instructor compensation, and the creation of course content for and quality of instruction within the online writing course (OWC). At this juncture, members of CCCC continue to add to an already growing body of research for online instruction by contextualizing the issues unique to online writing instruction (Hewett et al. 2015).

**OWI and the Advanced Communication Course**

Not surprisingly, this growing body of research for OWI is often studied and written from the stance of First-Year Composition (FYC). As early as the 1800s, the history of composition research disclosed a narrative of English departments creating

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1 In the introduction of their report, the CCCC’s established definitions for the common verb usage of should, shall, must to be defined as “is recommended that”, “is required to”, and “is to describe unavoidable situations” respectively (Hewett, 2015, p. 37). I use these verbs with the same connotative meanings throughout this dissertation.
composition courses designed to remediate the writing deficiencies of incoming freshmen students (Berlin, 1987; Connors, Ede, & Lunsford, 2003). This service-course perception continues to exist today as colleges and universities regularly offer either one or two semester set of courses designed to help new students acclimate to the rigors of academic writing and to provide a communicative entry point into the student’s chosen disciplinary community of practice. So, it would make sense that much of composition research focuses on FYC because of the desire to help students successfully enter into the academic conversation.

However, FYC is not the only time that students may be asked to fulfill a composition course requirement. Although FYC is a common occurrence within the general education requirements of nearly every major within the university system, one area of composition instruction that is often overlooked is the collection of advanced communication courses offered to third and fourth year students. Many majors require an advanced communication course—an upper level professional, business, or technical writing course to help students learn the specific genre conventions associated with graduate level academia, business, and industry. These courses are often the last English composition/communication course that students will take before graduating and finding a job. Therefore, advanced communication courses are uniquely positioned to provide concentrated instruction in specialized genres and communication practices that students will encounter in graduate level academia, business, and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{In this research, advanced communication is used as an umbrella term to encompass upper-level composition courses such as business communication, professional communication, technical communication, proposal writing, digital composition, and writing for the web.}\]
industry. In addition, the added element of those courses occurring in a fully online environment should invite inquiry into how to effectively facilitate a course for this subset of students.

Because junior and senior level undergraduate students are often at a different point in their academic career, they may require different approaches or strategies for effective learning and transfer of knowledge to occur within the online learning environment (OLE). With this in mind, an item worthy of our attention is the way in which online advanced communication courses technologically mediate communication and distribute content through time and space. One method, to address this, is through the OLE theory of transactional distance and the closely associated strategies found within the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework. To understand how transactional distance affects students and instructors within the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC), I first, begin with a definition of the term and then provide a brief overview of the Community of Inquiry framework that was developed to address the issues caused by transactional distance.

**OWI and Transactional Distance**

In the area of online instruction (generally) and online writing instruction (specifically) distance-learning scholars both inside (Warnock 2015, Hewett et al. 2015) and outside of composition (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer 2010; Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2014) have discussed the problems of transactional distance in online courses and suggested strategies for creating a Community of Inquiry (COI) framework which includes teaching, social, and cognitive presences. First, transactional distance theory, developed by Michael G. Moore (2013), addresses the unique conditions of online learning
environments, in which “transaction in distance education is the interplay of teachers and learners in environments that have the special characteristic of their being spatially [i.e. geographically] separate from one another” (p. 68). Building upon Moore’s theory, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010) expanded the concept of transactional distance beyond geographic distance to include both the emotional and psychological distances that factor into an online learning environment (OLE).

In response to the problem of transactional distance, Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2010) developed the Community of Inquiry (COI) instructional design model to address the non-geographical, transactional distances that affect the communication of both instructors and students. COI “intend[s] to offer…a new theoretical perspective” on distance instruction and draws upon “insights from the fields of linguistics and communications regarding the relevant features of text-based communication as compared to spoken language” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010, p. 6). COI is comprised of three elements:

- **cognitive presence**—“the construction and application of knowledge through sustained reflection and online discourse,”
- **teaching presence**—“the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile outcomes,”

![Figure 1.1 Community of Inquiry Model](image)
• **social presence**—“the way in which online learners portray themselves as ‘real people’ in their online interactions in the absence of face-to-face interactions” (Kumar & Ritzhaupt, 2014, p. 60).

See figure 1.0 on page 8 for a visual representation of the COI framework. Finally, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer contend that all three “presences” are necessary for effective teaching and learning to occur in the OLE.

**Problem Statement**

The focus of this research, then, centers on the correlation within the AC-OWC with one of the three COI elements—**social presence**—the “ability of participants in an online course to project their personal characteristics into the community of inquiry, thereby presenting themselves as ‘real people’ ” (Garrison, et al. 2010). Overall, previous studies involving the connection with social presence and distance instruction have included social interaction in an online environment (McCreery, Vallet, & Clark, 2015), electronic feedback and social presence (Walter, Ortbach, & Niehaves, 2014), students’ perceptions of teaching and social presence (Bowers & Kumar, 2015) to name just a few. More specifically within online writing instruction, composition researchers have explored online peer review (Breuch, 2004), the online writing conference (Hewett, 2010), pedagogical considerations of migrating from face-to-face to online (Warnock, 2009), and teacher training for online writing instructors (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004).

Even though the field of online writing research continues to expand, much of it falls within one of two categories: a generalization of all online writing courses (Depew, Fishman, Romberger, & Ruetenik, 2006; Hewett & DePew, 2015; Warnock 2009) or localization to FYC courses (Boyd 2008; Rendahl & Breuch, 2013). However, a smaller
subset of OWI remains to be explored—the area of advanced communication courses inhabited by older students who may require different approaches. In particular, this research focuses on one aspect of the COI framework—social presence to determine how it influences instructors’ and students’ abilities to construct knowledge and to connect within the advanced communication course, and as Johnson-Eilola alludes, to a larger network beyond the course itself.

**Statement of Purpose**

Although there are many issues surrounding the online learning environment (OLE) of OWI, one primary concern that I have identified, as both an instructor and a student, is the de-humanizing element that occurs when instruction is mediated through an interface of an OLE rather than face-to-face within the traditional classroom (Depew, Fishman, Romberger, & Ruetenik, 2006; Powers 2010). This de-humanization is due, in part, to the element of transactional distance that exists within AC-OWC. Transactional distance is not only a geographical distancing of participants from each other as theorized by Moore (2013), but also according to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010) comprises psychological and emotional distancing within the OLE.

Furthermore, I observed that the de-humanization of the OLE conflicted with commonly held constructivist pedagogies that advocate for collaborative learning environments, and by extension, *humanized* online spaces. Correspondingly, a de-humanized OLE collided with the newer theoretical considerations of connectivist pedagogies that suggest individuals learn not only through collaborative experience but also through their networked connections. The purpose of this research, then, is to explore how one element of online learning—the use of social presence in the
advanced communication-online writing course (AC-OWC)—might be used to mitigate the constraint of transactional distance (the geographical, psychological, and emotional distance found in the OWC) and to promote a community of inquiry in the OWC through students’ collaborative experiences and connective networks.

**Research Questions**

This study investigates three central questions:

- Which technological modalities do instructors and students prefer to use to communicate social presence within the AC-OWC?
- How does social presence reduce transactional distance and support collaboration within the AC-OWC?
- How does the use of social presence in the AC-OWC inform the post-process theory of composition, which embraces a “shift from production to connection” (Jenkins; Johnson-Eilola 2007)?

**Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One, I have briefly defined and contextualized online writing instruction, the problem of transactional distance, the community of inquiry framework, and highlighted the issue of humanizing the online learning environment. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature pertaining to writing in online environments and provides a theoretical framework for examining online writing instruction. Chapter Three outlines the presentation and rationale for my choice to use constructivist grounded theory, a postmodern iteration of grounded theory methodology that pairs well with the phenomenological study of instructors’ and students’ perceptions
of social presence in the AC-OWC. Chapter Four presents the results of the research study. Chapter Five discusses the implications of my findings. Finally, in Chapter Six, I conclude with my thoughts about future research and possible pedagogical strategies instructors might use.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, college and university teachers have been increasingly required to integrate technology in their teaching, and institutions schedule ever more courses online…. Students encounter their teacher, other students, and their subject matter through words on the screen. Literally, the text and the computer screen are the media that mediate the pedagogical relations and educational experiences. (Van Manen & Adams, 2009, p.10).

Due to the networked nature of twenty-first century knowing and learning, and because of the varied influences both within and outside of the field of online writing instruction, I envision online writing instruction (OWI) as analogous to the European traffic roundabout (See figure 2.0).

Currently, OWI stands at the epicenter of a busy, yet energized flow of action where the multiple and broad avenues of various disciplines converge, coalesce, and continue on toward familiar and new destinations. To fully understand and discuss the issues that coalesce at the epicenter of OWI, I examined the literature from intersecting theoretical areas of composition, andragogy, rhetoric, human computer interaction, and distance education to provide an analytical lens for this project’s data in order to guide my interpretative implications drawn from it.

This review commences, then, with a summary of the relevant literature for each theoretical contribution to online writing instruction/online writing course (OWI/OWC).
Where appropriate, I also highlight the conditions unique to the smaller subspecialty of upper level online writing courses in professional, technical, business communication referred to in this project as advanced communication online writing courses (AC-OWCs) or advanced communication online writing instruction (AC-OWI). To begin, I discuss Hewett’s (2015) *Grounding Principles of OWI* as a heuristic to establish effective practice in online writing instruction (OWI) within the online writing course (OWC).

**Foundational Principles of OWI**

In the introduction to my dissertation, I provided the general historical context for online writing instruction. In 2007 when the CCCCs formed a special committee to research online writing instruction, they took “no position on…whether OWI should be used and practiced in postsecondary settings because it accept[ed] the reality that OWI is used” and practiced in such settings (Hewett et al. 2011). By 2013, their research resulted in a document entitled, *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)* (2013). This document listed fifteen essential principles within four broad categories. To establish clarity as to what each of the principles states, I list them below along with a brief summary explanation to provide an initial entry point into the theoretical considerations that underlie online writing instruction as well as to consider how certain principles might be tailored to *advanced communication* online writing instruction which services a different demographic of students than first-year online writing instruction (FY-OWI) does.
OWI Principles and Effective Practices

Overarching Principle

**OWI Principle 1:** *Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.*

Principle 1 foregrounds the need for accessible course design. In a text-centric environment such as OWI, the instructor should make provision beforehand for students with “disabilities, diversity, and place-boundedness” by providing alternate methods of accessing course content and communicating with other participants in the course (Hewett, 2015, p. 39). This principle applies equally to FY-OWI and AC-OWC.

Instructional Principles

**OWI Principle 2:** *An online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies.*

Principle 2 outlines the “primacy” of writing instruction over technology (p. 46). The CCCC OWI Committee acknowledges the tension created by this principle in that composition scholarship has discussed extensively digital technologies as rhetorical acts. However the committee maintains that the primary function for writing intensive courses such as FY-OWCs is *writing* instruction. However, this focus shifts slightly for the AC-OWC, which has as some of its objectives to introduce technology to students for the purposes of rhetorical analysis of and skill building in composing modalities (pp. 46-7).
**OWI Principle 3:** *Appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment.*

Principle 3 is a call to researchers to explore new pedagogies and develop new theories that better clarify “fundamental explanations for the unique qualities and challenges of OWI” (p. 50). Hewett (2010, 2015) identifies two strategies from her research: (1) a need for semantic integrity in the teacher's writing to the student, and (2) the complex needs for different of literacy strategies for students and teachers in text-rich settings” (p. 50). Additionally, according to Hewett (2015), one question that OWI theory should address is “how does affect change among students and teachers when moving from onsite to online settings and the concomitant loss of real-time, non-mediated body/face/voice?” (p. 51). Hewett’s question resonates with my perception of online environments as de-humanized spaces. This principle is applicable for both FY-OWI and AC-OWI.

**OWI Principle 4:** *Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment.*

Principle 4 establishes that many “core pedagogies of onsite writing instruction can and should remain in OWI” (p.52). This includes composition scholarship concerning rhetorical and writing theories. Of particular importance, teachers should “seek opportunities to use established practices when moving online while seeking alternative ways of offering those practices within digital spaces and using electronic tools”[emphasis mine] (p.52). Common theories that are easily migrated online include “social construction, writing process, Aristotelian rhetoric, and expressivism” (p. 52). Warnock (2009) also recommends that teaching strategies such as
discussion/forum boards for facilitating peer/teacher discussions, small peer groups for peer review of drafts, revision process with multiple drafts of essays, reading about writing, portfolio assessment, and text- or audio-based teacher response to writing are all applicable in the online course (Hewett, 2015, p 53). These examples of effective migration from traditional to online environments work well both for FY-OWI and AC-OWI.

**OWI Principle 5:** *Online writing teachers should retain reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching, and assessing their students’ writing in their OWCs.*

Principle 5 mitigates the tension between the institutional need for homogeneity among different sections of a course and allowance for a teacher’s control over her own creativity in meeting students’ needs within the course. “To this end, OWI Principle 5 strives to recognize that experienced and appropriately trained [emphasis original] teachers of OWI should have as much control as possible over their course content, instructional techniques, and assessment methods” (p.56). This principle applies equally to both FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

**OWI Principle 6:** *Alternative self-paced, or experimental OWI models should be subject to the same principles of pedagogical soundness, teacher/designer preparation, and oversight detailed in this document.*

Principle 6 recognizes that alternative or “new” or “experimental” forms of online instruction may meet the needs of particular students. Nevertheless, the committee advocates that “even an experimental OWI model should be guided by a strong foundation in writing studies, specialized training in OWI, fair and equitable
compensation for teacher’s work, [and] a reasonable course load for instructors” (p. 59). This is applicable for both FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

Faculty Principles

**OWI Principle 7:** Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) for OWI programs and their online writing teachers should receive appropriate OWI-focused training, professional development, and assessment for evaluation and promotion purposes.

Principle 7 establishes criteria for faculty to be able to thrive and succeed in the online teaching environment. One critical key to success is that “contingent faculty should not be placed into OWCs until they have received appropriate training by their WPAs and institution” (p. 60). The focus of teacher training should be primarily about OWI pedagogy and not technology use. This principle is applicable to both FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

**OWI Principle 8:** Online writing teachers should receive fair and equitable compensation for their work.

Principle 8 acknowledges that the time and work into developing and facilitating an OWC is just as intensive, if not more so, as a traditional writing course. “Therefore the CCCC OWI Committee recommends additional compensation for first-time OWI teachers who are learning how to accommodate such necessary organizational and pedagogical strategies” (p.64). This principle is applicable to both FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

**OWI Principle 9:** OWCs should be capped responsibly at 20 students per course with 15 being a preferable number.
Principle 9 addresses the “text-heavy work” of OWI, which is due to “the sheer volume of interactive discussion boards and emails make for a more labor intensive class than a face-to-face class” (p.68). Instructors should be assured of smaller course sizes to avoid “burn out”, depersonalization, and students’ failure “to persist” (p. 67). This principle is applicable to both FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

**Institutional Principles**

**OWI Principle 10:** *Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components of OWI.*

Principle 10 suggests that institutional support in the form of orientation to the online environment, help with technology such as the learning management system, and setting of expectations about the OWC experience are all necessary for student success in the OWC. Therefore, the CCCCs Committee recommends, “clear OWI-orientation program should be provided at the institutional or unit level such that students are made aware of the unique requirements and technological opportunities of the OWC” (p.69). This is applicable for both online FY-OWI and AC-OWI courses.

**OWI Principle 11:** *Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success.*

Principle 11 highlights the connection between community building and student satisfaction. “Online communities help to make the mediated interaction more human” (p.75). Considering issues of inclusivity and access from Principle 1, there should be an LMS-based medium for communication. However, “not all group-building interactions may occur using the course’s preferred medium” (p.75). Current
strategies of building community between instructor and students include returning student writing promptly, responding to discussion prompts rather than letting students carry the discussion alone, giving students opportunities “to evaluate the course midstream”, and “include students in decision-making” (p. 75). While also appropriate for FY-OWI, some of these strategies rely upon andragogical principles that are particularly suited to the older students of the AC-OWC. Nevertheless, more research is necessary for acquiring additional strategies that will increase community building within the OWC (p. 75).

**OWI Principle 12:** *Institutions should foster teacher satisfaction in online writing courses as rigorously as they do for student and programmatic success.*

Principle 12 addresses issues for creating and maintaining teacher satisfaction within the OWC, which the CCCC’s Committee deems as important as student satisfaction. Teachers should receive support via “frank discussions about preferred media for communicating, theories of writing instruction, and notions of student learning and success” (p.78). In addition the Committee recommends “all new teachers [emphasis original] should be prepared for OWI in such ways as to help them find their strengths in the online teaching environment” (p.78). This principle is applicable to both teachers of online FY-OWI and AC-OWC.

**OWI Principle 13:** *OWI students should be provided support components through online/digital media as a primary resource; they should have access to onsite support components as a secondary set of resources.*

Principle 13 advocates that as an issue of access and inclusivity (see Principle 1) OWI students should have the same types of access to supporting services in the
form of Online Writing Labs (OWLs), “online library, IT assistance, and student counseling” (p.79). However, the Committee found from their survey that a “vast majority of supplemental support was available through static online materials with a text-based nature” (p. 79). The Committee suggests that more should be done to develop synchronous support for students in the online environment. This principle is applicable to both students of online FY-OWI and AC-OWC.

**OWI Principle 14:** Online writing lab administrators and tutors should undergo selection, training, and ongoing professional development activities that match the environment in which they will work.

Principle 14 addresses the need for OWL tutors and instructors to be trained “to address the distinctive nature of online writing tutoring in asynchronous and synchronous venues” (p.83). The Committee’s recommendation aims to increase the “quality of tutorial sessions” in the online environment, which holds benefit for both students in their skill building and instructors in refining their praxis of OWL tutoring. This principle is applicable to both students of online FY-OWI and AC-OWC.

**Research and Exploration**

**OWI Principle 15:** OWL/OWL administrators and teachers/tutors should be committed to ongoing research into their programs and courses as well as the very principles in this document (Hewett et al 2015).

Principle 15 calls for ongoing research in the field of OWI. The CCCC’s Committee maintains that not enough is known yet about “all the ways that students learn and fail to learn to write through digital technologies” (p.86). While this principle is applicable to FY-OWI, it seems that focused research on how students learn in
AC-OWC and the specific accommodations necessary for increasing student success and transfer of skills is extremely important is also of great concern.

This brief summary of the CCCCs Position Statement on OWI highlights the salient aspects of each principle and identifies specific areas that suggest more pointed inquiry into student learning and instructor training in the AC-OWC. The complete document, A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI) (2013), which includes the fifteen principles and accompanying rationales and best practices, may be found in Appendix A. Since it is not within the scope of this project to address the theoretical suppositions of all fifteen principles and their accompanying best practices, I only examine those most salient to this project namely: Principles 3, 4, 10, and 11 and further explain their relevance in the conceptual framework section of this chapter. In my brief summary of the CCCCs position statement, I point out areas of difference between FYOC and AC-OWC students. In the next section, I address the use of andragogy as a better approach for facilitating the AC-OWC for the typical adult learner who inhabits advanced online communication courses.

Andragogy—Contrasting Attitudes on Learning

While instructors of advanced composition often refer to their pedagogy, the term is not entirely accurate for the primary population who is enrolled in the advanced communication online writing course. By the time students arrive at this point in their academic career, they have attained a greater level of maturity and collected work and life experiences that set them apart from the traditional freshman first-year composition student. As adult learners, involved in part-time or full-time internships or work, their needs and focus are different from (recently graduated-from-high school) freshmen that
typically populate FYOC. A better teaching approach than pedagogy is andragogy, popularized in the United States by Malcolm Knowles (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000). While there is some debate over whether or not it is useful to characterize andragogy and pedagogy as distinct and whether Knowles' ideas are “techniques” or “theory,” (Henschke, 2009), the ideas are nonetheless helpful for conceptualizing online writing instruction for adult learners found in AC-OWCs. In his iteration of the theory, Knowles established six primary concepts of andragogy that include the following: need to know, foundation, self-concept, readiness, orientation, motivation (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Below is a brief explanation of each of the six concepts Knowles outlined and clarification of how it might be integrated into an AC-OWC.

- **Need to know.** Adults need to know why they are being asked to learn something and what the ultimate purpose of the knowledge or skill will be. To implement this into an AC-OWC, instructors should provide clear explanations in the syllabus, course announcements Q&A forum or discussion board posts, and any other public communication space. Some redundancy is helpful as well. For example, posting the announcement to the course announcement space as well as emailing the information to each student. There should be a high-level of contact between instructor and student.

- **Foundation.** Adults learn best through experience, including by making and correcting mistakes. According to Knowles, this idea should form the foundation of adult learning. To address this type of active learning, an AC-OWC should be a project-based course where students will learn about composing in different genres, in multiple modes, with various types of technological “tools”. Allowing
students to learn from their mistakes via instructor and peer feedback, as well as self-reflection on the process can help them continue improving their project-based, real-world, hands-on work (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994; Garraway, Volbrecht, Wicht, & Ximba, 2011; Russell & Fisher, 2009).

- **Self-concept.** Adults need to be responsible for their decisions involving their education as much as possible. They should be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning as much as possible. An AC-OWC can implement this concept by allowing students as much freedom of choice as possible with certain choices of projects, the self-selection of team/groups. In areas where they have expertise, they should be given more choice for example, in the selection of topics for writing a proposal and technical description. Students also are asked to reflect upon and evaluate their own work, which gives them a sense of agency as they determine what went well as well as the areas where they could still improve (Quick, 2012).

- **Readiness.** Adults work best and learn fastest when they are studying subjects that have immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives. Introducing relevant genres, tools, and communication practices found in many workplace environments provides relevance and promotes engagement with the course. Acquiring skills such as these foster the transfer of course concepts to their other classes and lives outside school (Kain & Wardle, 2005).

- **Orientation.** Adult learning should be problem-centered rather than content-oriented. Using a hands-on, project-based learning approach, course units, should provide or encourage the student to find an advanced communication
problem to solve—a hands-on task to accomplish. The course content gives the student the background information needed to accomplish the task, but the end result of the unit is solving the problem, or in other words, accomplishing the task (Youngblood & Mackiewicz, 2013).

**Motivation.** Adult learners respond better to internal rather than external motivators. While this is something we can’t necessarily instill in the students, instructors can establish a community of inquiry that appeals to the teaching, cognitive, and social presences all of which have been proven to correlate to student motivation and satisfaction in online course instructional environments (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). For example, some of the ways instructors build community of inquiry in the AC-OWC is to focus on the task (project) and the process of accomplishing the task, and emphasizing the transfer benefits of the knowledge, which students acquire (Paretti, McNair, & Holloway-Attaway, 2007; Swarts, 2011).

Understanding the needs of the adult learner is key to effectively facilitating the AC-OWC. Since OWI is mediated through the interface and is thus constrained by transactional distance, adult learners need additional opportunities for building social presence through team-based, collaborative projects that provide opportunities to build skills and increase motivation to transfer their skills to the workplace.

Because communication mediated through technology comes with both affordances and constraints, I explore, in the following section, how digital rhetoric provides a theoretical lens for understanding the ways in which humans interact with the interfaces of the online environment.
Digital Rhetoric and Advanced Communication

Because online writing instruction (OWI) occurs *online*, and thus is mediated by computer technology, it is necessary to address the rhetorical issues of the interface, which includes the ways in which humans interact with their technology. Some scholars such as Zappen (2005) and Handa (2001) do not define digital rhetoric directly, but talk around the term. Zappen calls digital rhetoric “an amalgam of more or less discrete components” (p. 323). Handa (2001), on the other hand, advocates for “incorporating digital elements into writing—especially in the form of Web pages and multimedia projects” (p. 2). However, other scholars define digital rhetoric using an Aristotelian framework of persuasive discourse. For example, DePew defines *digital rhetoric* as “*applied rhetoric* using digital technologies...[to] signify how an interlocutor considers to use digital tools when choosing the best available means of persuasion...and how to use their affordances” (DePew 2015, p. 439). Within this construction, to understand digital rhetoric is to understand the relationship between many different technologies and the myriad ways that arguments get made” (DePew, 2015 p. 440).

**Digital Rhetoric--Influencing Communication Practices**

Digital rhetoric seeks to examine the rhetorical nature of the interface, which permeates our postmodern world via the latest iterations of smart phones, wearable technologies, and the ubiquity of a networked, wireless world. Also known as “third wave computing” the shift to “mobile, social, cloud” facilitates accessibility while limiting privacy in our *always-on, always-connected* culture (Schulmeister, 2008). Earlier digital rhetoric scholars such as Lev Manovich describes the always-on, always-connected phenomenon as a “new media revolution” which paradigmatically shifts all culture to
“computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (19). Most notably, this shift affects not only our “stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation storage, and distribution” but also affects our “types of media—texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions” (Manovich 19). This shift also affects our understanding of what constitutes writing. Instead of a static message on printed-paper, writing is “epistemic, performative, multivocal, multimodal, and multi-mediated” (Lunsford 2006 p. 171). Thus, students must learn to "be able to think critically and carefully about how to deliver the knowledge they produce" (Lunsford 170).

Many scholars have advocated for a better understanding of new media texts and posited theories of digital rhetoric (Brooke, 2009; Eyman & Ball, 2014; McCorkle, 2012; Porter 2009; Warnick, 2005; Zappen, 2005) to accommodate our composing on-screen. For example, James Zappen (2005) theorized that digital rhetoric is “an amalgam of more-or-less discrete components rather than a complete and integrated theory” (p. 323). Likewise Barbara Warnick (2005), foregrounded the need for “critical approaches” that explore the “tensions between centripetal and centrifugal forces” in online composing (p. 331). A few years later, Paul Prior (2007) advocated for the application of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to digital rhetoric. “Where the classical canons mapped the situational, productive acts of a rhetor, this CHAT map points to a complex set of interlocking systems within which rhetors are formed, act and navigate” (Prior et al., 2007 p. 22).

One important aspect of CHAT is that it “integrates communication, learning, and social formation, seeing them not as separate categories, but as simultaneous, constant dimensions of any moment of life” (Prior et al., 2007 p. 23). This perspective speaks to
the multimodal nature of Lunsford’s definition of writing, “not as a question of which mode a message might be placed in, but as a question of how many modes operate together in a single rhetorical act and of how extended chains of modal transformations may be linked in a rhetorical trajectory” (p. 23). Subsequently, CHAT places rhetoric in “complex sociohistoric worlds” deeply oriented to “‘mediated activity and agency’ and ‘offers a new map of an expansive attention to the rhetorical dimensions of all activity’ via a networked system of data nodes (p. 25).

**Remediation—Delivery for a Digital Age**

Subsequent scholars have constructed a theory of digital rhetoric based upon the remediation of the traditional or classical five canons of rhetoric. In this framework, the term, remediation, suggests that newer forms of technology refashion older forms. The digital rhetoric of remediation incorporates both the logic of immediacy, which attempts to make the user interface look “natural” and the logic of hypermediacy, which allows for the “random access of multiple media” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999).

As part of those who structure digital rhetoric using a remediation metaphor, Collin Brooke, Ben McCorkle, and James Porter focus on the canon of delivery (in particular) as a key component of the digital rhetoric of discursive technologies. To begin, Brooke (2009) uses this concept of remediation to articulate the rhetoric of the interface within an ecological metaphor. In his remediated view of Aristotle’s five canons, the rhetoric of the interface becomes an “ecology of practice” so that the canons become less of an “exhaustive set of terms” and more of an “analytic and productive starting [point] from which we might begin a sustained engagement with discursive technologies” (p. 41). Furthermore, he situates the remediated canons inside of a remediated Trivium where
instead of *grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric* there now exist ecologies of “*code, practice, and culture*” (p. 48). His claim is that the environmental/ecology metaphor is the “perfect unit of analysis for examining the interface” (p. 42). Thus, discourse becomes a verb—an action of “circulating” rather than a noun—a “*something we circulate*” (p. 192).

Secondly, McCorkle (2012) sees the rhetoric of the interface as part of the poststructuralist rhetorical movement of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He claims that this transformation is not “passive” but “active” in remediating the “institutional, theoretical, and practice-bound” forces in our culture (p. 153). He posits that delivery and medium become “coequal terms” because digital writing technologies are perceived to be more “flexible, alterable, and performative” than print (p. 154). In addition he views the remediation of media forms as a “reciprocal,” activity in that they do not follow “a progressive trajectory…but are…forward-looking and backward-looking… at certain times nostalgic and at others innovative” (p. 150).

Next, Porter’s (2009) digital rhetorical framework remediates the canon of delivery as a “techne” in order to frame it “more broadly” than others have done (p. 208). According to Porter, this type of techne for digital rhetoric includes both “technical/procedural knowledge” and “knowledge of audience and effect” in the application of the canon of delivery in the art of creating discourse (p. 211). Porter claims, "A robust canon of delivery should help us think more productively about how we are writing, and to whom, and lead us to make smarter choices as writers/designers, whether we are producing online information or non-digital information" (p. 211). In addition, he provides a rhetorical framework that separates delivery’s aspects of performativity into the following heuristic:
- **Body/Identity**—online representations identity and performance
- **Distribution/Circulation**—the technological publishing options for distribution and circulation
- **Access/Accessibility**—audience connectedness to Internet-based information
- **Interaction**—the range and types of human-computer interaction relationships
- **Economics**—copyright, ownership and control of information (208).

Examining composing processes using this heuristic helps to expose ways in which the canon of delivery functions in an active rather than passive role. Finally, the common thread that runs through each of these three scholars’ remediated view of delivery is the importance of *performativity* as a key aspect of how the canon of delivery is used rhetorically to broaden our understanding of how principles of human computer interaction (HCI) affect the virtual spaces of online writing instruction, and also how theory can be developed to address our relationship to and within those spaces.

**HCI—Communicating via the Interface**

Human computer interaction (HCI) involves the types of relationships that are established among humans and their computer-mediated technologies. Typically those relationships have to do with the virtual spaces where users play, work and learn. These relationships rely upon the affordances and constraints that are embedded into the technology by its designers. While constraints are ways in which technology restricts choice by the user, and thus, are sometimes easier to identify, affordances are actually “communication between the designer and the user of a product” (de Souza cited in Norman 66). One critical aspect to affordances is their “visibility” (Norman 68). If a user doesn’t know an affordance exists, then according to Norman, it is “worthless.”
Conversely, “providing effective, perceivable affordances” are important to successful HCI because users “know” they exist and can make a conscious choice to use them or not (68). "The power of visual, perceivable affordances is that they guide behavior, and in the best of cases, they do so without the person’s awareness of the guidance--it just feels natural" (68-9). Knowing about and understanding how to use affordances extends agency to users.

Secondly, Brad Mehlenbacher suggests that web-based applications “embed a host of cognitive and social understandings…that separate users into builders, designers, teachers, and students” (Mehlenbacher, 2010) For example, in the online writing environment, the teacher/instructor becomes a user of whatever predetermined design elements are placed within the online learning environment (OLE) by its interface builders. Even so, the instructor may also function as the instructional designer of the curricular content and make limited adjustments (depending upon the OLE’s interface constraints) to the aesthetics (such as color, background, typography) of her individual composition course site. Typically, though, teachers remain in the role of curricular content providers. Students, on the other hand, typically remain solely in the user role. Each role—builder, designer, teacher, student—experiences varying levels of control from full to nearly none based upon the affordances and constraints of the HCI environment.

According to Johndon Johnson-Eilola (2005), the importance of considering human and computer interaction from a rhetorical perspective is that it allows scholars to examine the “interaction between general trends—tendential forces—and specific articulations, in the ways that people understand, work with, and reconstruct
technologies, and the ways that those activities both suggest and reflect changes in our cultures” (19). Next, Johnson-Eilola reminds us that contextual and situational understandings are typically considered in the singular use of the term context. However, within the structure of human-computer interactions, people “act in a large number of contexts—contexts that are social, technological, organizational, physical, cultural, intellectual, perceptual, informational, and environmental” (19). In addition, Johnson-Eilola points out that those contextual structures, mediated by interfaces, are not “neutral,” but are “cultural constructions responding to, engendering, and being constantly modified by numerous often contradictory, cultural forces” (20). By application, these contextual structures are not only true for users within the workplace but also for students within academic contexts such as the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC). In order to foster critical engagement with those culturally driven contexts, instructors and students should examine their technology use not through the lens of technology as an “articulation of an isolated device” but through the lens of technology as an environment of “specific users and contexts, political concerns, and whole technical systems” (Johnson-Eilola 20). In other words, technology use should be analyzed within the multiple contextual environments within which it exists not as a neutral entity but as a socially constructed one. Furthermore, an interrelated, contextual, and connected environment extends our understanding not only of HCI but also of new theories of learning—in particular, the connectivist approach to learning. The next section examines educational learning theories in light of OWI.
Distance Education—Accessing Learning Theories

Although, there are many learning theories, this section summarizes four dominant educational theories: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and connectivism to show their influences on various aspects of AC-OWI in the AC-OWC. I present these theories not in isolation to one another, but rather as a continuum. Ally suggests that perhaps what is needed for online learning is not necessarily a “new stand-alone theory for the digital age”, but a model that “integrates the different theories” in a post-modern both/and approach to designing meaningful online learning experiences (Ally, 2008 p. 18). Using a both/and approach, instructors may choose various strategies from the different schools of thought based upon educational objectives for the course as well as the environmental and contextual factors of students and institutional culture. However, other theorists such as George Siemens (2006) and Stephen Downes (2010) advocate for a theory to address the networked nature of the Internet technologies. See figure 2.1 on the following page for a visual representation of each of the four theories and subsequent summary of each.

Behaviorism—Responding to Stimuli (what)

First, behaviorism claims that learning occurs as a response to external stimuli in the environment (Skinner, 1974). One of the earliest examples of behaviorist psychology was Ivan Pavlov’s experiment on dogs’ responses to external stimuli via “classical conditioning” (Pavlov, 1927), which established the basic laws of learning and condition. Later, Skinner (1974) and others would use Pavlov’s work to fashion an educational theory that applied the laws of conditioned behavior to the classroom. Under a
behaviorist model, the way an educator would know if the student had “learned something” was through observable, outwardly manifested behavior (Ally, 2008, p. 19).

Although students may be “conditioned” to respond in certain ways to different types of stimuli, some educational psychologists such as Wertheimer, Miller, and others did not believe that the educational theory of behaviorism provided a complete picture of the learning process. Their reaction against behaviorism formed two lines of thought: the Gestalt Learning Theory and the Information Processing and Computer Models theory. For example, in the first line of thinking, Max Wertheimer along with Kurt Koffa and Wolfgang Kohler promoted the Gestalt Theory of Learning, which claimed the brain

Figure 2.2: Educational Models of Learning (Images used with permission from AA Designs.)

Cognitivism—Processing Knowledge in the Mind (how)

Although students may be “conditioned” to respond in certain ways to different types of stimuli, some educational psychologists such as Wertheimer, Miller, and others did not believe that the educational theory of behaviorism provided a complete picture of the learning process. Their reaction against behaviorism formed two lines of thought: the Gestalt Learning Theory and the Information Processing and Computer Models theory. For example, in the first line of thinking, Max Wertheimer along with Kurt Koffa and Wolfgang Kohler promoted the Gestalt Theory of Learning, which claimed the brain
responded to stimuli by grouping information according to four basic principles: proximity, alignment, repetition, and contrast (Gestalt theory, 1944).

By contrast, the second line of thinking exemplified by George A. Miller Information Processing Theory (1960) made two important claims. First was the concept of “chunking” in which he determined that the brain only held small “chunks” in short term memory (Miller, 1960). His second contribution was the concept of information processing using a computer model of human learning (Miller, 1960). Using one or both lines of thinking, Cognitive psychology applied to education advanced a theory “that learning involves the use of memory, motivation, and thinking, and that reflection plays an important part in learning” (Ally, 2008, p.19). In contrast to behaviorists, cognitivist theorists viewed “learning as an internal process” where the amount learned “depend[ed] upon the processing capacity of the learner, the amount of effort expended during the learning process, the depth of the processing, and the learner’s existing knowledge structure” (Ally, 2008, p. 19).

**Constructivism—Constructing Knowledge Contextually (why)**

More recently, the Constructivist theory of learning, which is based upon the social learning theories of Piaget (1970) and Vygotski (1986), laid the groundwork for contextualized learning and meaning making. Championed by theorists such as Piaget, Lave, Kolb, Bruner, and others, constructivism articulates that each learner “constructs” knowledge individually and socially. Knowledge is always “out there” in the world not as the “true” representation of reality but as an interpretation of it (P. Cooper, 1993). Basic principles of the constructivist model include:

- constructing layered meaning,
- learning occurs within the mind,
- learning is social activity
- learning is contextual
- learning involves language (Vygotsky 1986).

In the “situated learning” model, students learn best through “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991) where the student becomes something of an apprentice and "mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which the master is part" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). Likewise, constructivists posit that learning occurs as the student observes, processes, and interprets, and personalizes information, and then begins to move from outside the circle of constructed knowledge to within— from beginning as an outsider/novice/newcomer to becoming an insider/professional/old-timer (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**Connectivism—Networking to Construct Knowledge (where)**

Next, in the connectivist approach to learning, scholars George Siemens (2004) and Stephen Downes (2010), build upon and extend the currently popular constructivist approach to allow for knowledge to exist externally to the individual so that “knowledge, learning, and meaning can be conceptualized as networked elements” (Dunaway, 2011, p. 678). As defined by Downes (2010), connectivism is “to immerse oneself in the network...to expose oneself to actual instances of the discipline being performed” (p. 19). Secondly, connectivism, unlike prior learning theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism (developed prior to computer and web-based technologies), specifically addresses learning that is impacted and mediated by technology. According to Michelle Dunaway, “The connectivist model posits that learning takes place when
learners make connections between ideas located throughout their personal learning networks, which are composed of numerous information resources and technologies” (2011, p. 676). Consequently, connectivism, with its emphasis on networked learning, better reflects the “underlying social environments” of twenty-first century learning because it addresses the “learning that occurs outside of people…[that is] learning stored and manipulated by technology” (Siemens 2004). Connectivism also foregrounds the “tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity,” but instead, learning is “a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources” where “currency” and “capacity to know is more critical than what is currently known” (Siemens 2004). Thus, connectivism takes the human computer interaction ecological metaphor to its next logical step by extending knowledge beyond humans and to the machine.

The next section examines one approach to distance learning that borrows ideas from cognitivist, constructivist and connectivist theories of learning to provide a structure germane to the online learning environment—the Community of Inquiry Framework.

**COI and Transactional Distance**

The Community of Inquiry Framework was developed to address the problem of the transactional distance, which occurs when communication facilitated through the interface creates geographical, emotional or psychological distance among the participants (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Garrison, Anderson, and Archer 2010; Kumar and Ritzhaupt, 2014). Transactional Distance is comprised of three key variables:

- Structure—determined by the actual design of the course, organization of its instruction, and the use of various media of communication
Dialogue—two-way, real-time communication versus dialogue internalized within the student.

Learner autonomy—an individual learner’s sense of personal responsibility and self-directness (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010) address each of these variables by establishing a type of “presence” found within the online learning environment (OLE).

**The COI Framework—Establishing Presence**

In response to the issue of transactional distance, researchers Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010) developed the Community of Inquiry framework, an approach, which establishes three necessary components: **cognitive presence**, **teaching presence** and **social presence** to foster community and collaboration within the OLE. Figure 2.2 below depicts the three components of the COI framework. Each of the three presences is defined as follows:

- **Cognitive presence** (CP) is defined as “the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication” (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 1999, p. 89). CP is based upon “Dewey’s notion of reflective thought” (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 2010, p. 5), which is a “vital element in critical thinking” (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 1999, p. 89).

- **Teaching presence** (TP) is defined as the “design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes for the purpose of realizing personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes” (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, Archer, 2001, p. 5). In the COI framework, teaching presence is viewed as a
“means to an end” because its purpose is to “support and enhance social and
cognitive presence for the purpose of realizing educational outcomes (Garrison,
Anderson, Archer, 1999 p. 90). Thus, teaching presence is based upon
cognitivist theories of memory and Gestalt principles for design of course content
in the online environment.

- **Social presence** (SP) is defined as the “ability of learners to project themselves
socially and emotionally, thereby being perceived as *real people* in mediated
communication” (Garrison, Arbaugh, 2007 p. 159). The link of affective to
cognitive in this framework adds a “multidimensional perspective” that is reflected
in a collaborative community by its ability to create, promote, and maintain, “open
communication” and “group cohesion” (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 2010 p. 7).
Borrowing the idea that learning is a “social activity” from the constructivist theory
of learning, social presence works in conjunction with teaching and cognitive
presences to provide a fuller, richer, and more satisfying experience for both
instructor and students.

According to Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2010), social presence becomes the all-
encompassing affective component to the COI framework.

Later researchers (Kreijns, Acker, Vermeulen, & Buuren, 2014), however, have
argued for a “disentangled” view of social presence that actually represents two
constructs: *social presence* and *social space*. From this viewpoint, they define *social
presence* as “the degree of realness of the other in the communication” and *social
space* as the “degree of salience” ascribed to social, interpersonal relationships (Kreijns,
Acker, Vermeulen, & Buuren, 2014, p. 5). Social space is construed as the “network of
social relationships amongst the group members embedded in group structures of norms and values, rules and roles, beliefs and ideals” where interpersonal relationships exist within a “network” (p. 11). Additionally, social space is centered upon “impression formation…. a social cognitive process” in which students get to know one another through the “accumulation of the messages transferred...[and] generated during episodes when group members have social interaction” (p. 11). Kreijns, Acker, Vermeulen, & Buuren (2014) also posit that social presence is a “mediator between teaching and cognitive presence” (p. 7-8).

In addition to the “disentangled” view of SP, Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, (2012) suggest that a fourth category of emotional presence (EP) should emerge from the COI framework. They define emotional presence as the “outward expression of emotion, affect, and feeling by individuals and among individuals in a community of inquiry, as they relate to and interact with the learning technology, course content, students, and the instructor” (p. 283). Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, (2012) also claim that emotional presence is not just the affective response demonstrated through social presence; “rather, it underpins the broader online experience” by presenting itself “at two junctures: one in relation to the adjustment to a new role as online learner and second in combination with cognitive, social, and teaching presence” (p. 283-4). For the purposes of this research, social presence will be used broadly to encompass social presence, social space and will view emotional presence as a subset of social presence rather than a completely separate entity. Using social presence in its broadest understanding within the COI framework provides an effective heuristic for analyzing the ability of students within the AC-OWC to create, collaborate and connect with the
instructor and with each other. See figure 2.2 below for a visualization of this iteration of social presence.

![Figure 2.3: Emotional Presence in COI (adapted from Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012).](image)

For the instructor of the AC-OWC, social presence is particularly important for enabling students to form and maintain sustainable team relationships. Working in groups or teams is a commonly used strategy for creating a collaborative learning environment in face-to-face advanced communication courses. Likewise in the AC-OWC, team-based work is often focused on the application of newly learned skills as students transfer knowledge from academic exercise to real world communication problems. See figure 2.3 on the following page for a visualization of social presence broadly understood.
Since many AC-OWI students will enter the workplace after earning their undergraduate degree, team collaboration becomes particularly important for them because it provides necessary preparation for team-based projects within collaborative work environments of business and industry. Finally, the following section summarizes the conceptual framework for this research.

**Conceptual Framework**

Current literature from composition, andragogy, digital rhetoric, human computer interaction, and distance education inform online writing instruction in general. However there is a gap concerning some of the specific characteristics of the advanced communication course. This gap occurs in the areas of the type of student that predominantly inhabits an AC-OWC (as opposed to FYOC), the focus of the course on both writing instruction in specific advanced communication genres and particular software used in business and industry, as well as the need for a robust theory of
learning that addresses communication via the interface. The following comprises a synthesis of current literature from various disciplines to provide a lens for examining the AC-OWC.

**Specific OWI Principles and Effective Practices**

Online writing instruction (in general) for the advanced communication course relies primarily on the set of principles and effective practices developed by the CCCCs Committee for OWI. From the fifteen principles and best practices, I have identified specific principles and effective practices that apply directly to the focus of this study. They are reiterated below and will be used to guide my analysis of the data.

**Principle 3**—*Appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment.*

**Effective Practice 3.7:** Teachers should provide students with additional and supportive course materials through hyperlinks, electronic documents, and access to databases.

**Effective Practice 3.9:** From a writing instructional perspective, teachers should take full advantage of the flexibility of electronic communications in the planning and guiding of projects and activities. The concept of the “classroom” can be expanded productively to include time when students and teacher are not physically present in a room. For example, discussions, collaborative work, research, invention activities, and individual and group instruction and guidance begun in class can continue beyond that point using both asynchronous and synchronous modalities.
**OWI Principle 4**—*Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment.*

**Effective Practice 4.2:** Teachers should use known practices for developing knowledge in the online setting. They should employ the interactive potential of digital communications to enable and enact knowledge construction (e.g., group projects and one-on-one teacher-student dialogues).

**Effective Practice 4.3:** Teachers should use universal and time-honored rhetorical theories to emphasize the rhetorical nature of communication through online and Web-based discourse.

**Effective Practice 4.4:** Teachers should engage understood and accepted thinking about communication and interacting in composition courses by employing LMSs and other digital environments to extend the reach of classroom interactions (e.g., reading responses, debates, peer review and editing); to develop rhetorical understanding via online access to real audiences; and to keep students informed of assignments, grades, and policies.

**Effective Practice 4.5:** Teachers should engage learner-centered and writing-intensive pedagogies via electronic means (e.g., collaborative invention and writing, online research, and teacher and peer review of work in progress).
**OWI Principle 10**—*Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components of OWI.*

**Effective Practice 10.7:** In most cases, teachers should make use of the institutionally approved software and/or LMS on which students are prepared for the OWC. Although composition teachers may desire to bring additional, often free, software into the OWC, they should: (1) have a clear pedagogical rationale for doing so; (2) have appropriate permission to do so; (3) make sure that it is accessible to all students; and (4) prepare students adequately for the change and/or addition to the LMS.

**Principle 11**—*Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success.*

**Effective Practice 11.2:** OWC teachers should develop course community early by employing “icebreakers” and other activities that make use of the LMS and that engage student writing.

**Effective Practice 11.5:** Informal student writing integrated in the course (e.g., asynchronous discussions, blogs, reading responses) should use the technological opportunities that most likely will elicit meaningful responses among class participants.

**Considering Adult Learners**

Creating social presence within the AC-OWC requires forethought in order to give adult learners the agency and support they need within the course. Andragogy suggests that adult learners need to see value in project-based learning in order to refine *techne* and increase motivation to transfer their skills to the workplace. Because many AC-OWI
students are already involved in internships or employed, they are able to see the direct benefit of genre studies and application of technological training more readily than students in FYOC. They often have more experience with building a network of resources both human and non-human to enhance their knowledge, skills, and productivity.

Digital Rhetoric of HCI

Because communication mediated through technology comes with both affordances and constraints, AC-OWI students should analyze their technology choices within the multiple contextual environments within which they exist not as a neutral entity but as a socially constructed one. Porter’s remediation of the canon of delivery as techne provides a useful heuristic for students to consider the rhetorical nature of body/identity, distribution/circulation, access/accessibility, interaction, and economics in their move from “production to connection” in their composing processes.

A Connectivist View of Community of Inquiry

In addition to the OWI principles/effective practices that I have identified for this study, I consider how a connectivist theory of learning would situate online communities of inquiry somewhat differently than a constructivist theory of learning would. First, connectivism better addresses instruction conducted via the interface and at a distance (unlike previous theories of learning) because it conjectures that learning does not reside entirely within the individual but also within networked connections that the individual creates. Therefore, a connectivist theory of learning would not see the online community of inquiry as “adjunct to, or follow[ing] from” the online course. Instead, the relationship would be the other way around. For example in the use of the discussion
board in an AC-OWC, the “course content…ought to be subservient to the discussion, [so] that the community is the primary unit of learning and that the instruction and learning resources are secondary, arising out of, and only because of the community” (Downes 2010 p. 20). This approach views learning environments as “multi-disciplinary” and as “emulation of some real world application or discipline” so that in the process of producing a specific communication genre learning must occur through the connection to a number of contexts and disciplines (Downes 2010 p. 20). Next, if “specialized nodes and information sources are composed of digital, electronic, online resources,” then learning and technology are inextricably linked.

To teach effectively online, instructors embracing a connectivist theory, would need pedagogical approaches that encourage students to embrace networked connectivity as an important aspect of the learning landscape. In order to do this effectively, students need varied and multiple opportunities to build social presence—the affective element that connects both to cognitive and teaching presences within the AC-OWC. Additionally, instructors, embracing a connectivist theory, would desire to support students’ efforts to create, maintain, and expand their connective networks. As AC-OWC students encounter communication tasks or problems to solve, they should be encouraged to go beyond the curricular content of the course to connect with other “nodes” of knowledge within and outside of their own networks. Another important consideration is that students who acquire the “capacity to know” also stand a greater chance of transferring knowledge and skills from one composing ecology to another (Dunaway, 2011 p. 676). See Figure 2.3 on the following page for a visual representation of the theoretical framework used in this study, which I created to help
me, the researcher, and the readers of this dissertation understand the conceptual framework of the theoretical contributions made by other disciplines to OWI.

Figure 2.5: Overview of the Theoretical Framework of AC-OWI

The last consideration, for relying on a connectivist theoretical construct in AC-OWI, includes a more vibrant use of multimodal composition within our courses. Kristine Blair projects that “the future relevance of English Studies will rest on the ability to [teach] multimodal, Web-based literacies” (Walker et al., 2011 p.340). Multimodal
composition asks students to be part of the “web of social...and semiotic relationships” (Fleckenstein et al. 2008 p. 394) that shares “ideas...out there in the world, [in] a landscape that is always being modified by ongoing human discourse” (Cooper, 1986 p. 12). Therefore, within the connectivist theoretical framework, multimodal composition affords students the ability to participate in a larger conversation, not limited to the confines of a course’s beginning and end dates.

**Summary**

Garrison, Anderson, & Archer’s (2010) COI framework is one attempt to solve the human-computer interaction problem of transactional distance that occurs within online courses. Their framework is based upon constructivist theory of learning that posits that knowledge resides within the individual. However, constructivism was developed prior to technological remediation of communication and composing. Thus, the learning theory of connectivism provides a better framework for analyzing the ways in which students and instructors are able to create, promote, and maintain social presence within the AC-OWC. Accepting the idea that knowledge may reside outside of the individual also represents a significant shift in our understanding of composition from production to connection. Finally, the tensions created by the logic of immediacy and hypermediacy of the OLE requires instructors and students to critically examine their technologically mediated communication practices and situate them within larger networked and varied communities of inquiry that may extend beyond the confines of the AC-OWC. One important aspect within the AC-OWC is social presence—a key component for developing networked connections. In the next chapter, I explain the rationale and methodology behind this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To better address differences and complexities of social life articulated through the postmodern turn, grounded theory is being regenerated and updated. Based on Strauss’s ecological frameworks in his social worlds and arenas theory, I offer situational maps and analyses as innovative supplements to the basic social process analyses characteristic of traditional grounded theory (Clarke 2003).

Because online writing instruction occurs online and is mediated in virtual spaces, instructors often do not consider the social nature of learning perhaps in the same way that they do in face-to-face classrooms. This research study aims to examine the social nature of learning within the advanced communications online writing course (AC-OWC) to determine how instructors and students create, promote, and maintain social presence within the confines of the course and the community of inquiry found therein. In this research project, the working definition of social presence is the “the ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g. the course of study), and communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities” (Garrison 2010). Social presence is most closely connected to an individual’s ability to form and maintain effective individual and team relationships, both of which are necessary components to learning in a collaborative environment focused on solving real-world communication problems.

Although theorists disagree somewhat on the parameters of social presence, the intent, here, is to convey a general sense of what social presence is and how it affects the learning environment. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, social presence is defined in its broadest understanding within the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework as encompassing social presence, social space, and emotional presence.
Chapter 3 contains the presentation and rationale for my choice of a qualitative research methodology that is situated in a constructivist grounded theory approach. It describes the data collection tools, and the methods by which participants were contacted and asked to join the study. Likewise, the methods for collecting, sorting, coding, and analyzing the data are discussed in this chapter as well as the processes for producing reliable and trustworthy data. To clarify how research was conducted for this study, this chapter includes the following:

- An explanation of the theoretical framework for constructivist grounded theory methodology,
- A description of the role of the researcher
- A description of the research setting and context,
- An description of participants, data collection,
- An explanation of data analysis,
- A discussion of the limitations of this study and,
- A summarization of the methodological approach for this study.

To provide context and a theoretical grounding for my choice of qualitative research, I first explain the theoretical framework informing this study’s methodology as well as discuss my position as researcher toward the research material and the participants.

**Theoretical Framework**

First developed by Barney Glaser & Anselm Strauss, grounded theory qualitative research interrogated the assumption that qualitative research was only to be used as a precursor to quantitative research. Instead, Glaser and Strauss (1965) advocated that qualitative research was a viable strategy for “the discovery of substantive theory” (p. 5).
The name, *grounded theory*, was derived from the idea that “theories should be ‘grounded’ in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people” (Creswell, 2006, p. 63). Grounded theory as first introduced by Glaser & Strauss carried with it positivistic overtones of a modernist worldview. In traditional grounded theory, the study of basic social processes was “articulated in gerund form connoting ongoing action at an abstract level” (Clarke, 2003, p. 558).

In addition to the grounded theory approach, I assimilated into my data collection elements of phenomenology, which examines “the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). In this study, those *lived experiences* constituted participants’ perceptions of social presence in the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC). The phenomenological overtones of this study integrate particularly well with constructivist grounded theory in that the experiences revealed by participants may be situated within a larger ecological social arena. Furthermore, by incorporating the constructivist “social worlds/arenas/negotiations framework with grounded theory as a new conceptual infrastructure,” a researcher may view “‘the social’ in social life…after the postmodern turn” from a fresh perspective (Clarke, 2003, p. 557).

**Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology**

Constructivist grounded theory advocated by Clarke (2003) and Charmaz (2006) uses “social situations” as units of analysis and replaces the metaphor of “social process/action with an ecological root metaphor of social worlds/arenas/negotiations …that allows situational analyses at the mesolevel, new social/ organizational/ institutional and discursive sitings, as well as individual-level analyses” (Clarke, 2003, p.
Subsequently, constructivist grounded theory allows for “provisional grounded theorizing” and the framing of “systemic and flexible means of research design” (p. 559). Finally, constructivism expands the grounded theory methodology to embrace such postmodern perspectives as “reflexivity on the part of researchers, a recognition of problems of representing information, questions of legitimacy and authority, and repositioning the researcher away from the ‘all knowing analyst’ to the ‘acknowledged participant’ (Clarke 2003, pp. 555-6), which are derived from Foucault.

**Rationale for Constructivist Grounded Theory**

The rationale for constructivist grounded theory in this study is to integrate an approach that “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). The researcher’s role as a participant-observer that repositions the researcher away from “all-knowing analyst” to “acknowledged participant” is a key factor in this choice of research methodology because I have been both an instructor and a student in online writing courses. Being able to include my knowledge and lived experiences along with other participants provides an insider’s perspective on the research topic. Moreover, the constructivist grounded theory methods function better as “flexible heuristic strategies” (Clarke, 2003 p. 559) rather than as predominantly prescriptive, systematic, analytic procedures. These enabled me to negotiate among various conflicting tensions and narratives. Additionally, addressing the postmodern turn in research, allows me to seriously consider the “various contexts” of the research focus and to portray how “contextual elements might condition the action” (p. 559).
**Situational Mapping**

One method for uncovering relationships among various artifacts is the use of situational mapping. This strategy views the "situation itself" as the key unit of analysis (p. 559). See Figure 3.0 below for the situational map of the AC-OWC. Situational mapping is a visual representation of contextual elements that are framed within a particular "network" that is comprised of "a collection of nodes or points connected by links or lines that display streams of participant actions, events, and processes" by recreating "the 'plot' of events over time, as well as showing complex interrelationships.

![Figure 3.1: Situational map of the AC-OWC](image)

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"Situational Mapping" One method for uncovering relationships among various artifacts is the use of situational mapping. This strategy views the "situation itself" as the key unit of analysis (p. 559). See Figure 3.0 below for the situational map of the AC-OWC. Situational mapping is a visual representation of contextual elements that are framed within a particular "network" that is comprised of "a collection of nodes or points connected by links or lines that display streams of participant actions, events, and processes" by recreating "the 'plot' of events over time, as well as showing complex interrelationships."
between variables" (111). Figure 3.0 on the prior page depicts the visual representation of the key agents in the online learning environment (OLE) within the AC-OWC. What makes this particular world/arena different from its face-to-face counterpart is that communication is always or nearly always mediated by the interface, which I have suggested by the computer screen icon as the “boundary” line for communicative acts in the AC-OWC.

By using situational mapping I expose the “major human, nonhuman, discursive, and other elements in the research situation of concern” by provoking analyses of the relationships among the various research artifacts and entities (p. 559). In this project, situational mapping also permits me to explore “sites of silence” in the data—things that are unarticulated in the data themselves but tacitly seem to be going on behind the scenes (p.561). One additional benefit to situational mapping is that it opened up the data by interrogating them in “fresh ways” to find “new paths” (p. 560).

The use of situational mapping strategy from the constructivist approach also works well alongside of the coding and analysis methods of the traditional grounded theory approach. The combination of traditional grounded theory methodology and its postmodern, constructivist iteration move data collection beyond mere description to the generation of an ongoing, provisional theoretical constructs. Although it may not be considered a definitive formal theory, the ideas presented in the chapters to follow build a foundation for further inquiry and research.

**Role of the Researcher**

My role in this research project is as an “acknowledged” participant observer (Clarke, 2003). First, I have taught English 314, Technical Communication online at
Iowa State University for seven semesters. Not only have I taught online for Iowa State, but also I have had the experience (since Fall 2011) of teaching Rhetoric online for a small private college, Patrick Henry, which has 338 students. The combined experiences of teaching online in two different institutions over a period of five years have made me feel comfortable in my ability to teach online and to accomplish the institutional and course objectives for both courses: technical communication and rhetoric.

**Patrick Henry College Online**

I initially entered the world of online instruction, mentored by the on-campus professor, Dr. Jim Tallmon, at Patrick Henry (PHC) who worked closely with me to achieve parity between his face-to-face sections of rhetoric and my online section. Because he had taught the online section prior to my employment at PHC, he was well acquainted with the challenges of teaching at a distance and provided valuable insight and coaching during the four semesters he mentored me.

**Iowa State University Online**

Later in 2013, I first became interested in teaching online at Iowa State University when a fellow graduate student, who had been teaching English 314 and 309 online, approached me because he knew that I had taught online elsewhere. Since he was nearing the completion of his PhD program, he was looking for another teaching assistant to teach his online English 314 course in which he had innovated a new approach, informed by activity theory (Russell & Fisher, 2009). His approach to teaching English 314 included creating a simulated technical communication firm to which students “applied” for a position and were assigned communication problems to solve
(Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994). This opened up for me a completely different view of online instruction that focused on collaborative student learning and students’ ability to actively transfer their classroom skills to workplace environments.

Because of his focus on transfer (Wardle, 2012), my colleague placed students in teams early in the course, and the teams remained stable throughout the duration of the course. Just as in a real job situation, team members had to learn to work effectively with each other toward a common goal of solving technical communication problems. Built into the course objectives were a series of activities to create, maintain, and promote social presence among team members. The emphasis on teaming early in the course, and the fact that it was sustained throughout the course, helped me to recognize that there was more to learning online than merely interacting with the content on an individual level. In my early observations and experiences with team collaboration, I also noticed in the comments made by students in their final course reflections that working in teams played a noticeable role in their learning and ability to connect with others. Based upon early student feedback, I devised this study to understand better the role that social presence has had in the advanced communication online writing course and the influence of social presence on team collaboration and student connective networks.

**Research Setting and Context**

The ideal site for qualitative research is one that is accessible to the researcher and that provides the appropriate level of activities, participants, and course dissemination necessary for understanding online writing environments (Creswell 2009, p. 177-8). Additionally, the ability for the me to develop trusting relationships with participants and
to gain a dual perspective from both instructors and students was important for acquiring trustworthy data (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007, p. 12-13).

**Setting**

The general setting for this research occurred at Iowa State University, which is a large mid-western land grant university that enrolled 28,893 undergraduate students in the fall of 2014-15 (the academic year in which this study was begun). Iowa State has a student to faculty ratio of 19:1, with the English advanced communication courses capped at 26:1. Because of the intensive nature of writing courses, the English composition class size is typically below the overall average of 36.2 in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Iowa State University Institutional Research, 2015).

**ISU Advanced Communication Courses**

The specific setting for my research was six-advanced communication courses offered during the spring, summer and fall semesters of 2015. Four of these courses were English 302, one was English 309, and one was English 314. As part of the advanced communication course offerings at Iowa State, English 302, Business Communication, English 309, Proposal and Report Writing and English 314, Technical Communication are often the last “English” course a student will take before finishing her chosen degree. Each advanced communication course carries the same set of prerequisites: to successfully complete English 250—Written Oral, Visual and Electronic Composition and to attain junior classification prior to enrolling in the advanced communication courses " ("Iowa State University 2015-2016 Catalog," 2015). To better understand the distinctions among the three different courses the catalog descriptions are listed below:
**English 302—Business Communication** is the “theory, principles and processes of effective written, oral, visual, and electronic communication typically encountered in business and the professions. Extensive practice in many areas of workplace communication, including letter, memo, and email correspondence; short proposals and reports; policies and procedures; job packet including letters of application and resumes; website analysis; brochures; and individual and team presentations,”

**English 309—Report and Proposal Writing** is the “introduction to the theory and practice of preparing and analyzing reports and proposals intended for businesses, governmental agencies, and/or private and corporate foundations. Individual assignments and group projects include textual and visual elements of print and electronic documents as well as oral presentations,”

**English 314—Technical Communication** is the “theories, principles, and processes of effective written, oral, visual, and electronic communication of technical information. Attention to major strategies for analyzing and adapting to audiences in various communication situations and composing technical discourse including organizing visual and verbal information. Extensive practice in many areas of technical communication, including instructions and procedures, proposals and reports, website analysis and design, and individual and team presentations” ("Iowa State University 2015-2016 Catalog," 2015).

Although, open to anyone with junior standing, English 302, 309, and 314 are typically populated with students from the colleges of Engineering, Business, Natural and Computer Sciences. The variety of disciplinary majors provides a form of
triangulation to acquire data “from different perspectives” in order to increase “rigor” (Hughes & Hayhoe, 2008, p. 81).

**Context**

Prior to data collection, I secured permission from my major professor, Dr. Barbara Blakely, to pursue my research interest in online writing instruction. Next, I obtained permission from the ISU Advanced Communication co-directors Jo Mackiewicz and Jenny Aune to gather instructor data from instructors of the online sections of 302, 309, and 314. Subsequent to the co-directors’ approval, I completed the required IRB paperwork and submitted it to the human subjects review board. The study was received and approved as exempt. The original exempt study only gathered information from instructors in the online sections of 302, 309, and 314. After an initial pilot study in the spring semester of 2014, I later submitted a modified request in spring semester of 2015 to the IRB to include data gathered from student survey responses and students’ written course reflections. The modification was approved and ruled exempt as well. See Appendix A for both original and modified IRB approvals. Upon receiving approval, instructors and students were initially contacted via email from the selected courses. Participation was voluntary, and if instructors and students indicated they would like to participate in the study, they were emailed an informed consent form to sign and return to me.

**Participants and Data Collection**

As Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) observe, “Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people’s lived experiences, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives and for
connecting these meanings to the *social world* around them." (11). To understand the meanings of the online classroom’s social world and its inhabitants, I used three qualitative data collection methods for this study. The first data collection method consisted of interviewing instructors for the perceptions about their ability to create, promote, and maintain social presence in the online learning environment. Instructor interview questions are listed in Appendix B. I initially interviewed seven advanced communication instructors. These instructors were either currently teaching or had previously taught at least one of the three ISU advanced communication courses: English 314, 302, or 309.

The second method consisted of surveying instructors and students. Instructors’ surveys gathered quantitative data about their demographics, technology use, and perceptions about communication in the online writing instruction. See Appendix C for instructors’ survey questions. I also surveyed students to gather quantitative data on demographics and technology use as well as qualitative responses to open-ended questions concerning aspects of communication, social presence and team collaboration within the advanced online writing by students. See Appendix D for Qualtrics student survey data from closed and open-ended survey questions.

The third data source was students’ end of the course reflections. These reflections were written in response to a series of prompts that asked students to comment on skills learned, the role of team collaboration in the course, and personal connections (if any) that they made with other students in the course. See Appendix E for student reflection question prompts.
Gathering data from both instructors and students and from a variety of sources was important for establishing the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study. According to Hughes and Hayhoe (2008) to maintain credibility, the participants in the study should “truly represent the population or phenomenon of interest” to demonstrate that their behavior is typical (p. 79). Likewise, examining the lived experiences of both instructors and students helped to create an “authentic” environment that might be examined from both sides of the phenomenon to increase the transferability of such a project (p. 79). Lastly, triangulating the study in this way increased the aspect of dependability that other researchers might “replicate” this study or one that is very similar to it (p. 80).

**Participants: Instructors**

In order to triangulate the study, participants included both instructors of advanced communication online writing courses and students from six sections of three different advanced communication online writing courses: English 302 Business Communication, English 309 Proposal and Report Writing, and English 314 Technical Communication.

Instructors were comprised of a mixture of assistant professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants. Although rank differed, one area all instructors held in common was a shared interest in as well as an absence of prior training for teaching online writing instruction. Seven instructors were interviewed once. Two instructors were interviewed a second time. This study’s final analysis includes only five of the seven instructors’ interview data. The basic instructors’ demographics are reported next.

First, five instructors began and completed the Qualtrics survey. Secondly, four instructors (80%) were currently teaching at Iowa State University. However, one
instructor (20%) was a former ISU instructor, but had now become an instructor for another university. Subsequently, one hundred percent of instructors who completed the Qualtrics survey were currently teaching an advanced communications course. The breakdown of courses currently being taught is as follows: two instructors (40%) were teaching business communication; two (40%) were teaching technical communication, and one (20%) was teaching proposal writing. Next, I discuss the characteristics of the student participants.

**Participants: Students**

Student participants were derived from six advanced communication courses, which were offered as fully online courses and in addition to the 89 sections of face-to-face, traditional advanced communication courses offered in the fall 2015 semester. Each fully online course averaged 24 students per section. Students typically take one advanced communication course as part of the general education requirements of their chosen major. However, some students take an advanced communication course by choice as an elective rather than to fulfill a general education requirement. The Qualtrics student survey showed a seventy-five percent completion rate with thirty-nine completed surveys and thirteen partially completed surveys, which were derived from a total of fifty-two participants (across the six advanced communication course sections). For both instructors and students, participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to skip a question if they felt uncomfortable answering it. Identities were coded to preserve participant anonymity and privacy. While instructor participants were determined using both the snowball technique and by theoretical sampling, student participants were determined using purposive sampling, a strategy that “purposefully”
selects individuals for the proposed study, which according to Creswell (2009) “will best help the researcher understand the problem and research question” (p. 178). Here is a brief snapshot of student demographics. The word cloud in Figure 3.1 below illustrates the relationship of engineering to other majors that take an AC-OWC, and also

![Word Cloud Image](image)

**Figure 3.2: Word cloud shows engineering as most frequent major in AC-OWC.**

highlights other dominant majors which participant in AC-OWCs at Iowa State University. One hundred percent of students surveyed were enrolled as students at ISU. The Qualtrics data that revealed 48% of advanced communication students were in some type of engineering major.

In addition to the type of major, the Qualtrics data also revealed that as of Fall 2015 (when this data was collected), the closest date of graduation for students in AC-OWCs was December 2015 and the farthest date of expected graduation was May 2018. The survey data corroborates the information in the course catalog prerequisites that AC-OWC students are in at least their third or fourth year of undergraduate studies when they participate in an AC-OWC. See Figure 3.2 on the following page for a visual
representation of expected graduation dates (as of 2015, fall semester when this data were collected) for students in an AC-OWC at Iowa State University.

**Data Collection**

The use of purposive sampling resulted in a total of six advanced communication online courses as the sites for data collection and analysis: four sections of English 302—Business Communication, one section of English 309—Proposal Writing, and one section of English 314—Technical Writing. These are the total number of AC-OWCs offered during the 2015 fall semester at Iowa State University. All other sections of AC-OWCs during this time period were offered face-to-face. To better understand the full context of OWI, I chose to gather data from both instructors and students using the following three methods—surveys, interviews, and open-ended reflective responses.
First, I created open-ended, semi-structured interview questions with the intent of removing bias or leading questions. Next, I conducted my interviews using the “intensive” interviewing strategy, which is a “directed conversation” between the interviewer and the participant (Charmaz, 2006 p. 25). The open-ended nature of the interview questions gave me an in-depth look at instructors’ general perceptions of the online writing environment and the students, which inhabit it. Because intensive interviewing is “open-ended,” it fit constructivist grounded theory methods well, and it also “complement[ed] other methods such as…surveys, and research participants’ written accounts” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28).

Secondly, instructors’ and students’ surveys were constructed using the Qualtrics program. These surveys asked both closed and open-ended questions that were designed to prompt thinking about technology use, the online environment, and the ability for a person to create, promote, and maintain social presence within an AC-OWC. The Qualtrics program was constructed in such a way as to gather the participants’ reflective answers anonymously so that they might have full agency to respond honestly.

The Qualtrics data collection criteria for this research were based upon the work of others in the field of distance learning. I relied on Akoyl and Garrison’s (2008) tripartite categories of social presence: “open communication”, “group cohesion”, and “personal/affective” expression to develop my criteria for instructor and student surveys (p.4). In addition to each of Akoyl and Garrison’s three categories of social presence, I also adapted criteria from another related study by Richardson and Swan (2003 p. 86-7) and made adjustments for this research’s particular focus on the advanced
communication online writing course (AC-OWC). Finally, using the adapted social presence categories and criteria from these two studies, I devised a set of questions aimed at understanding the connection between social presence and technology preferences.

For certain types of closed-ended questions that were placed on a continuum, I arranged my criteria on a four point, Likert scale using the descriptors: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, very satisfied to interrogate instructors’ and students’ perceptions of both emotional/affective expression and open/interactive communication within the online environment. Although opinions vary regarding the appropriateness or usefulness of a midpoint, particularly for agreement scales, the University of Washington Office of Education Assessment states, “research suggests a forced response will yield roughly the same proportion of agree/disagree as a scale with a midpoint” (Maring, 2006). Therefore, I eliminated the midpoint with the intent of reducing ambivalent responses and garnering a better picture of participants’ affective responses to social presence and technology integration. After examining the data, I calculated the percentage of responses in each broad category to better understand the relationship among the data.

See Appendix F for a sample of instructors’ and students’ survey questions & data results. In the following subsections, I provide further detail of my processes for interviewing, surveying, and collecting end-of-course reflections.

**Interviewing Instructors**

First, I began by employing snowball sampling—“a technique for finding research subjects” in which one subject gives the researcher “the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 1). To
accomplish this, I contacted one of the co-directors of the advanced communication courses at Iowa State to discover which instructors were currently teaching advanced communication courses online (English 314, 302 or 309). After learning the names of those individuals, I made initial contact by email to inquire if s/he would be interested in participating in my study. If s/he said yes, then, I also inquired if s/he knew of anyone else teaching advanced communication courses online.

After making the initial contact I then asked permission to interview each instructor participant in person. Subsequently I found five individuals who were either currently teaching online advanced communication courses or who had previously taught them, I contacted them using the method I described above. They all agreed to allow me to interview them.

I used the intensive interviewing technique, which “permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic with a person who has had the relevant experiences” (Charmaz, 2006 p. 25). This technique is appropriate because as Charmaz suggests, “intensive interviewing has long been a useful data-gathering method in…qualitative research” (2006, p. 25).

I employed a semi-structured approach by asking focused questions that I had written beforehand. With a mindset of exploration rather than interrogation, I opened the interview by asking each participating instructor what his or her “ideal” online learning environment (AC-OWC) would look like, who would be the “ideal” student to inhabit that environment, and what type of technology would be “ideal” to facilitate communication.

At the end of the interview, I asked if I might send the instructor a survey. Also, if the instructor was currently teaching an advanced communication course, I asked
permission to send out a survey link to their online students as well. To protect instructors’ privacy, I used pseudonyms. See Table 3.0 on the following page for the names of participating instructors.

**Table 3.1: Instructors’ Pseudonyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the first round of interviews was completed, I employed theoretical sampling—a grounded theory technique “whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them” (Glaser and Strauss 1967 p.45). The initial data analysis led me to contact two former colleagues that I knew had previously taught one or more of these courses (302, 309, 314) at Iowa State. Based upon information from the first interview sessions in which two participants mentioned that they had “inherited” a course, I felt that the former colleagues (who initially had set up those courses) might contribute something of significance to understanding the online writing experience.

Again, using theoretical sampling, I returned to the field one last time to conduct a set of follow up interviews with two of the instructor participants who had indicated that they would be implementing a collaborative assignment late in the semester in their AC-OWC. My follow up interview questions focused on how team collaboration was conducted in the course, and what instructors’ perceptions were about students’ participation and learning as part of a team project. See Appendix G for semi-structured
follow up interview questions. My initial coding of the data involved a “close reading of the data” with the goal of remaining “open to all possible theoretical directions” (Charmaz, 2006 p. 46). See Table 3.1 below for my initial codes for emerging categories.

Table 3.2: Initial Codes for Emerging Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CH - Communication Habits / Practice</th>
<th>COI - Community of Inquiry</th>
<th>OWI - Online Writing Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPM - Communicating via Preferred Modes</td>
<td>TP - Teaching Presence</td>
<td>CT - Collaborating Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAM - Communicating via Actual Modes</td>
<td>CP - Cognitive Presence</td>
<td>CN - Connecting Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO - Communicating Online</td>
<td>SP - Social Presence</td>
<td>TTW - Transferring to Workplace or Other Contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2F - Communicating Face to Face</td>
<td></td>
<td>APG - Acquiring Professional Genres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Charmaz (2006) comments, “we create codes by defining what we see in the data. Codes emerge as [we] scrutinize [our] data…. As a result, coding may take [us] into unforeseen areas…” (p. 46). After my episodes of theoretical sampling, I determined that out of the seven individuals that I had interviewed, five revealed information that was useful to this study, while two individuals were either too far removed from the online teaching experience or did not share information that pertained to the research questions.

Surveying Instructors and Students

The open-ended nature of the interview data gave me an in-depth look at instructors' general perceptions about social presence in the AC-OWC. Because intensive interviewing is “open-ended,” it fit constructivist grounded theory methods well, and it
also “complement[ed] other methods such as…surveys, and research participants’ written accounts” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28).

I used the Qualtrics survey program, to create my survey questions for both instructors and students, which collected data on instructors’ and students’ demographic information, technology preferences, and communication habits within the online learning environment. In order to email the survey to instructors, I generated an anonymous link via Qualtrics in order to access the survey. In order to email the survey to students I created an anonymous link that I shared with instructors. Instructors, then, emailed the link out to their students.

The data collection criteria for this research were based upon the work of others in the field of distance learning. I relied on Akoyl and Garrison’s (2008) tripartite categories of social presence: “open communication”, “group cohesion”, and “personal/affective” expression to develop my criteria (p.4). Likewise for each of Akoyl and Garrison’s three categories of social presence, I adapted criteria statements from another related study by Richardson and Swan (2003 p. 86-7) and made adjustments for this research’s particular focus on the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC). Finally, I devised additional set of questions aimed at understanding the connection between social presence and technology preferences.

Using the Qualtrics survey tool, I arranged my criteria and placed them on a four point, Likert scale using the descriptors: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree to interrogate instructors’ and students’ perceptions of both emotional/affective expression and open/interactive communication within the online environment. Although opinions vary regarding the appropriateness or usefulness of a midpoint, particularly for
agreement scales, the University of Washington Office of Education Assessment states, “research suggests a forced response will yield roughly the same proportion of agree/disagree as a scale with a midpoint” (Maring, 2006). Therefore, I eliminated the midpoint with the intent of reducing ambivalent responses and garnering a better picture of participants’ affective responses to social presence and technology integration.

**Students’ End-of-Course Reflections**

After determining who the instructor participants were, the next step was to use purposive sampling technique using the preselected criteria of contacting current students in the online sections of English 302, 309, and 314 at Iowa State University. Purposive sampling much like theoretical sampling works well when data collection is done in conjunction with data review and analysis (Creswell, 2009, p. 178). I contacted my English 314 students via email with the anonymous survey link to participate in the Qualtrics survey. I shared the anonymous Qualtrics link with the other participating instructors, who then shared the link with their students in their online courses.

Therefore, I collected data from instructors and students initially at the beginning of the course via the Qualtrics survey instrument, spent time quickly reviewing the data, and then ventured out into the field again at the end of the course to collect data from students’ end-of-course reflections (Charmaz, 2006, p.48). The second data-gathering episode for student end-of-course reflections was also done via the Qualtrics program in which I created a set of reflection prompts and a large text field in which students could write their responses. I initially read through the student end-of-course reflections to derive a general sense of their perceptions about learning online. With each subsequent reading I continued to look for themes and emerging patterns.
Data Analysis

One central concern I considered as I designed this research study was *how* to collect data on the *affective* influence of social presence on human-computer interaction within the online writing course (OWC). To address issues of reliability and validity, I first examined preferred technology modalities in the OWC by instructors and students. Then, I asked questions about emotional/affective expression, open/interactive communication, and group cohesion to uncover the ways in which instructors and students’ perceived their ability to communicate social presence via their technology choices. Next, to triangulate this research, I gathered data from participants on both sides of the AC-OWC— instructors and students. My intent in doing this was to gain different perspectives on the issue of technology use, the problem of transactional distance within the AC-OWC, and the use of social presence to mitigate transactional distance in the AC-OWC. Subsequently, I developed trustworthiness by arriving at a richer understanding of the contextual world arena in which AC-OWI and corresponding AC-OWCs exist.

Likewise, I used a multilayered approach to data analysis. First, interrogating the data on a high level with a quick reading of interview transcripts and Qualtrics survey data. Next, after a close reading of data I used initial coding to separate into emerging categories. Then, with each subsequent level of analysis, I continued to fracture and interrogate the data, and to refine codes of analysis. As I placed the data into the final categories and sub-categories, I made note of emerging themes and concepts. While most of the data is presented qualitatively, some of the survey data was quantified by calculating percentages for type and frequency of use.
Instructor interviews were sent out to a transcription service. To ensure validity, after receiving the written copies, I listened to the recorded interview to fact check the transcribed data, making corrections when necessary to do so. Next, I downloaded the Qualtrics data to read and code students' reflective responses to open-ended questions and analyze demographic information. See Table 3.2 on the below for the refined codes for AC-OWI categories.

Table 3.3: Refined codes for AC-OWI Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CT- Collaborating Teams</th>
<th>CN- Connecting Networks</th>
<th>APG- Acquiring Professional Genres</th>
<th>TTW- Transferring to Workplace or Other Contexts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTP- Positive Experience</td>
<td>NCI- Networked Connections—Inside the Course</td>
<td>APGE- Email</td>
<td>TTWP- Transferring Skills to Business or Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTN- Negative Experience</td>
<td>NCO- Networked Connections—Outside of the Course</td>
<td>APGP-Proposal</td>
<td>TTAC- Transferring Skills to Academic Coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTM- Mixed</td>
<td>APGDV- Data Visualization</td>
<td>TTOC- Transferring Skills to Other Contexts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA – Ambivalent</td>
<td>APGAA- Audience Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I noted all prominent ideas related to the instances of social presence within the online learning environment (OLE) as well as the participants' perceptions how social presence enhanced or detracted from the experience of the AC-OWC. Afterwards, I looked for emerging themes and refined my codes. Next, in examining issues of communications habits and technology use, I employed the constant comparative method, which compares data and then positions any data with conceptual similarities into categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). By using the constant comparative method of data analysis within the grounded theory methodology, I established "distinctions—and
thus [made] comparisons at each level of analytic work” comparing “earlier data with later,” looking for “similarities and differences” (Charmaz, 2006 p. 54). To do this, I analyzed the data by coding line-by-line to see “the familiar in a new light,” and incident-by-incident to discover “patterns and contrasts” (Charmaz, 2006 p. 55).

See Table 3.3 below for the codes of communication/habits practices with technology in the AC-OWC.

Table 3.4: Codes for Communication Practice in the AC-OWC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CH- Communication Habits/Practice Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Final Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPM- Communicating via Preferred Modes of Tech</td>
<td>A/V- Audio/Video (Skype, Hangouts etc.)</td>
<td>CPM-A/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F- Face to Face</td>
<td>CPM-F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-Email</td>
<td>CPM-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PH- Phone</td>
<td>CPM-PH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAM- Communicating via Actual Modes of Tech</td>
<td>A/V- Audio/Video (Skype, Hangouts etc.)</td>
<td>CPM-A/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F- Face to Face</td>
<td>CPM-F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-Email</td>
<td>CPM-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PH- Phone</td>
<td>CPM-PH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, I examined the meaning of participants’ lived experiences, which were encapsulated in the data and represented by their descriptions and perceptions of those experiences in the form of instructors’ responses to interview questions, and survey questions, and students’ responses to survey questions and reflections about the AC-OWC. Charmaz comments, “analysis is contextually situated in time, place, culture, and situation” (2006, p. 131). As I analyzed and coded the data, I looked examples of specific time, place, culture and situation of the AC-OWC.

To organize emerging patterns and contrasts, I used a role-ordered matrix to “chart the essential characteristics relevant to the study of the various participants” (Miles,
Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 162). As Sarantakos comments, matrices in general “contain information about and explain aspects of research, and allow the researcher to get a quick overview of data related to a certain point” while role matrices, in particular, contain “verbal information about the views of role [participants] on a specific issue of the project” (2013, p. 393). The matrices helped me to “elaborate and refine the categories” of my research to produce this initial analytical framework (Charmaz, 2006 p. 96). See Appendices H and I for examples of the instructor and student role-ordered matrices (respectively). Finally, I analyzed the emergent themes for insights regarding how the use of technological modes within the online learning environment might contribute (or not) to students’ and instructors’ social presence by affording a more humanized experience within the AC-OWC.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

What has made this study and its data collection somewhat different than other studies is its focus on social presence, technology, and collaborative learning within the asynchronous online environment of the AC-OWC. Teaching in an asynchronous online environment comes with a number of limitations. Most notably, the limitation of a lack of physical presence in which to interact and communicate on a regular basis can foster a de-humanizing aspect to online instruction. The very nature of asynchronicity or “learning at a distance” allows students to interact with course content at their own pace and at times convenient to them but also inhibits students’ ability to connect more frequently with others in the course. So this study embraces those limitations in a way that “leans in” to acknowledge that this potentially is a problem with online learning.
One potential weakness of this study, then, is that it did not collect data about nor did it include a detailed comparison of online, hybrid, and traditional classroom environments. Additionally, it did not include research data from first-year composition courses online, as a comparison of this magnitude would be outside the scope of this particular project. Therefore given some of the inherent constraints found within the online writing environment, this study is delimited to a subset of advanced communication courses online—English 302, 309, 314. The primary goal of this study is to gather data, to analyze it and to make sense of it in ways that will make it transferable to other online contexts, and to provide a basis for further research.

Summary

Data for this study were gathered from two different perspectives, instructors and students, and through three different instruments: interviews, surveys, and student reflections. To protect participants’ anonymity, I used pseudonyms for both instructors and students. First, I initially interviewed five instructors of advanced communication courses early in the semester. After the semester was completed I conducted follow-up interviews with two instructors to gather more information about team collaboration and its connection to social presence in the online course. Secondly, using the Qualtrics survey software, I constructed a series of closed and open-ended questions aimed at gathering specific data about the nature of the online environment and instructors’ and students’ perceptions of their use of social presence within the course. Questions were divided into the following criteria:

- Emotional/affective expression (gathering information about overall online experiences)
• Open/interactive communication (gathering information about communication practices in the online environment)

• Group/Team Cohesion (perceptions of group/team experiences within the online environment)

• Technology integration (use of different types technology within various communication contexts)

• Demographic information (for instructors: institution, number of years teaching advanced communication courses; for students: major, number/type of advanced communication courses taken).

Thirdly, using the Qualtrics software, I asked students to respond to a series of open-ended question prompts aimed at understanding certain aspects of the online learning environment and its relationship to social presence in the AC-OWC.

The objective of this research was to explore the communication practices of instructors and students to understand how they use technology to create, promote, and maintain social presence within the confines of the advanced communication online writing course. This study investigated three central questions:

• Which technological modalities do instructors and students prefer to use to communicate social presence within the AC-OWC?

• How does social presence reduce transactional distance and support collaboration within the AC-OWC?

• How does the use of social presence in the AC-OWC inform the post-process theory of composition, which embraces a “shift from production to connection” (Jenkins; Johnson-Eilola 2007)?
Although other studies have compared traditional and online learning and demonstrated “no significant difference” (WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, 2010), the unspoken messages that lie around the margins of this data suggest that, at least in the affective realm, there is a difference. In the chapters to follow, I explore both the said and the unsaid from instructors and students in the advanced communications online classroom. In Chapter Four I share the significant findings of my data and provide an initial analysis of them.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

A constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130).

Online writing instruction comes with its own peculiar set of affordances and constraints. This research study gathered data to explore how one element of online learning—the use of social presence in the advanced communication-online writing course (AC-OWC)—might be used to mitigate the constraint of transactional distance (the geographical, psychological, and emotional distance found in the AC-OWC) and to promote a community of inquiry in the AC-OWC through students’ collaborative learning experiences. To accomplish this, I gathered data about the communication practices of instructors and students in the online learning environment with the express purpose of establishing a baseline for further research in online writing instruction and to provide a helpful heuristic to humanize learning conditions within the AC-OWC. My data collection is based upon the following three research questions:

- Which technological modalities do instructors and students prefer to use to communicate social presence within the AC-OWC?
- How does social presence reduce transactional distance and support collaboration within the AC-OWC?
- How does the use of social presence in the AC-OWC inform the post-process theory of composition, which embraces a “shift from production to connection” (Jenkins; Johnson-Eilola 2007)?

To interrogate the data, I use a constructivist grounded theory methodology, which I chose because the researcher is able to “see [the] world as…research participants do—
from the inside” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). Given the qualitative nature of this study, my results are indicative of recurring themes emerging from the data, and in this chapter, form a baseline analysis that is interpreted in Chapter 5 by comparing it to the extant literature discussed in Chapter 2. Equally important, the results are organized using the categories that emerged from the data. Based upon the thematic categories emerging from my analysis, this chapter is organized in the following two sections:

- Communicating with Technology
- Creating Social Presence

In the first section, *Communicating with Technology*, instructors and students reveal their preferred technological modes of communication. The second section, *Creating Social Presence*, discusses perceptions of instructors and students about key aspects of social presence in the online course such as affective/emotional expression, open and interactive communication, and group cohesion/collaboration within the online environment. To deepen our understanding of which technological modalities instructors and students prefer to use to communicate within the AC-OWC, I examine the Qualtrics survey data that focused on this aspect of online learning.

**Communicating with Technology**

Understanding instructors’ and students’ perceptions about how they communicate via technology is useful information because as Mick and Middlebrook suggest, “OWI Principle 1…declared that online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible. This overarching need has profound implications for course design and execution” (2015, p. 137). Not only does inclusivity and accessibility have profound implications for course design and execution, but also it has profound consequences on
instructors and students’ ability to create, maintain, and promote social presence as well. If instructors and students are not able to access each other via the accepted or institutionally mandated mode(s) of technology, course participant interactions become limited at best and non-existent in the worst possible sense. The analysis begins with a comparison of instructors and students perspectives on technology integration in the AC-OWC.

**Understanding instructors’ perceptions**

An initial interaction with the data shows 80% of instructors agree that they prefer to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with students. However, instructors’ overall (80%) do not believe that students prefer to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with the instructor. Slightly more than half of instructors (60%) also indicate that they prefer to communicate with students using other collaborative technology not found within the LMS. Although many instructors are more likely to communicate with students using LMS software, some use the LMS communication software as little as possible. One instructor feels very strongly about not using the LMS, he comments,

> I hate them [LMSs]. I hate them all. That’s terrible, but especially in the advanced communication classrooms…. They were not necessarily user-friendly, and we were trying to teach students to prepare them to communicate in the workplace [but instead we were] spending time in class, helping them learn a tool that they’re never going to use again after that class (Bryce).

Although instructors’ opinions vary in their approach to using the LMS to communicate with students, instructors are unified (100%) in their perceptions about
how student teams/groups prefer to communicate with both the instructor and with other team members via communication software not found within the learning management system (LMS). See table 4.0 below for additional details.

Table 4.1: Instructors’ Perceptions of Technology Integration in the AC-OWC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Technology Integration</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Disagree</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (the instructor) preferred to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with students.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teams/groups preferred to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with me.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (the instructor) preferred to communicate with students using other collaborative tools not found within the LMS.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teams/groups preferred to communicate with me (the instructor) using other collaborative tools not found within the LMS.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teams/groups preferred to communicate with each other using the course tools of the LMS.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teams/groups preferred to communicate with each other using other collaborative tools not found within the LMS.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding students’ perceptions

After examining instructors’ views about LMS communication software use, I turn now to students’ views. By comparison, Table 4.1 on the following page presents the data from students’ survey questions about technology integration in the AC-OWC. The data reveal that slightly less than half (42%) of students prefer to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with the instructor. Also, only 34% of students prefer to use the course software of the LMS to communicate with team members. Instead individually and on teams over 80% of students indicate a preference to use other
collaborative tools found outside of the LMS to communicate with each other and the instructor. See table 4.1 below.

Table 4.2: Students' Perceptions of Technology Integration in the AC-OWC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Technology Integration</th>
<th>STUDENT Disagree</th>
<th>STUDENT Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I preferred to use the course tools of the learning management system (LMS) to communicate with the instructor.</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My team preferred to use the course tools of the LMS to communicate with the group/team members.</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I preferred to use other collaborative tools not found within the LMS.</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My team/groups preferred to use other collaborative tools not found within the LMS.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of technological preferences

In summary, survey data reveal that while instructors prefer to use the LMS more to communicate than students do, both instructors and students frequently prefer to communicate via other collaborative tools outside of the LMS. This suggests a general trend (for both instructors and students) of moving away from the communication software found in the LMS and towards communication software that is found outside of it. One instructors' rationale for this shift is a result of the tension and frustration between trying to teach AC-OWC students to “communicate in the workplace” rather than “spending time in class, helping them learn a tool that they’re never going to use again after that class.”

Having established instructors' and students' general technology preferences used in communicating within the course, the next section discusses what the data reveal about instructors and students’ perceptions of creating social presence via their abilities
to express emotion, engage in open communication, and create group cohesion through collaboration.

Creating Social Presence

In the Community of Inquiry framework, social presence is the “ability to project one’s self and establish personal and purposeful relationships” (Garrison, 2007, p. 63). The data presented in this section aims to investigate social presence by inquiring into the three aspects which comprise it, namely, “affective communication, open communication, and group cohesion” (p.63). Because students do not take courses merely for the elements of social interaction, Garrison maintains that social presence is more than establishing a “socio-emotional presence and personal relationships” (63). Instead he advocates that in order to develop group cohesion, social presence requires “intellectual focus,” “open and purposeful communication, and respect” (p. 63). To address Garrison’s claim, I present data from instructors’ and students’ responses to each of the three aspects of social presence using the following categories: emotional communication, open communication, and group cohesion. I begin by discussing the results of data gathered about affective/emotional communication in the AC-OWC.

Investigating emotional communication

To access the emotional/affective expressions of instructors and students, I constructed a set of criteria aimed at connecting social presence with normal course activities (such as making introductions), and with instructors’ perceptions about their abilities to create a teacher persona and make impressions about students in the course. From that data set, I learned that 80% of instructors feel comfortable introducing themselves to students. Likewise, 100% of the instructors feel comfortable
overall interacting with students online. However, only 20% are satisfied with their ability to promote a feeling of community within the online course. This lower percentage is curiously offset by unanimous (100%) feelings that instructors are comfortable interacting with students online and conversing via an online medium. Other aspects worth noting are that 60% of instructors’ perceive that they are able to construct social presence within the course through their abilities to form distinct impressions of students, to project their teaching persona, and to relate effectively in an online or web-based medium. See Table 4.2 below for additional details of instructors’ perceptions of emotional expression in the AC-OWC.

Table 4.3: Instructors’ Perceptions of Emotional Expression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Emotional/Affective Expression</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Disagree</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I introduced myself to the students in this course.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductions of myself and the students helped me form a sense of online community</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable interacting with students in this online course.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to form distinct impressions of some students in this online course.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I projected a teaching persona to the students in this online course.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online or web-based communication is an effective medium for social interaction.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to promote a feeling of online community in this course.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall this course met the learning objectives set by the department.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall the students for this course met the instructor’s expectations.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this data set, two interesting items stand out. First, 100% of instructors feel comfortable both interacting with students in the online course as well as conversing through an online medium. However, the second item of interest is that only 20% of instructors perceive that they are able to promote a feeling of online community with their interactions inside of the AC-OWC. In addition to the survey data, instructors’ interview responses provide additional information on this apparent tension about instructors’ abilities to promote a feeling of online community within the AC-OWC.

**Understanding instructors’ emotional expression**

An examination of instructors’ interview data exposes transactional distance as a significant problem that affects their emotional expression in the AC-OWC. As mentioned earlier in the study, transactional distance occurs in online environments when participants are spatially (i.e. geographically), psychologically, and emotionally separated from one another. Although instructors do not use the term *transactional distance*, their language describes it. As an example, one instructor attributes the “distant feeling” he has to students (within the online environment) to a lack of a “shared experience” in time, spatial, and psychological ways. He comments,

*I found that I would communicate more individually with each student, but have a much more distant feeling from them…. When you’re on different, vastly different, time zones and in different cultures, it breaks that [social presence] even further.*

(Bryce)

His response to the loss of social presence due to the side effects of transactional distance is to adjust his approach so that he is “independent of” rather than “dependent upon” an “ongoing conversation.” This shift also leads him to create more individualized
conversations rather than fostering a collective group experience or feeling of community. However, this is just one perspective. In order to gain richer understanding, I now turn to students’ responses concerning emotional/affective expression in the AC-OWC.

**Understanding students’ emotional expression**

Students’ responses to the questions concerning affective/emotional expression are somewhat different than instructors’ perceptions. Overall, students’ perceptions of affective/emotional expression in the AC-OWC are higher than instructors. Ninety-six percent of students feel comfortable introducing themselves within the course. Seventy-seven percent perceive the introductions of other peers within the course helped them to form a sense of online community. See Table 4.3 on the below for additional information.

**Table 4.4: Students’ Perceptions of Emotional Expression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Emotional/Affective Expression</th>
<th>STUDENT Disagree</th>
<th>STUDENT Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable introducing myself in this course.</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The introductions of other peers within this course helped me to form a sense of online community.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to form distinct impressions of some course participants.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I projected who I am to other course participants</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable communicating online</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online or web-based communication is an effective medium for social interaction.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructor created a feeling of online community in this course.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall this course met my learning expectations.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall the instructor for this course met my expectations.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Likewise, 81% percent are able to form distinct impressions of some course participants. The same percentage (81%) is also able to project their persona into the course. Generally speaking students are comfortable (95%) with online/web-based communication. They also feel it is effective for social interaction (82%). Finally, 79% of students believe the AC-OWC instructor created a sense of online community in the course.

**A comparison of instructors’ and students’ emotional expression**

Ninety-five percent of students feel comfortable communicating online, whereas one hundred percent of instructors have indicated that they feel comfortable interacting and conversing with students in the online medium. Not surprisingly, 82% of students feel online or web-based communication is an effective media for social interaction, contrasted with only 60% of instructors who feel the same about this. While only 20% of instructors agree that they are able to promote a feeling of online community within the course, 79% percent of students say that they perceive a sense of online community, created by the instructor.

The discrepancy between how instructors feel they are able to promote an online community and the students' feeling of being part of the online community indicates a dissonance in the narrative. It also may indicate that social presence is created in the course, and that students establish a sense of community even though instructors feel they are not doing much to actively create and promote it.

Next, I report on my results of the second category of social presence—open/interactive communication from both instructors’ and students’ perspectives.
Investigating open communication

In addition to exploring instructors’ and students’ perceptions of affective/emotional expression, I also examined their thoughts about open/interactive communication within the OWC. Open/interactive communication is an integral component to creating, promoting and maintaining social presence. Earlier scholars believed that affective expression was the first necessary action to establishing “a climate for learning with open communication and cohesion following” afterwards (Akoyl & Garrison, 2008, p. 5). However, Rogers and Lea’s (2005) study suggests that a “shared social identity with the group and not personal identity…is crucial for cohesive group behavior” (cited in Akoyl & Garrison, 2008, p.5). Therefore, the relationship among the three components of social presence is more complicated than what was previously understood. In the next subsection, I examine instructors’ perceptions of social interaction.

Understanding instructors’ open/Interactive communication

Overall instructors demonstrate open/interactive communication within the AC-OWC. For example, 60% of instructors agree that they compliment students on the content of discussion posts and ask questions of students regarding discussion posts. Eighty percent of instructors indicate that they directly refer to the content of students’ discussion posts. However, only 40% of instructors recognize that they express agreement or disagreement with the content of students’ discussions. Interestingly, while 100% of instructors feel comfortable participating in online threaded discussions, only 60% believe that they communicate effectively with students using the online communication tools of threaded discussions, email, instant messaging and texting. Instructors’ perceptions of students’ abilities to effectively communicate using online
communication tools is higher—80%. See Table 4.4 on the below for the data on instructors’ perceptions of open/interactive communication within the AC-OWC.

Table 4.5: Instructors’ Perceptions of Open & Interactive Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Open/Interactive Communication</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Disagree</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I complimented students on the content of their discussion posts.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In response to student discussion posts, I asked questions of students.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I directly referred to the content of students’ discussion posts.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expressed agreement or disagreement with students on the content of students' discussion posts.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable participating in online threaded discussions.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicated effectively with students using online communications tools (e.g. threaded discussions, email, instant messaging, &amp; texting).</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students communicated effectively with me using online communications tools (e.g. threaded discussions, email, instant messaging, &amp; texting).</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to student-to-student interaction, the type of student participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to student-to-student interaction, the amount of student participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the type of instructor participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the amount of instructor participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up this section, instructors’ perceptions of how they interact with students in the online environment vary. Only 60% of instructors perceive that they communicate effectively with students using online communication tools. By contrast, 80% of
instructors feel that students communicate effectively with them (instructors) using online communication tools. Also interesting to note, 60% of instructors perceive the type of student-to-student and instructor-to-student interactions in the course is adequate. However, only 40% of instructors feel that the amount of instructor-to-student and student-to-student interactions is adequate. This discrepancy between type and amount may suggest that instructors are desirous of more communication (frequency/amount) in addition to better communication (type) within the AC-OWC.

Another item of consideration from instructors’ responses concerns the amount and type of communication initiated either by instructor or student. From the instructors’ stance in relationship to discussion posts, perhaps more instructor interaction is needed as instructors indicated lower response rates to this criterion than in other areas.

To provide an alternate perspective, I examine next the perceptions of students’ open/interactive communication for additional insights.

**Understanding students’ open communication**

Overall students are comfortable in interacting with others (95%), complimenting other students on the content of discussion posts (91%), asking questions (89%), referring to the content of others’ posts (82%), and expressing agreement or disagreement with others’ messages (94%). Moreover a higher percentage—86% and 89% respectively—feel comfortable participating and communicating online using tools such as threaded discussions, email, instant messaging, and texting. In all criteria categories, students consistently rank themselves 80% or higher as perceiving to have open and interactive communication within the AC-OWC. In examining the type and amount of student-to-student and instructor-to-student interaction, students assess the
type of their participation at 82%, which is relatively lower than students’ assessment of their amount of participation, which rose to 91%. See Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.6: Students’ Perceptions of Open & Interactive Communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Open/Interactive Communication</th>
<th>STUDENT Disagree</th>
<th>STUDENT Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable interacting with others.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I complimented students on the content of their discussion posts.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked questions.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I directly referred to the content of others’ posts.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expressed agreement or disagreement with students on the content of others’ messages.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable participating in online threaded discussions.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicated effectively using online communications tools (e.g. threaded discussions, email, instant messaging, &amp; texting).</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others communicated effectively with me using online communications tools (e.g. threaded discussions, email, instant messaging, &amp; texting).</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to student-to-student interaction, the type of student participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relations to student-to-student interaction, the amount of student participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the type of instructor participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the amount of instructor participation was adequate for the course.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of open/interactive communication

Thus, students’ perceptions of their personal course participation remain relatively high. By contrast, students rank the amount of instructor-to-student participation (80%)
as the lowest aspect of open/interactive communication. Although the rankings are relatively high for all criteria in this sub-category of social presence, students indicate a desire for more interaction from instructors, not less. By comparison, instructors’ data ironically reveal that they want more interaction from students. Students’ perceptions of their interactions within the course suggest that social presence and collaboration do play a role in developing a sense of community in the course. In the next sub-section I report the results of instructors’ and students’ survey data on group/team cohesion.

**Investigating Team/Group Cohesion/Collaboration**

Akoyl and Garrison (2008) claim that cohesion is based upon “identifying with the group and the interests of the course” (p.5). Therefore, the criteria of this data set interrogates instructors’ and students’ perceptions about how social presence is related to the ability of students to collaborate and achieve group/team cohesion within the AC-OWC. Also, criteria are adjusted to fit instructors’ and students’ respective roles within the AC-OWC. Next, I discuss the results of instructors’ perceptions about team/group cohesion in the AC-OWC.

**Understanding instructors’ perceptions of group/team cohesion**

Overall, the use of polite linguistic turns is common within the instructor-to-student interaction. This indicates a willingness by participants to demonstrate collegiality and a willingness to become part of a community of inquiry. In the area of team building activities 40% instructors provide activities to allow individuals to get to know teammates. Sixty percent of instructors feel that students are comfortable interacting with peers in their group/team. Likewise 80% of instructors feel that students are inclusive of other team members and acknowledged other peers’ viewpoints. Instructors
are unanimous (100%) in their belief in the value of collaborative assignments for students to develop a sense of collaboration with peers and ultimately for building community within the course. By contrast, only 60% of instructors believe that students make connection to knowledge from their interactions with peers in their group/team. See table 4.6 below for instructors’ views on social presence within group/team cohesion.

Table 4.7: Instructors’ Perception of social presence within Group/Team Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Group/Team Cohesion</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Disagree</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (instructor) provided team building activities to allow individuals in groups/teams to get to know teammates</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students felt comfortable interacting with their peers in their group/team.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (instructor) used greetings and salutations.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students used greetings and salutations.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (instructor) referred to students by their first name.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (instructor) addressed the team/group using inclusive pronouns (e.g. “you,” “your” etc.)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students addressed the team/group using inclusive pronouns (e.g. “you,” “your” etc.)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students felt that their peers in the group/team acknowledged their point of view.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The collaborative assignments were valuable for building community within the group/team.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students were able to develop a sense of collaboration with their peers.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students made connections to new knowledge from their interactions with their peers in their group/team.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (instructor) provided team-building activities to allow individuals in groups/teams to create a sense of belonging on their team in this course.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only 20% of instructors have indicated that they provide any additional team-building activities (beyond an introductory activity or the collaborative assignment itself). Although instructors overall do not perceive that they are providing team building activities to foster collaboration, they have unanimously (100%) expressed that students are able collaborate with their peers in the course. This may suggest that students are promoting and maintaining social presence “behind the scenes” or outside the purview of the instructor’s window in the LMS. Likewise, it may suggest that instructors are discounting smaller activities that inherently are promoting group cohesion despite a lack of an overt gesture by the instructor.

**Understanding Students’ Perceptions of Group/Team Cohesion**

Similar to instructors’ perceptions of team building and collaboration, nearly all students’ (98%) have indicated that they use polite turns of phrase when interacting with other team members. Eighty-three percent of students have indicated that getting to know other team members gives them a sense of belonging in the course, and 88% feel comfortable interacting with peers on the team. Most students (86%) feel that their peers acknowledge their point of view as well as indicate a 95% rate of collaboration among team members. However, only 76% of students feel that as a result of collaboration with peers and team members, that they are able to make connections to new knowledge either within the course or outside of it. See Table 4.7 on the following page for further details on students’ perceptions of group/team cohesion/collaboration in the AC-OWC. In comparison to instructors’ views (100%) on the benefits of collaboration within the course, students’ perceptions (76%) were relatively lower. This may be due in part to the preconceived ideas students have about online learning.
Table 4.8: Students’ Perception of Social Presence within Group/Team Cohesion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA: Group/Team Cohesion</th>
<th>STUDENT Disagree</th>
<th>STUDENT Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to know others in my group/team gave me a sense of belonging in the course.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable interacting with my peers in my group/team.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I referred to other participants by their first name.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I addressed the group using inclusive pronouns (e.g. “we”, “our”, etc.)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others addressed the team/group using inclusive pronouns (e.g. “you”, “your” etc.)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt peers in the group/team acknowledged my point of view.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I collaborated with peer-team members.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of my interactions with my peers and team members, I made connections to new</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge found within this course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of my interactions with my peers and team members, I made connections to new</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge found outside of this course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

The results of this study’s data demonstrate that the ability to create, promote, and maintain social presence is influenced by both technological and human factors. First, instructors and students have strong technology preferences for communicating with each other. Often those preferences rely on software that exists external to the course. Instructors more than students prefer to use learning management tools to communicate within the course. Likewise, synchronous and asynchronous modalities of technology are frequently constrained by institutional decisions beyond instructors’ and students’ control. This is due to the fact that the institution not the course instructor or students determine the primary mode of delivery.
In examining the three major markers of creating social presence—emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion, the data reveal some interesting tensions. In relationship to emotional expression, instructors have articulated a feeling of greater constraint from transactional distance than did students. Secondly, while 100% of instructors feel comfortable interacting with students in the online course as well as conversing through an online medium, only 20% of instructors think that they are able to promote a feeling of online community with their interactions inside of the AC-OWC.

By contrast students’ overall perceptions of affective/emotional expression in the AC-OWC are higher than instructors. One significant difference is in students’ perception of whether or not the instructor is able to promote a sense of online community in the course. Seventy-six percent of students have indicated that the instructor did create a sense of online community. This is in sharp contrast to only 20% of instructors who believe they have created a sense of online community in the AC-OWC.

In the aspect of open/interactive communication, instructors and students have indicated that they want more interaction from each other in the course. In spite of this, students’ perceptions of their personal course participation have remained relatively high. By contrast, students rank the amount of instructor-to-student participation (80%) as the relatively lowest aspect of open/interactive communication. Students’ perceptions of their personal interactions within the course are higher than instructors’ views about students’ interaction within the course.
Finally in the aspect of group/team cohesions/collaboration, there is a marked difference in perception between instructor and students. Instructors (20%) do not perceive themselves to contribute much to team-building activities in the course even though all instructors (100%) have indicated a strong agreement that collaboration is valuable. Most students (83%) have indicated that getting to know others in the course does give them a sense of belonging, and many feel comfortable (88%) interacting with their peers on the team. The percentage of students (76%), who feel that team collaboration has helped them connect to new knowledge in the course, is higher than instructors’ perceptions (60%) about students connecting to new knowledge within the AC-OWC.

In the next chapter, I will detail how these results answer my research questions. In particular to my third research question concerning Johnson-Eilola’s post-process theory of composition, I will explain why these results demonstrate that social presence is a necessary component in the process of moving students from “production to connection” in the advanced communication online writing course.
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

The logical extension of the constructivist approach means learning how, when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger and, often, hidden positions, networks, situations, and relationships (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130).

In this chapter I explain the implications for my research project to demonstrate how the study answers the questions posed in Chapter One. This chapter uses the research questions of this study as an overall organizing strategy.

- Which technological modalities do instructors and students prefer to use to communicate social presence within the AC-OWC?
- How does social presence foster collaboration within the AC-OWC?
- How does the use of social presence in the AC-OWC inform the post-process theory of composition, which embraces a “shift from production to connection” (Jenkins; Johnson-Eilola 2007)?

In the online environment, social presence is measured by emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion and is expressed through computer-mediated technology. A major outcome from this study is that social presence is a key component in the AC-OWC. In addition to survey questions, both instructors and students provided responses to open-ended interview and end of course reflections (respectively). To answer my research questions, I return to the voices of the participants— instructors and students to compare their perspectives with current literature. In the section that follows, I provide an interpretation of how the data answers the first research question: Which technological modalities do instructors and students prefer to use to communicate social presence within the AC-OWC?
Identifying Technology Preferences to Create Social Presence

One major implication from this study is the tension that exists between how instructors and students prefer to communicate versus how they are actually able to communicate within the AC-OWC. As a result, this tension highlights one of the unique aspects of learning online and also colors instructors’ and students’ perceptions of how well they are able to create, promote, and maintain social presence in the course.

From instructors’ perspectives

Whether communicating a message about coursework, sharing assignment feedback with a student, or answering students’ questions about course content, instructors’ rely on email more than any other form to communicate both one on one and one to many in the course. In their study of distance learning in the composition classroom, Blakelock & Smith (2006) confirm that email is most widely used to communicate either through the “continued use of proprietary university [email programs] or personal email programs outside those incorporated in an [LMS]” (Blakelock & Smith, 2006, p. 151). Perhaps, the use of email (as the default mode) stems from instructors’ and students’ perceptions of it as an asynchronous, stable, more formal genre than chat/texting or other synchronous audio/video software such Skype or Google Hangouts.

Overall, instructors’ actual use of technology in the course (including email) is constrained by any number of factors unique to the particular contextual environment of the institution and the nature of learning in an online environment. To experience this tension between the desire for the ideal and the actual use of technological
communication modes, I present two instructors’ responses to the following question:

**What is your preferred way of communicating in the online writing course?**

*For the most part it was through emails. I really liked Skype, though, it was a bit hard to schedule sometimes and the students weren’t always super excited about it. I really liked it because I was able to talk to them face-to-face, and you can explain things much better when you can see them and see their visual cues. Email was the most common, Skype when I could…for me, nothing humanizes more than the face-to-face video chatting, as that gets better and better, that’s what I’d like to use. I love the group chats when you can get them to work. In an ideal world, every student would have the bandwidth capability to participate in a large group chat. I’ve only been able to make that work a couple of times just because students are living on the cheap usually, and so it would be a huge problem. We could get audio in with multiple students or text, but not the video chats. The second most common was the discussion boards going back and forth talking about answers and questions and things like that.* (Bryce)

Throughout Bryce’s answer we feel the tension between how he really would like to communicate in the AC-OWC, which is through “face-to-face, video chatting” either one on one or in group chats, and how he actually communicates, which is most commonly through email or through audio/text chatting or discussion board/forums.

The discrepancy between ideal and real is due in part to feasibility and accessibility issues. He mentions that not all students have the “bandwidth” to video chat or the appropriate computer equipment (in this instance a video camera in their computer). In
response to issues such as these, Bryce’s approach to transactional distance involves making learning accessible (OWI Principle 1.1) while at the same time extending the discussions beyond the confines of the course (OWI Principle 3.9) by incorporating various types of interactive digital communication tools (OWI Principle 4.2) that are mutually inclusive to all course members.

While Bryce is most interested in synchronous technology that allows him to see and hear students in “real-time,” other instructors address the ideal versus real communication tension with alternate solutions. Noelle’s responds to the same question: *What is your preferred way of communicating in the online writing course?*

*Email, actually I prefer phone…. I work a lot off of intonation and facial expressions, so it's very disconcerting to me when I don't have those. Phone would be number one if I couldn't meet in person, or Skype, or Google Hangouts, or something, but students don't want to do those. They don't necessarily want to be seen, and I feel ethically torn about making them be seen if they don't want to…. I’ve also used screencasting to do my weekly updates, or if a student has a question about an assignment or comment that I have written on the assignment, I'll actually go and do a quick screen cast of their document to kind of walk them through it. (Noelle)*

Noelle’s disconnect between ideal and real also involves a loss of face-to-face interaction. Just as with Bryce who wants face-to-face interaction as an effective way to problem solve and humanize interactions within the AC-OWC, Noelle desires face-to-face for the additional communicative elements of non-verbal expressions such as facial expressions and vocal intonation, which ultimately lead to enhanced understanding. Her
approach to solving transactional distance is to employ asynchronous technologies such as screencasting, which allows students to “see” her face, and “hear” her voice (OWI Principles 3.9, 4.2, 4.5).

However, even though instructors have indicated in the closed-ended survey questions that their default form is email, interview responses also have shown that they supplement email communication with other modalities not specified in the survey. For example, Selma comments,

*I…screencast all the feedback for my online students…I also screencast short videos…going over assignments…I think it makes it more personal…it seems more like a conversation…. Even during conferences, I got a lot of feedback from students saying, “Oh this is the best online class I’ve had because you actually talked to us, and we feel more connected.”* (Selma)

In this instance, Selma’s screencasting of feedback for student assignments provides a personalized atmosphere where students feel a part of the “conversation” in the online environment. As the quotations from both Noelle and Selma illustrate, one popular method for reducing transactional distance and humanizing the course is to include screencasts to share feedback on student assignments, reiterate printed assignment instructions, and provide weekly updates about the course schedule. Instructors’ attempt to connect to students via multiple modalities demonstrates what connectivist theory literature suggests: “learning is perceived as a special bond between the learner, other people or groups and the online learning media (Pavalche-Ilie & Cocorada, 2014, p. 117). Other approaches employed by instructors include audio/video technological modalities that enable students to “hear” and “see” instructors, thereby, providing a
greater opportunity for instructors to create social presence and become “real people” in the course.

**From students’ perspectives**

Whether communicating with peers or instructors, students also rely on email as their default mode of communication. This is a little surprising since students also do a fair amount of texting on their phones. However, in the more formal environment of the online course, they prefer a more formal and stable communication genre.

At first glance, students’ perspectives about technologically mediated communication) seem to be less concerned with issues of transactional distance than instructors. Instead, students’ perspectives focus more often on the affordances of the online environment. For example, Ivy comments, “The ‘on-line’ format of this course provided flexibility in participating in group activities such as class discussion.” What students appreciate about online learning is the “flexibility” to learn in their timeframe and to some degree at their own pace. Also, according to Stella & Corry (2013) the nature of learning online tends to attract particular types of students. Therefore, students’ assumption that the online environment will provide greater flexibility and foster independent learning is supported by prior research that claims, “students who are self-directed, independent, and mature do well in online courses” (Stella & Corry, 2013).

Even though online students tend to be self-motivated and desire flexibility and independence, they also recognize these affordances come at a cost. For example, Marco comments about the “difference” between online learning and traditional classroom learning. He says,
When approaching an online class, it is important to understand that it can and will be different from the standard format. Much of the content of the course won’t be presented in a fashion that a typical student is used to. The student will have to actively seek out and block off time to make use of the material presented online, rather than having a fixed amount of time per week in a lecture hall. (Marco)

There is an unspoken tension in Marco’s perspective. For him, the online medium affords him “flexibility” to learn “anytime, anywhere” (Richardson & Swan, 2003), but the online medium also constrains him because he must “block off” time to interact with course material. Having to “block off” time might also be interpreted as having to reserve additional time to interact with material presented online rather than attending class during traditional daytime hours. This signifies a form of transactional distance that is both geographical and psychological. Transactional distance, which is comprised of three key variables: structure, dialogue, and learner autonomy, exists on a continuum.

According to the Computer-Mediated Communication Resources, transactional distance actually increases when there are “lesser amounts of dialogue among participants and less structure” and greater learner autonomy (2002). Since the typical student (who does well in the online course) is someone that is an autonomous learner requiring less interaction with instructor or peers, the very personalities of online students contribute to creating a course environment that fosters transactional distance through diminished social presence. Therefore, these students, who are aware of the peculiar affordances and constraints within the online learning environment, also
simultaneously embrace a tacit acceptance of transactional distance as part of what it means to *learn online*.

Likewise, in examining the said and unsaid in student responses, we also notice that students often enter the online course with expectations for a passive rather than active model of learning approach. To illustrate this, Jana states,

*Learning in this course was very different compared to many of the other courses I have taken at college. Most noticeably, there were not very many lecture videos. This meant that I [had to learn] by…gathering feedback on my writings from both the professor and my group members.* (Jana)

From Jana’s comment, we might infer that other courses (face-to-face or online) use static methods or passive learning approaches. Parker corroborates this idea. He says,

*For most courses at Iowa State I have taken, I tend to learn the most sitting through lectures, but in this course, the majority of the learning done was through team revision and collaboration, both online and in person.* (Parker)

Jana and Parker’s comments suggest students enter the AC-OWC with expectations of a “banking model of education” (Freire, 2000) and are subsequently surprised by the frequency and amount of active learning that often occurs within the AC-OWC.

Despite these preconceived notions that the AC-OWC is primarily a “flexible” space that fosters a “banking model” of learning, some students did indicate that social interaction in the course was important. For example, Mary comments,

*This experience was vastly different from any course I have taken prior, due to the nature of having to meet over Google Hangouts and using email for most of our collaboration.* (Mary)
Additionally, Kylie shares her perception of communicating online:

*Prior to this semester, I was unable to professionally communicate to a group of people electronically. As we were put into groups I was chosen to be group leader. At first I struggled guiding my group because I was uncomfortable talking to them via email instead of face-to-face. This forced me to rely on the tools I was provided with to my advantage, both email and Google doc[s].* (Kylie)

Because the curricular structure of this particular AC-OWC required group/team collaboration for a sustained period throughout the semester, Kylie is encouraged to interact with others. This alludes to Kylie’s connection between acquiring skills in certain modes of computer-mediated communication and her ability to create social presence and the technology. Through her online interactions, she is able to create, promote, and maintain social presence with her group and within the course, and as a result; she also has improved her skills in using email and Google Docs.

**Challenges**

Even though there seems to be an implied positive consequence from communicating with technology in the AC-OWC, some students have shared challenges they face in communicating online and by implication the troublesome effects of transactional distance.

For example, Audra said,

*The teamwork in this course is very different from the other courses. Since this is an online course, basically all the teamwork is online too…[the] biggest challenge is communication between each other.* (Audra)
The implicit message in Audra’s comment is that communication is challenging due to transactional distance created by the online environment. Jake also adds,

“As a team, our largest challenge was organizing ourselves as a unit through purely electronic communication. In our first few assignments, this challenge caused missed deadlines, confusion, and unnecessary stress.” (Jake)

We sense Jake’s frustration, when he points out that communicating online (via technology) caused “confusion” and “unnecessary stress.” In this instance, the online environment hindered or constrained students’ abilities to perform at a desired level. For students, the tension created by transactional distance evidences itself most notably within group/team interactions online.

Although instructors and students use email as their default mode of communication, preferred modes of communication involve being able to “see” and “hear” the other person. Likewise, instructors and students find communicating online to be cumbersome at times due to the type of computer-mediated communication modalities available to them either inside of the course LMS or external to it. In the next section, I provide an interpretation of how the data answers the second research question: *How does social presence foster collaboration within the AC-OWC?*

**Fostering Collaboration via Social Presence**

Composition scholars have long recognized collaboration as an important learning strategy (Bruffee 1984) as well as a key component for establishing communities of inquiry (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Luke 2003). Distance learning scholars also recognize the importance of collaboration within the online course (Abdelmalak, 2015; Remesal &
Colomina, 2013) especially in the connection of collaboration to creating social presence within the Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Likewise, collaborative online coursework frequently is connected to computer mediated-communication technologies because students require a way to share ideas, create content, and complete assignments (Abdelmalak, 2015).

**Challenges of collaborating online**

Although 100% of instructors advocate for collaboration as an essential element of active learning in the online environment, only 20% of instructors indicate they are providing either team-building or whole class activities in addition to a major collaborative course assignment. Interestingly, instructors, who have students form teams later in the course for a single assignment, feel less confident about the overall ability of the collaborative experience to achieve its purpose of helping students create social presence and build community in the course. For example Selma comments,

*I think part of the challenge that we’re finding is the first half of the class is completely individual and so the students’ only interaction is with me. It’s me and them. Then all of a sudden we switch [to collaborative projects] and there’s no sense of community in the class, and so they [students] struggle…. yeah, all of a sudden we’re trying to say ‘community,’ but we haven’t built community all semester. There’s a big break there. I don’t think it’s effective.* (Selma)

Selma keenly senses students’ reticence and frustration in response to her request to create “community” because prior to Selma’s collaborative team assignment, students had interacted individually with her, but had not interacted with each other in discussion posts or on smaller collaborative assignments. AC-OWC instructors, such as Selma,
can improve students’ opportunities to collaborate and to build course “community” if they introduce collaborative assignments earlier in the course, provide students with smaller collaborative work that is scaffolded to promote success with the larger projects, and create more than one major collaborative assignment for teams to complete. These suggestions actually correspond with the OWI Principle/effective practice 11.2, which suggests instructors should build course community “early” (Hewett et al. 2013).

Likewise, incorporating smaller, scaffolded, and more frequent collaborative experiences earlier within the course would also allow the instructor and students to address the issue that learning online is decidedly different than face-to-face and allow them to make adjustments for the unique environment of learning online. As Brindley, Blaschke & Walti (2009) observe, “the social milieu of online activities is quite different from in-person interactions, thus requiring new skills and behaviors.”

Similarly, working with collaborative projects earlier, may also enable instructors to address their frustrations earlier with knowing how to set up, facilitate, and maintain a collaborative environment. Once over the hurdle of placing students in teams or groups, instructors may focus more of their attention on facilitating student-to-student interactions using student peer interactions to leverage instructors’ teaching and students’ learning opportunities within the course. Additionally, as instructors search for training on effective strategies of how to employ collaboration effectively in their AC-OWCs, and subsequently put those strategies into practice, they may refine their praxis and increase their confidence in their ability to create, promote, and maintain social presence in the course. Finally, instructors’ desire for better strategies and training also corresponds with the literature that suggests that both instructors and students should
have formal training in both constructing and participating in online collaborative work (Hewett, et al., 2013, OWI, Principles 10 & 14).

**Creating collaborative experiences**

Instructors who develop teams/groups earlier in the course feel more comfortable asking students to work collaboratively. These instructors also provide extra team-building activities, which are scaffolded into the course to serve the double purpose of helping students establish social presence as well collaborating effectively. Forming teams earlier also provides opportunities for team members to explore other technologies outside of the course LMS and acquire skills in using them to communicate and collaborate. One instructor’s rationale approaches technology in this way—not necessarily to learn the technology for technology’s sake, but to ensure that students are “comfortable” in communicating within their teams. He comments,

> I did much more than working through the LMS. The thing that I would try to do is to introduce them to some new options that they hadn’t considered before, but then I would leave it up to them to consider how best to communicate in their teams and with me, so they had multiple options to create that social presence. Part of it was just making sure that they were comfortable because the goal of the class wasn’t necessarily to use new technology, it was to get them to communicate better. Also just with the exposure to new technology, some of them were able to come up with really cool ways to interact with each other.

*(Bryce)*

Through exposure to workplace technologies, students are able to interact with each other in creative ways that are also “comfortable.” So, instructors who are willing to
make themselves perhaps slightly _uncomfortable_ by relinquishing control over technological choices can establish the opportunity for a _comfortable_ atmosphere for students’ to create social presence and collaborate effectively.

**Students’ positions on collaboration**

Students take one of three positions concerning collaborative work. The first position is one of pleasant surprise.

_The one thing that has stood out to me about this course is the way that we were able to work in a group even though this is an online class. Usually I have terrible anxiety about working with groups because as luck has it, I usually get stuck in terrible groups where no one wants to work together, and there is always someone who drops the ball; this has not been the case in this class. My group was amazing to say the least; we all worked well as a team and got along amazingly. There was never a time through out the class where I felt someone was being rude or not pulling their weight.”_ (Gigi).

Gigi’s experience with collaborative work demonstrates how team members developed social presence, projected themselves as real people, and were able to transcend minor issues to work together towards the common goal of accomplishing the assignment.

Next, the second position that students note about collaborative assignments is the opposite of this Gigi’s. They perceive collaboration as a negative experience. One student states, “*All group work in college is a joke. When are you people going to realize this?*” Another person comments, “*I hated having group projects for an online class.*” What’s left unsaid in these statements speaks to two aspects of the online experience. First, when students do not see each other as “real people” then there is
little motivation to make an effort to work with the other individuals on the team towards a common goal. In this scenario, collaboration does not occur well or at all. Secondly when students do not project themselves into the course as “real people,” they cannot create, promote, or maintain social presence. This also affects their ability to collaborate with and learn from others.

The third position that students take is hesitantly positive. The student sees the benefit of working collaboratively, but something left unsaid in the experience is not entirely positive. As an example, Oliver comments on his experience collaborating online:

*Ironically enough, this course was focused on technical communication and although our assignments were to work on designing technical documents, our success relied on effective communication between our peers. I recognized that part of our learning was not solely our end products, but our collaborations and journey to get to the end product (Oliver).*

Oliver’s use of the word “ironically” is a clue as to what he is leaving unsaid. He perceives that collaboration is necessary to do well in the course, but we sense that collaboration is not what he “signed up for” when he decided to take the online version of the course. This leads to another hidden assumption that Oliver views the online learning environment as a passive, banking model approach to education.

Although some students struggle to create social presence and collaborate effectively, overall many students find that they are able to create, promote, and maintain social presence in order to work effectively together towards a common goal. Ivy sums this up the best.
Even though the group used "Google Docs" to collaborate on assignments so we could work on a project when it fit our individual schedules; we seemed to be more productive and communicated better when a number of us edited at the same time. There must be some internal mechanism of wanting to communicate when we know the others are "there". We seemed more likely to leave notes describing our different thoughts and ideas in that format. When we worked individually we tended to treat the projects more as individual assignments with fewer notes to the group (Ivy).

Whether instructors construct their course with multiple collaborative assignments sustained throughout the semester, or just one collaborative project sometime during the semester, most students indicate that social presence plays a role in their ability to collaborate to accomplish a common goal in the AC-OWC.

To sum up this section, instructors and students appear to benefit from early, sustained contact with instructor-to-student and student-to-student interaction. Instructors who provide multiple opportunities for student groups/teams to create, promote, and maintain social presence throughout the duration of the AC-OWC increase the likelihood that students will build a community of inquiry that fosters collaboration and connection. Instructors who form teams early allow space for instructors and students to communicate with each other using a variety of technological modalities and to address the unique affordances and frustrations of collaborating online.

In the third section, I provide an interpretation of how the data answers the third research question: How does the use of social presence in the AC-OWC inform the
post-process theory of composition, which embraces a “shift from production to connection” (Johnson-Eilola 2007)?

**Embracing a Shift from Production to Connection**

According to Johndon Johnson-Eilola (2005), composing online is an “interaction between general trends—tendential forces—and specific articulations, in the ways that people understand, work with, and reconstruct technologies, and the ways that those activities both suggest and reflect changes in our cultures” (19). Johnson-Eilola (2005) also identifies a transformational shift in composing practices. He comments,

In this epoch, information workers do not merely use information; they inhabit it [emphasis original]…. Rather than seeing information as something they needed to master and contain, they saw information as a rich field in which to work. I was struck by the possibilities of computer use as something that broke open and radically transformed traditional ways of working and living (2005, p. 3).

Another aspect of the radical transformation that has occurred in knowledge work is the emergence of “convergence culture” mentioned by Jenkins (2006) where “new and old media collide” so that now both instructors and students are “cultural producers and participants and not simply…consumers” (p. 259). Since the explosion of web 2.0 technologies and now *third wave* computing, instructors and students are able to produce and consume texts/media through their connections to discursive human and non-human elements.

Unlike the prior theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, which were developed prior to computer and web-based technologies, connectivism specifically addresses learning that is impacted and mediated by technology. Scholars George
Siemens (2004) and Stephen Downes (2010) build upon and extend the currently popular constructivist approach to allow for knowledge to exist externally to the individual so that “knowledge, learning, and meaning can be conceptualized as networked elements” (Dunaway, 2011, p. 678). In the connectivist theory of learning, which is “gaining momentum…for the digital learner,” a student’s primary focus is on “the connections rather than the knowing” (Cowan, Neil, & Winter, 2013). This section interprets the data to determine whether or not the inclusion of social presence in the AC-OWC can inform Johnson-Eilola’s post-process theory of composition, which embraces a cultural shift from production to connection. 

**Connecting to Networks**

To demonstrate how students’ social presence aids their ability to move from “production” to making “connections,” I share student accounts that highlight ways in which they are able to construct new knowledge and make connections both inside of and outside of the AC-OWC. Their narratives are divided into two categories: narratives of acquiring skills in professional writing genres and narratives of connecting to personal and professional networks. 

*Producing texts—professional writing genres*

In end of course reflections, students mention specific professional communication genres that they were either unaware of, or did not know how to properly construct at the beginning of the AC-OWC. For example, Edna says,

> Taking this course has expanded my knowledge of what technical communication actually is, as well as given me insight on how to correctly use it. For example, the assignment of writing a proposal was especially useful to me. I
learned how to analyze and write for your audience, and how to use persuasive writing without being too blunt. (Edna)

Others such as Jake comment on particular aspects of professional writing important for effectively designing documents. He states, this class “taught me the type of information and organization that is needed in each type of communication including instructions, memos, and feasibility reports.”

Along with their acquisition of professional writing skills, and professional writing genres, some such as Nancy comment on the relationship of collaboration to knowledge construction. She says,

Before taking this course, I had never completed a proposal; therefore, I was not knowledgeable about professional documents. I have been able to effectively create a proposal along with several other skills. These skills include working with a group to give a progress report on a proposed change in activity. I can also effectively write a business memo that is simple but down to the point.

(Nancy)

Not only did collaboration help students acquire needed skills, but as Audra comments,

Collaborating with my group [made] me feel more connected to the other individuals in this course. If the course had not called for collaboration, I would have never met my classmates and therefore would not have been able to connect with them. (Audra)

However, not all students were able to connect via collaboration. Some such as Fiona experienced a negative environment due to poor and antagonistic communication by another member towards other teammates.
She mentions,

*Overall, working with others made me feel less connected to the course, because of our main communication leader was so judgmental, rude, and generally seemed to think that he was better than our group.* (Fiona)

Therefore, we can intuit that a student’s ability to make connections via collaboration is dependent upon, among other things, the dynamics of the student’s particular team/group. If the dynamics are healthy with open, interactive, and respectful communication, students are generally able to create, promote, and maintain their social presence, which also leads to construction of knowledge (skills) and team collaboration. If, however, one or more individuals on the team are rude, dismissive, or disrespectful, the team dynamics are damaged. Consequently, when one or more individuals become disenfranchised from the group/team, they may even distance themselves from the course at large. This finding relates to prior literature that demonstrates the connection and importance of social presence with student satisfaction in the online course (Abdelmalak, 2015; Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012; Richardson & Swan, 2003).

However, overall negative responses to group/team dynamics are the exception rather than the rule. Most students say they benefited from the collaborative nature of team assignments. For example, Jake mentions,

*This new process [better communication and distributed work load] allowed us to achieve success in our work. This was rewarding in that we were all contributing more equally to the given project and had enough time to create the document, review, and improve it, and submit it with a quality that we were happy with.*
have also learned about effective teamwork and communication with different groups. Through this, I will be able to work more effectively in a team and distribute responsibilities well. I will also be able to know how to more effectively communicate with unique groups. This knowledge will serve me well far beyond just this class. (Jake)

Jake’s comment hints at the fact that not only does collaboration build teams, foster social presence and community within the course, but also collaboration enables the student to connect to networks beyond the course and transfer knowledge to other contexts. Jana overtly describes how team relationships make her feel “connected to other students in the course.” She comments,

*Though difficult at times, working with a team can be very rewarding. Not only did I further develop important communication skills, but also had the opportunity to get to know some other students better and to create relationships with them. These relationships helped me feel connected to the other students in the course, and helped motivate me to be actively engaged in the weekly discussions.* (Jana).

Max discusses how collaboration made him “feel more connected with other people in the class.” He also explains, “*The group projects made the class seem more interactive.*” One interpretation of these students’ sentiments is that their ability to create, promote, and maintain social presence in the AC-OWC has a significant impact on their abilities to connect to peers within the course. Students abilities to connect emotionally with each other via social presence may also be reflected in their abilities to transfer skills and knowledge outside the course.
Networked connections—transfer to workplace

Not only does social presence foster students’ connections with each other and the construction of knowledge, but also social presence fosters students’ connections beyond the confines of the course. For example, Edna transferred what she had learned in the AC-OWC to another course. She observes,

Lo and behold, my final project for one of my Animal Science classes this year was to write a proposal for the efforts of humane education. Using the skills that I’ve learned from this class, I put together a well-organized proposal focused on cat declawing alternatives. I received an A grade for this paper, and my professor even commented on how well put together the proposal was. That project showed me how useful this class has been for me, and how it will help me improve on any future assignments…. I look forward to using the skills that I have learned in my future classes and jobs.”

In a similar manner, Jake also comments on the importance of learning how to communicate with his team—a skill he intends to transfer to the other contexts. He states, “I have also learned about effective teamwork and communication with different groups…. This knowledge will serve me well far beyond just this class.” As final example, Roger shares how he envisions using skills learned in the AC-OWC. He says,

I have learned a great deal from this class. I will utilize the experiences I have gained from this class in my future career to work better as a team member, in giving speeches, and to be mindful of my audience. (Roger)

Overall a majority of students’ responses such as Roger’s, Jake’s and Edna’s indicate that they are able to connect with peers inside the course and to transfer newly
constructed knowledge and skills to other contexts outside of the course. This connects with literature about adult learners’ preference for learning that has “relevance to their work and/or personal lives” (Kain & Wardle, 2005) and learning that is “problem-centered rather than content-oriented” (Youngblood & Mackiewicz, 2013). Generally, students have expressed in their end of course reflections how “in the contemporary blend of ‘old’ and ‘new’ information environments, people draw on diverse sources of information, means of communication, and (virtual) community engagements, which suggests that learning and information exchange and production occur in socially interactive communities of learners” (Luke, 2003, p. 398). From this vantage point, it appears that attentiveness to social presence in the AC-OWC does foster collaboration. Students are able to move “from production to connection” with each other and to other networks outside of the course.

**Summary**

By examining both participants’ voiced narratives and relevant literature we can see that social presence is an integral part of the learning process within the AC-OWC. Although students often are hesitant about working on team-based projects, those instructors and students, who create, promote, and maintain social presence in positive and collegial ways, can derive deeper emotional connections that result in deeper personal satisfaction from the online learning environment. In the AC-OWC, social presence supports student collaboration, and as a result, student collaboration generates a more humanized experience in the online learning environment.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I conclude with my final thoughts on this study and suggest implications for further research.
A significant challenge facing online education is committing to a deeper understanding of the efficacy, values, and inner workings of OWI (both classroom- and tutor-based); its innumerable, rapidly changing modalities; its distinctive nature; and how it functions in a pedagogical sense. The writing studies discipline awaits viable theories of OWI as a philosophy of writing and as a series of strategies for teaching and learning to write in digital settings. (Ehmann & Hewett, 2015, p. 517).

By analyzing instructors’ and students’ perspectives about technology use and communication preferences within the advanced communication online writing course, we can see that social presence plays an integral role in determining whether or not students are able to communicate, collaborate, and make connections to knowledge both inside of and outside of the advanced communication online writing course (AC-OWC). As Ravenscroft (2011) observes, online writing instruction requires a theory of networked learning through…connectivism based upon social constructivist thinking and an emphasis on dialogue…. Embracing connectivism means that we need to consider new design metaphors for future learning that place the person, their social behavior, and their community at the center of the design process and their resulting networked technologies (p.155).

This study confirms Ravenscroft’s statement for the participants, who shared their experiences with me, that our approach to online writing instruction should encourage students to create, promote, and maintain social presence in order to acquire new knowledge, collaborate with peers, and make connections inside of and outside of the course.

Although students enter the course with presuppositions of a “banking model” of education (Friere, 2000) in learning online, our goal should be to move them from being
merely passive “consumers” to active “producers” of communication acts (Jenkins, 2006; Johnson-Eilola 1998), and finally to “connectors” of networks inside and outside of the course (Downes, 2010; Siemens, 2004). One key aspect to achieving this goal is creating an online environment that encourages students to use social presence in order to become “real people” in the online course. To do this, the course structure should emphasize and require “conversation and interaction” incorporating both Vygotsky’s dialectic and Bakhtin’s dialogic in order to move composition instruction forward by foregrounding “the proactive role of …technologies” and to map to “connectivism and networked learning” (Ravenscroft, 2011, p. 145).

In order to bridge this gap, we must consider what online writing instructors can do to more effectively facilitate the creation of social presence in the advanced communication online writing course. While the following suggestions are not all-inclusive, they are an appropriate place to commence. The following suggestions in the next section denote actions that instructors can implement in their own classrooms.

**Course-Level Recommendations**

These suggestions focus on the online writing environment and the instructor. These ideas build upon the *Grounding Principles of OWI* (Hewett et al., 2015) to suggest specific practices that instructors might implement in their online learning contexts. It is important to note that these are merely suggestions. Individual instructors should take into consideration their institutional, curricular, and departmental contextual environments as well as their demographic of students to determine what is feasible and beneficial for their AC-OWCs. Also, it is ultimately the students we serve who are our best “pulse” on whether or not we are effectively providing growth and learning.
opportunities in the online learning environment. Below are three recommendations to help instructors improve OWI.

**Provide Opportunities**

According to OWI Principle 3, “teachers should take full advantage of the flexibility of electronic communications in the planning and guiding of projects and activities” (Hewett et al., 2015 p. 49). In the advanced communication course, populated with adult learners, this takes on a more pointed significance because instructors can provide opportunities for students to experiment with current or emerging technologies that are connected to workplace genres and practices. For example, in facilitating a collaborative assignment, the introduction of collaborative composing software such as Google Docs provides opportunities for growth in learning a new technology as well as connecting with peers.

**Adapt praxis**

First, an important consideration in the AC-OWC is incorporating what we already know about teaching and learning into the new setting of the online writing course. According to OWI Principle 4, instructors should adapt their praxis for the online environment (Hewett et al., 2015 p. 52). One way for instructors to adapt their praxis is to consider the specific needs of adult learners. In order to engage adult learners in the AC-OWC, instructors should create learner-centered and writing-intensive assignments that ask the students to respond via collaboration within their community of inquiry. Likewise, assignments should be project-based to provide relevance and foster the transfer of knowledge to other contexts. Instructors also should consider generating
assignments that correspond to genres found within adult learners’ places of internship and employment.

**Prepare students**

Secondly, creating relevant assignments that appeal to adult learners is not enough. Students must be prepared and oriented to the AC-OWC by “assisting them with technological and cognitive challenges” (OWI Principle 10, Hewett et al., 2015, p. 69). One way to address this is for instructors to provide a clear list of expectations and course guidelines that are written specifically for the online environment. Among the most salient of these are “preparing students for the using of technology in the course,” “time management skills,” and the “ability to be successful” within an active learning environment that requires collaborative work and an engaged social presence in the course. In helping students with using technology, instructors may need to direct students away from institutionally sanctioned software found within the LMS to bridge the gap between classroom and workplace writing practices.

**Cultivate communities**

Coinciding with Siemen’s “participatory pedagogy” in which learning occurs in “a variety of ways—through communities of practice, personal networks, and through completion of work-related tasks” (2004), instructors should “develop course community early” and “engage student writing” using the “technological opportunities that most likely will elicit meaningful responses among class participants” (OWI Principle 11, Hewett et al., 2015, p. 73). Students who are encouraged to form communities early tend to have greater social presence among peers in the online course and derive greater satisfaction from the AC-OWC experience (Richardson & Swan, 2003).
Instructors can provide additional peer-to-peer activities (such as discussion boards, scaffolded, smaller formative assignments that require collaboration and that build to a larger collaborative project) in order to engage learners with each other in constructing dialogue about content, collaborating to produce texts, and connecting to knowledge both inside of and outside of the course.

Nevertheless, these are not the only suggestions that can be used by instructors to develop a vibrant, engaged community of learners in their AC-OWCs. Instead, I offer them as place to begin as they consider how to create, adapt, and implement best practices into their online writing courses. Moreover, I consider how institutions might provide better support to instructors and students with the following recommendations.

**Institutional-Level Recommendations**

These suggestions consider a larger view of the university context. Rather than focusing on instructors’ specific actions, these recommendations contemplate the university as a whole and the relationship it has to the inhabitants of the OWI environment. I provide two basic recommendations.

**Prepare instructors**

First, institutions should prepare instructors for teaching in the unique environment of OWI. This support could take the form of “teacher training programs, professional development, and assessment for evaluation and promotion purposes (OWI Principle 7, Hewett et al. 2015 p. 61). Another item to consider is that some of this training should occur in an “immersive,” online environment so that instructors understand from a student’s perspective the challenges and affordances of learning to write online (Hewett & Ehmann, 2004).
Provide support

Secondly, not only do instructors need support in the form of training and professional development, but also they need support in the form of “fair and equitable compensation for their work” (OWI Principle 8, Hewett et al., 2015, p. 63). The work involved in producing OWI requires “additional effort” and should presume that the “intellectual and pedagogical labor” is “equivalent to (and no less than) onsite course” development and facilitation (Hewett et al., 2015, p. 63). Likewise, institutions should consider capping course sizes at “20 students per course with 15 being a preferable number” (OWI Principle 9, Hewett et al., 2015, p. 65). The rationale behind this is that teaching writing in the online environment is “text-heavy” and leads to a “high literacy load in terms of reading and writing for teachers and students” (p.66). Thus, the writing-intensive nature of online writing instruction emphasizes the need of keeping course sizes small (not to mention the additional attempts by instructors’ to promote inclusivity and accessibility by providing additional accommodations for students’ technological, socio-economic, physical, learning, and linguistic needs).

Future Research

As I was conducting this study and analyzing the results, I realized that the answer to the exigency of how to humanize the online learning experience never really was about a “magical” piece of software that would make online like face to face. Instead what I realized was that humanizing the online writing course occurs only when the participants are willing to become “human” through “humane” acts of dialogue, collaboration and connection.
Therefore, I echo Hewett et al. (2015) and their call for more research to develop theory and pedagogy that address “affect...among students and teachers when moving from onsite to online settings and the concomitant loss of real-time, non-mediated body/face/voice” (p. 510). In particular, research that studies the ways in which collaborative teams, formed early in the semester and sustained throughout it, may promote a vibrant, collaborative community of inquiry that continues to inform theories such as Johnson-Eilola’s (1998) “production to connection,” theory of composing processes along with Siemens’ and Downes’ theory of connectivism that addresses learning via the interface.

**Concluding Thoughts**

By listening to the voices of instructor and student participants of this study, I have learned that social presence does play an integral role in student success and satisfaction in the advanced communication online writing course. However, given the technologically mediated environment of OWI, instructors must consider carefully how they may reduce transactional distance and open up spaces for students to become “real people” in the course. Also, if as Lunsford (2006) suggests 21st century writing is “multimodal” and “multimediated”, then according to Blythe, Lauer, and Curran (2014) students in AC-OWCs possess three needs.

First, students need to be placed in situations that require communication problem solving using multimodal writing. In light of this, students should “choose the best channels for communication in a given situation, including more informal channels such as chat and texting...that...should not be invisible in the curriculum, [but]... should be
discussed as common methods of communication that have important rhetorical implications” (Blythe, Lauer, and Curran, 2014 p. 281).

Secondly, in order to build students’ skill levels in choosing appropriate channels of technology, they need to be “exposed to a wide range of technologies that will facilitate that process” (p. 281). This includes providing opportunities for students to learn software “as part of the language that enables our students to join the professional conversation” (282).

Thirdly, as a natural outgrowth of the first and second implications, students need to be “versatile with multiple media” in order to become “well-rounded interdisciplinary employees…. They must be able read to work on paper or screens using alphanumeric text, still images, audio, and video” (282). This addresses Santos and Leahy’s (2014) claim that “collaborative digital tools, online communities, and the evolution of literacy create opportunities in which writing for an [advanced communication] online course and writing for the “real” world no longer have to be two separate activities” (p. 84).

Finally, in working in online learning environments, instructors and students should actively create a space that is inhabited with “real people” who incorporate the affective and emotive qualities that constitute us as human. Humanizing online writing instruction means projecting our humanity within our online spaces.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVALS

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Iowa State University
Office for Responsible Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4366
FAX 515 294-4207

Date: 1/29/2014
To: Lynn McCool
CC: Dr. Barbara Blakely

From: Office for Responsible Research
Title: Using Moodle to Create a “Flipped” Classroom
IRB ID: 14-037

Study Review Date: 1/29/2014

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:
- You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.
- You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application. Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.
- Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.
- Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.
The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where:
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

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Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.
APPENDIX B

CCCs POSITION STATEMENT OF OWI (2013)

A Position Statement of

Principles and Example Effective Practices

for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)

By:
The Conference on College
Composition and Communication Committee
for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction

March 2013
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Appendix A: Definitions and Acronyms
Establishing a Statement of Principles for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s report Online Learning (2011), the number of postsecondary students taking at least one online course has tripled in the past ten years (p. B20). In line with overall trends in online and distance learning in general, exponential growth of online writing instruction (OWI) is in evidence, and the literature surrounding it has begun to proliferate (OWI Bibliography, 2009; Warnock, 2009). With the rise in Internet-based and Intranet-based courses as well as an abundance of mobile mechanisms for teaching and learning, online courses increasingly are a primary means of instruction for many first-year composition students; as a result, OWI rightly has received intensified attention within composition studies. This growth in courses and concurrent need for scholarly attention to OWI have driven the demand for a broadly encompassing statement about how best to teach writing online.

This document describes OWI principles and example effective practices for teaching writing in the online learning contexts common in postsecondary education. First-year writing instruction is one of the most obvious areas requiring such a document; however, other composition courses/levels and writing-intensive courses in various disciplines also will benefit from this document. Designed primarily for teachers and writing program administrators as well as other stakeholders invested in the teaching of writing, this document represents collaboration among hundreds of experienced and expert OWI educators. Indeed, the research process of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Committee for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction (OWI) has included field visits to leading-edge institutions, bibliographic study, national surveys, a published Report of the State-of-the-Art of OWI (CCCC Committee, 2011), Web/phone conferences with identified expert practitioners and stakeholders, and intensive discussion with CCCC members at meetings of the CCCC through panel presentations, discussions, and special interest groups.

Perhaps most importantly, this statement reveals a blueprint for further investigation into OWI. Addressing OWI is complex and challenging, particularly given the vast array of learner settings, needs, circumstances, contexts, and other factors. Fundamentally, however, educators must acknowledge that OWI is not a panacea for any failures in writing instruction more generally. Rather, OWI provides an opportunity for teaching various student populations in a distinctive instructional setting. As educators, it is our responsibility to be frank in our discussions about the realistic limitations of our work with students, and this document is designed to provide a clear entry point into those types of conversations about OWI. In short, with the rapid growth of all distance/online learning, the time has come to identify, develop, and articulate the OWI Principles that ground potentially successful OWI; such principles lead to example effective\(^1\) practices as viewed by experts of teaching writing in these environments.

Methods and Processes of Developing OWI Principles and Example Effective Practices

The process of discerning and collating OWI Principles and effective practices began in 2007 when the CCCC Executive Committee decided that a set of “best” practices needed to be developed for OWI to help guide those who teach writing in environments that are:

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\(^{1}\) We use the term effective rather than best to describe practices that potentially are strong in more than one setting. Janet Moore (2011) of the Sloan Consortium introduced effective practices to acknowledge the “rapid” changes occurring in online instruction overall (p. 93). The Committee sees such changes as ongoing, which suggests that effective practices will continue to evolve.
March 2013

**OWI PRINCIPLES**

- Digital (i.e., using computer-based or other integrated technologies that can be accessed virtually anywhere and anytime),
- Online (i.e., Internet- or Intranet-based), and
- Distributed (i.e., linked through a computer network while being geographically dispersed).

Questions included: What qualities of writing instruction and learning are the same as with onsite settings? What qualities are different? Does OWI itself call for new ideas, pedagogies, or strategies? If so, which ones are necessary to the digital setting? Which ideas, pedagogies, and practices from the traditional onsite setting can be migrated and adapted to the online environment?

Specifically, the CCCC Executive Committee asked that effective strategies be identified and examined for use with various online media and pedagogies primarily for teaching writing in fully online (i.e., having no onsite components) and hybrid (i.e., classes meeting in distance-based and/or computer-mediated settings and in traditional onsite classrooms) writing courses. While the focus of these practices would be on composition classrooms, other college writing courses and levels presumably would benefit from them. Additionally, the CCCC expressed that an effective practices document would be a useful way to share these ideas within the CCCC’s community and also with the many stakeholders and interested audiences outside of that group.

To that end, the Committee was formed in 2007, charged, reconstituted in 2010, and recharged with the following duties:

**Charge 1:** Identify and examine best strategies for online writing instruction (OWI) using various online media and pedagogies primarily used for the teaching of writing in blended, hybrid, and distance-based writing classrooms, specifically composition classrooms, but including other college writing courses.

**Charge 2:** Identify best practices for using online instruction specifically for English language learners and individuals with disabilities in coordination with related CCCC committees.

**Charge 3:** Create a Position Statement on the Principles and Standards for OWI Preparation and Instruction. In consultation with the Assessment Committee and the Task Force on Position Statements, review and update the 2004 Position Statement “Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments.”

**Charge 4:** Share best practices in OWI with the CCCC membership in a variety of formats.

This document responds to these charges.

In writing this document, the Committee agreed that so-called “best” or effective practices are most usefully shaped in the context of particular institutional settings—such as 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, state and private universities, and for-profit educational venues. To that end, we conducted our research within these contexts and in consultation with administrators and educators in such settings. The principles and practices outlined and described within this position statement can be used to guide institutions—from the private to the state to the corporate, for-profit—in their OWI programs and work.
Additionally, effective practices tend to be difficult to pin down in a fluid technological world. Yet, they certainly are needed as examples so stakeholders can understand ways to improve and support OWI education. To this end, the Committee first developed a series of grounding OWI Principles that will hold firm regardless of the modality (i.e., asynchronous or synchronous), medium (i.e., text-based, voice/audio, video, graphic), and technology (i.e., learning management system [LMS] or universal access platform). Hence, in this document, the term OWI Principle expresses the baseline requirements for OWI and the term Effective Practice expresses strategies for particular grounding principles. While we recognize that the work of OWI is constantly evolving as new communication and writing technologies are developed, this statement provides foundational principles that we believe will stand.

Finally, we note that similar effective practices often are necessary to address different OWI Principles. To that end, readers will find some redundancy among Effective Practices and overt connections to various OWI Principles in this document.

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OWI Principles and Effective Practices

For each of the OWI Principles stated below, the Committee describes a rationale for that principle and provides example Effective Practices that can be adapted to varying institutional contexts. With the exception of the first one, these principles are not presented in order of importance but rather a sequence that addresses pedagogy, institutional level concerns, teacher concerns, and research.

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Overarching Principle

OWI Principle 1: Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.

Rationale for OWI Principle 1

The primary ideas driving the OWI Principles outlined in this document are inclusivity and accessibility. Hence, OWI Principle 1 supersedes and connects to every principle in this document. In particular, the Committee believes that the needs of learners with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, multilingual backgrounds, and learning challenges related to socioeconomic issues (i.e., often called the digital divide where access is the primary issue) must be addressed in an OWI environment to the maximum degree possible for the given institutional setting. Furthermore, given that OWI typically is a text-intensive medium where reading is a necessary skill, addressing the accessibility needs of the least confident readers increases the potential to reach all types of learners.

The CCC published in 2006 and reaffirmed in 2011 its statement regarding disability issues for educators, staff, and students. This statement recognizes that fully inclusive environments are necessary for the equitable and appropriate teaching of writing at the postsecondary level. The CCC statement regarding disability issues strongly indicates that a proactive approach to physical and pedagogical access is superior to one that includes “added on” or retrofitted alternatives. It further states that:
Making writing classrooms and curricula inclusive and accessible to those with disabilities means employing flexible and diverse approaches to the teaching of reading and writing to ensure pedagogical as well as physical access; using multiple teaching and learning formats; welcoming students with disabilities in course syllabi; and including disability issues or perspectives in course content and faculty development workshops.

Additionally, this statement specifically addresses electronic environments: “CCCC is committed to accessible online environments, including making the CCCC Website accessible, as well as working to teach others about ways to make their program and course Websites fully inclusive.”

Such inclusivity must be a fundamental part of any initiative that includes OWI, given its inherent connection to technology; patterns of exclusion have too often resulted from an uncritical adoption of digital technology and an indifference to how it could be used by persons with various disabilities and learning challenges. The Committee therefore posits that no statement of OWI principles and practices can be appropriate if it does not fully recognize and accommodate educators and students with varying physical, learning, linguistic, and socioeconomic challenges.

We specifically include multilingual learners who may have a different working knowledge of academic English and/or different cultural backgrounds. The CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers (2009) advocates that all writing teachers should be prepared to address pedagogically the linguistic and cultural diversity of the multilingual students in their classes.

Thus, both the CCCC Committee for Second Language Writing and Writers (2009) and the CCCC Committee on Disability Issues in College Composition (2011) agree that such teachers’ and writers’ needs must be addressed at all levels of writing courses to include such concerns as content, teacher training, and administrative actions. To this end, the Committee holds that—to the degree possible—all of its OWI Principles and effective practices should adhere to the need for inclusivity and accessibility at all levels of pedagogy, student satisfaction, faculty satisfaction, and administrative concerns, including selection of the technological modality and software for OWI.

Some of the guidelines presented below are adapted from Burgstahler and Cory’s (2008) principles of universal design while others are developed primarily for this document:

- **Equitable use:** The course and its digital designs should be usable by all students and teachers to include those with physical, visual, hearing, learning, attention, and communication differences (inclusive of multilingual students whose first language may or may not be English).
- **Technological equality:** The technology should be financially accessible to all students and teachers in the course.
- **Flexibility in use:** The course and its digital design should accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple and intuitive use:** Use of the course materials and the digital design should be comprehensible regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- **Perceptive information:** The course materials and the digital design should communicate necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.
- **Tolerance for technological error**: The course materials and the digital design in particular should minimize the potential for failure based on accidental or unintended actions such as a technological crash. They should, for example, provide automatic protection of data entered and simple means for recovering such data.

- **Tolerance for mechanical error in writing**: Teacher response and assessment of writing should reflect an awareness of the relatively low value to be placed on mechanical and usage errors in student writing particularly for multilingual and physically and learning-challenged writers. Although grammar, mechanics, and usage need to be taught, evaluation should focus primarily on how well ideas are communicated and secondarily on sentence-level errors.

- **Low physical effect**: The OWI’s digital design should be usable efficiently, comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

- **Size and space for approach and use**: The physical design of the computer- or other classroom should be of the appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user’s body size, posture, or mobility.

We must note that adhering to the principles of universal design “reduces, but does not eliminate, the need for accommodations for students with disabilities” (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008, pp. 24-25). Therefore, there will be times when—regardless of how well prepared an OWI program is for faculty and students with different needs—some accommodations may need to be made (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008).

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 1**

**Effective Practice 1.1:** OWI teachers should determine their uses of modality and media based not only on their pedagogical goals but also on their students’ likely strengths and access.

**Effective Practice 1.2:** Students should receive mandatory technology orientation sessions in advance of the teaching term, which will assist with providing adequately accessible OWCs. Ideally, these sessions would include opportunities for students to express areas of difficulty that can be addressed prior to the OWC. Such orientation sessions can help both the teacher and college staff to gather information about the needs of their disabled and otherwise challenged students and to find timely and helpful ways to address those needs. Carefully orchestrated orientation sessions also can permit stakeholders to assess students’ skills and aptitudes for instructional technology use in distance settings.

**Effective Practice 1.3:** OWI teachers should (1) ask students to confirm that they have the required technology at the beginning of an online writing course (OWC) and advise students regarding how to meet the course requirements through, for example, institutional computing equipment and (2) keep cost in mind when assigning texts (hard copy and digital) and “bundled” supplemental materials, necessary equipment, software, and so on. Doing so will help address inadequate access to classroom materials, which remains an issue, particularly for students from certain socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Effective Practice 1.4:** Teachers should provide students with reasonable alternate means outside the LMS for conferencing or meeting for office hours. Such means include the phone, onsite meetings, or various asynchronous or synchronous online media outside the required LMS (e.g., Oovoo, Skype, and GoogleTalk).
Effective Practice 1.5: When teachers create their own Websites for courses, they should first develop these sites with accessibility and inclusivity in mind. Second, they should validate such accessibility and inclusivity through an external evaluation (e.g., those performed by Bobby in keeping with the guidelines set by the Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST] and the Web Accessibility Initiative [WAI]).

Effective Practice 1.6: Teachers should consider that students may use mobile devices to access the course materials. Therefore, teachers should design the course and course materials according to best design principles that cut across these devices.

Effective Practice 1.7: OWI teachers should notice which students participate less fully in online discussions, whether asynchronous or synchronous. Teachers should connect with such students to learn the reason. For instance, poor participants may have weak keyboarding skills that affect their ability to communicate fully or freely. A possible accommodation is to allow slow typists to provide more detailed asynchronous commentary to one or two discussion posts, favoring quality over quantity (especially if written discussion is graded).

Effective Practice 1.8: The institution’s office of disability services should contact all students as soon as they register to let them know of the availability of their services. We make this recommendation in view of the time involved in preparing accessible materials for disabled students. By the time teachers share their syllabi with students, it is difficult to provide timely academic accommodations to the most disabled and/or challenged students. Without accessible textbooks and other learning materials, these students may fail. We encourage students to be proactive in obtaining academic accommodations, but expecting most undergraduate students to acquire such independence overnight is not realistic. Like their non-disabled peers, students with special needs also experience other pressures and require institutional support for success.

Effective Practice 1.9: Teachers must become acquainted with multimodal means for distributing and accessing learning materials. When students request different media, teachers should check with the office of disability services to learn where and how to find these media as well as who is responsible for acquiring it. In choice of media—Braille, large-print, recorded, or electronic texts—students’ preferences and previous experience with technologies and learning styles should be honored. All U.S. institutions are required by law to provide material in students’ preferred format, and the “reasonable accommodations” argument on the part of colleges has been rejected repeatedly by Federal Courts (Office for Civil Rights, 2010).

Effective Practice 1.10: OWI teachers should offer instructional materials in more than one medium. For example, a photograph or other graphic on the course Web space should be described textually. For another example, critical textual material should be described orally using an audio feature. Similarly, a teacher’s video should be transcribed or closely paraphrased textually to accommodate a deaf student or one with auditory learning disabilities. Students should have a choice about whether to receive an essay response orally (through digital recording) or textually; alternatively, students might receive one essay response orally and the next one textually. If these practices seem onerous, it is helpful to remember that multimodality assists all learners and not just those with special challenges.
Effective Practice 1.11: Institutional administrators should select their LMS for OWI according to its accessibility (e.g., textual, video, and audio functions) to students with the disabilities and other challenges considered in this document.

Effective Practice 1.12: Instructors should focus primarily on how well the student is communicating ideas and secondarily on grammatical precision. Mechanical and usage errors are not uncommon for students who grew up speaking non-standard English or who have certain disabilities. While grammar, mechanics, and usage should be taught, they need to be emphasized in a contextual manner consistent with good composition instruction.

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Instructional Principles

OWI Principle 2: An online writing course should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies.

Rationale for OWI Principle 2

Unlike a digital rhetoric course an OWC is not considered to be a place for stretching technological skills as much as for becoming stronger writers in various selected genres. To this end, it is important to recall the access and inclusivity issues found in OWI Principle 1. Students should use the provided technology to support their writing and not the other way around. It must be clear that OWI teachers and students alike do not need to be technology experts, computer programmers, or Web designers to accomplish the instructional purposes of an OWC.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 2

Effective Practice 2.1: The requirement for the institution’s initial technology orientation should be handled by the institution’s IT unit and not the OWI teacher of any OWC.

Effective Practice 2.2: An OWI teacher should not be considered a technology point person to be held responsible for technical assistance or technology repair. Teaching writing is the key work of the OWI teacher. Therefore, reasonable technical assistance should be available to teachers in person (if onsite) and by phone, email, or instant messaging during all instructional hours. In case of technology failure, teachers should have an alternate lesson plan when the technology cannot be fixed on the spot.

Effective Practice 2.3: Web-based or Web-focused assignments should be about the rhetorical nature of writing for the Web and not about html coding or Web development. To that end, teachers should use transparent software (e.g., WordPress or Dreamhost) so that students focus on learning composition and not on learning technological platforms or software.

Effective Practice 2.4: To maintain the appropriate focus on writing, OWI teachers should be provided professional development in the institution’s technologies sufficiently in advance of a scheduled online course. An example would be to provide such professional development at least one term prior to teaching the first OWC.
OWI Principle 3: Appropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment.

Rationale for OWI Principle 3

Some changes in traditional composition pedagogy are necessary for teaching writing in the OWI setting, an environment that is by nature text-centric and reading-heavy and that requires intensive written communication. Educators who develop and teach OWIs should use pedagogical theories and strategies that account for the distinctive nature and opportunities provided by the online setting. New pedagogies should be explored and implemented to leverage the inherent benefits of the electronic environment in relation to composition instruction (e.g., discussion boards and blogs that allow students to exchange thoughtful claims and support in writing or private messaging that allows students to communicate with one’s teacher through writing).

OWI-specific pedagogies can address the diverse learning needs of students, who can benefit from the different ways writing can be taught online. Such approaches foster a culture of learning and knowledge creation—rooted in the multimodal online environment—that opens up new opportunities for student thought and expression and prepares students for the 21st-century skills and modalities that will help them thrive as citizens and workers.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 3

**Effective Practice 3.1:** When text is the primary medium, OWI teachers should use written language that is readable and comprehensible. OWI often uses text alone—through syllabi, instructions, readings, and peer and teacher responses to student writing—to teach writing contexts, skills, and genres. Specifically, written instruction should use straightforward, plain, and linguistically direct rather than indirect language. It should avoid ambiguous rhetorical questions, phrasal verbs, idioms, and metaphorical/figurative language as much as possible (see plainlanguage.gov, 2012; Hewett, 2010).

**Effective Practice 3.2:** Text-based instruction should be supplemented with oral and/or video instruction in keeping with the need for presenting instruction in different and redundant modalities (see OWI Principle 3). Similarly, when oral and/or video instruction is used primarily, comprehensible text should supplement the instruction.

**Effective Practice 3.3:** Online written instruction should take advantage of the opportunities of the word processing system, text editor, html creator, and the LMS to mirror the types of online writing students most often read. These include:

- Writing shorter, chunky paragraphs
- Using formatting tools wisely to highlight information with adequate white space, colors, and readable fonts
- Providing captioned graphics where useful
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- Drawing (when tools allow)
- Striking out words and substituting others to provide clear examples of revision strategies
- Using highlighting strategically

**Effective Practice 3.4:** Teaching in the text-centric OWI environment should be explicit and problem-centered. An example strategy for problem-centered, text-based teaching that uses explicit language is a “four-step intervention process”:

A. Identify the problem  
B. Explain why it is a problem  
C. Demonstrate how to address (revise) and avoid the problem  
D. Give the student something to do in revision—a way to change the writing and an instruction to try a revision action. (Hewett, 2011, pp. 12-13)

**Effective Practice 3.5:** Text-based teacher response to student writing should be explicit in how to improve the writing, if that is the goal of the response. When there is no face-to-face explanatory opportunity and text is the primary means of teaching the writing, example strategies for intervening in a clearly written, problem-centered manner include:

- Asking open-ended (e.g., wh- [i.e., what, when, where, why, who] and how) questions  
- Demonstrating how to do something  
- Illustrating by examples, anecdotes, and numbers  
- Modeling by writing at the level that is being required of the student  
- Providing doable tasks with instructions to try them out  
- Explaining terms and actions that might be unclear otherwise (Hewett, 2011, p. 12)

**Effective Practice 3.6:** Online text-based lessons should be supported through redundancy and repetition using the electronic tools and software that are available.

**Effective Practice 3.7:** Teachers should provide students with additional and supportive course materials through hyperlinks, electronic documents, and access to databases.

**Effective Practice 3.8:** From a classroom management perspective, teachers should maximize their use of the online environment for explaining assignments and answering questions, holding small group or whole class meetings, showing examples, responding to student texts, and encouraging student writing in as many forms as may be pertinent to course goals. Students and faculty often use writing to connect for guiding tasks, sharing and critiquing assigned texts or student writing, and evaluative commenting.

**Effective Practice 3.9:** From a writing instructional perspective, teachers should take full advantage of the flexibility of electronic communications in the planning and guiding of projects and activities. The concept of the “classroom” can be expanded productively to include time when students and teacher are not physically present in a room. For example, discussions, collaborative work, research, invention activities, and individual and group instruction and guidance begun in class can continue beyond that point using both asynchronous and synchronous modalities.
Effective Practice 3.10: Teachers should moderate online class discussions to develop a collaborative OWC and to ensure participation of all students, the free and productive exchange of ideas, and a constant habit of written expression with a genuine audience. Discussion board facilities in LMSs, blogs, and some social media can host discussions that are integrally part of assigned projects.

Effective Practice 3.11: The inherently archival nature of the online environment should be used for learning. To this end, teachers should use the digital setting to encourage students to rhetorically and metacognitively analyze their own learning/writing processes and progress. Such strategies can identify growth areas and points for further assistance. These opportunities make OWI ideal for multiple drafting opportunities and portfolio-based assessment.

Effective Practice 3.12: The feedback loop both for essay response and question/issue response as well as the expected timing for these processes should be well-defined in any OWC. Feedback timing is a critical issue in the success of OWI. For example, teachers should indicate to students the timeframe (i.e., number of hours) within which they should expect response to an essay or an email and by when any problem resolution might be expected. Doing so builds appropriate boundaries, trust, and a sense of relationship. Such timeframes might be set by Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) or by teachers as appropriate to the institutional context.

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OWI Principle 4: Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment.

Rationale for OWI Principle 4

OWI Principle 3 explains that those teaching OWCs should think of ways to maximize the distinct opportunities of the electronic environment. However, one impediment to those moving their instruction online is the unfounded belief that everything about their teaching will have to change.

Composition studies has a rich research and teaching history, and the Committee recognizes that many core pedagogies of onsite writing instruction can and should remain in OWI. Many pedagogical theories and strategies that have not been designed with OWI in mind can be adapted to the online setting. Indeed, various foundational rhetorical and writing theories and their connected onsite pedagogies and strategies can be migrated online successfully. Teachers should seek opportunities to use their established practices when moving online while seeking alternative ways of offering those practices within digital spaces and using electronic tools.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 4

Effective Practice 4.1: When migrating from onsite modalities to the online environment, teachers should break their assignments, exercises, and activities into smaller units to increase opportunities for interaction between teacher and student and among students using both asynchronous and synchronous modalities.
Effective Practice 4.2: Teachers should use known practices for developing knowledge in the online setting. They should employ the interactive potential of digital communications to enable and enact knowledge construction (e.g., group projects and one-on-one teacher-student dialogues).

Effective Practice 4.3: Teachers should use universal and time-honored rhetorical theories to emphasize the rhetorical nature of communication through online and Web-based discourse.

Effective Practice 4.4: Teachers should engage understood and accepted thinking about communication and interacting in composition courses by employing LMSs and other digital environments to extend the reach of classroom interactions (e.g., reading responses, debates, peer review and editing); to develop rhetorical understanding via online access to real audiences; and to keep students informed of assignments, grades, and policies.

Effective Practice 4.5: Teachers should engage learner-centered and writing-intensive pedagogies via electronic means (e.g., collaborative invention and writing, online research, and teacher and peer review of work in progress).

Effective Practice 4.6: Teachers should incorporate redundancy (e.g., reminders and repeated information) in the course’s organization. Such repetition acts like oral reminders in class.

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OWI Principle 5: Online writing teachers should retain reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching, and assessing their students’ writing in their OWCs.

Rationale for OWI Principle 5

Particularly in first-year writing courses, a tension can exist between institutional/programmatic instructional requirements and outcomes and the flexibility that experienced educators need to teach effectively. Within the context of institutional/programmatic outcomes, online writing teachers should have the freedom to develop their OWCs with content, methods, and technologies that best suit their purposes, expertise, and teaching style. Because achieving advanced levels of fluency in writing requires the complex integration of different kinds of skills and knowledge (e.g., rhetorical awareness, linguistic competency, and genre literacy), highly qualified writing teachers not only are “content experts” in rhetorical, linguistic, and genre literacy but also are knowledgeable about composing and assessing learning situations in response to their specific students.

This principle speaks to the larger issue that faces many institutions with vast numbers of OWC writing sections. The pressures of these large programs lead to unified (and often restrictive) course templates and core syllabi and sometimes even more restrictive course shells. These features often are the result of programs that rely heavily on contingent faculty; it is well known that institutions turn to uniformity of method and materials in lieu of hiring, training, and retaining expert, full-time writing teachers.

Online writing teachers do their best work when they retain some control over their courses, and OWI effective practices should be accounted for in helping to balance necessary institutional pedagogical
goals with teacher flexibility. This recommendation (and every listed effective practice for this principle) strongly relies on teachers having received the training, professional development, and assessment described in [OWI Principle 7].

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 5**

**Effective Practice 5.1:** Writing program course curriculum guidelines should account for any current or expected OWI. Teachers regularly should be informed of significant changes and relevant updates.

**Effective Practice 5.2:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in making necessary accommodations for students with physical, learning, multilingual, or socioeconomic challenges.

**Effective Practice 5.3:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in choosing the subject matter and focus of the OWC course content.

**Effective Practice 5.4:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in assignment specifics when the genre, length, and subject matter already are selected by the unit.

**Effective Practice 5.5:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in adding relevant support materials to enhance the engagement of students and to keep the course current.

**Effective Practice 5.6:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in engaging individual styles of communication to meet both teachers’ and particular students’ needs for interpersonal contact.

**Effective Practice 5.7:** OWI teachers should have flexibility in grading or assessment style including whether to grade online discussions and writing drafts formally and whether to use letter, numerical, or portfolio grades.

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**OWI Principle 6:** Alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI models should be subject to the same principles of pedagogical soundness, teacher/designer preparation, and oversight detailed in this document.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 6**

As emergent forms of online teaching increasingly are offered by many colleges and universities, and as these fall outside traditional onsite education models, some credit-bearing, online-supported, composition entities will receive less professional oversight and may fail to offer students adequate preparation for later work. OWCs listed as “self-paced” or “independent learning” frequently have a fixed syllabus that students work through at their own pace, with varying amounts of oversight from an educator, depending on the institution and the individual teacher. These self-paced OWCs are a component of OWI in the sense that they use digital technology, occur in online settings, and typically are geographically distributed. Hence, they are subject to many of the strengths and limitations of online teaching generally; they should reflect the principled approaches of OWI as outlined in this
document. Similarly, experimental models for OWI, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), are emerging. These, too, should reflect the principled approaches of OWI as described in this document.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 6**

**Effective Practice 6.1:** The WPA should have final approval of alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI models integrated into the online curriculum.

**Effective Practice 6.2:** The WPA should select OWI-trained teachers for alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI courses.

**Effective Practice 6.3:** Teachers of alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI courses should receive the same training, and they should be offered the same professional development as other OWI faculty.

**Effective Practice 6.4:** The alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI course itself should be observed on a regular basis and judged for the content and quality markers determined by the WPA or unit.

**Effective Practice 6.5:** Alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI course teachers should be evaluated/assessed by a peer or supervisor who has similar training and equal or superior abilities/experience in writing instruction generally and OWI particularly.

**Effective Practice 6.6:** Alternative, self-paced, or experimental OWI course teacher assessment should be engaged as rigorously as—and not more rigorously than—it would be in a similar traditional onsite course.

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**Faculty Principles**

**OWI Principle 7:** Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) for OWI programs and their online writing teachers should receive appropriate OWI-focused training, professional development, and assessment for evaluation and promotion purposes.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 7**

This principle establishes an environment in which WPAs and their online writing teachers can develop, thrive, and meet OWI students’ needs. Prior to supervising OWI teachers, WPAs need to have training and experience in OWI. Regarding faculty, OWI-teacher candidates should be selected first from a pool of experienced and proven writing teachers. Teachers—especially novice teachers (e.g., graduate student teachers) and contingent faculty—should not be placed into OWCs until they have received appropriate training by their WPAs and institution. Although such a requirement places restrictions on the teaching pool, institutions should establish some way of training teachers and having them demonstrate their ability to teach writing online before they do so with an OWC.
WPAs and OWI teachers need proficiency in three specific areas. (1) They must be able to teach writing. (2) They must be able to teach writing specifically in a digital environment. (3) They must be able to teach writing in a course in which text is the primary communicative mode. Similarly, WPAs and OWI teachers need support through regular professional development opportunities and mentoring. As professional knowledge and theories change regarding OWI, active OWI teachers and WPAs who supervise them need to be educated and given opportunities to enact new ideas in their teaching and programs. Additionally, OWI programs and teaching should be assessed regularly and appropriately for the environment and in a manner comparable to traditional courses/writing program in the institution or unit.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 7**

**Effective Practice 7.1:** WPAs who will supervise OWI teachers should receive the same training, professional development, and assessment—as well as practical OWC experience—prior to training and managing OWI teachers.

**Effective Practice 7.2:** Teacher candidates for OWI should first be skilled, experienced teachers of postsecondary writing at the required levels and for the needed genres. Individual writing programs should develop methods, such as reviewing teaching experience and unit-based teacher evaluations, for determining such strengths.

**Effective Practice 7.3:** Teacher candidates for OWI should self-select or otherwise express willingness to teach in an OWI setting. Teachers who are not willing should be given accurate information about the writing program’s current and projected future needs for OWI teachers and whether the ability to teach in an OWI setting will have an effect on retention or promotion. Because the institutional needs for increasing OWI course selections must be accounted for, teachers should be encouraged to understand the professional development opportunities and needs for future writing courses (see [OWI Principle 12](#)).

**Effective Practice 7.4:** Given that not all teachers are well-suited to OWI work, those who would do better in traditional settings should be identified and assigned to such settings whenever possible. Where personality or the conditions of access, as outlined in [OWI Principle 1](#), indicate a poor match for OWI, such teachers should be accommodated whenever possible.

**Effective Practice 7.5:** Prospective OWI teachers should receive training particular to online teaching and learning, including differences in modalities, logistics, time management, and career choices.

**Effective Practice 7.6:** Prospective OWI teachers should receive OWI-specific training as outlined below:

- Training should include the technological elements of teaching both asynchronously and synchronously using the institution’s approved technologies. These elements include online techniques for teaching students to achieve strong writing in a computer-mediated setting. This training should be augmented with knowledge regarding any freeware that the institution approves generally or for OWCs specifically.
- In keeping with [OWI Principle 1](#), training should address issues of accessibility such as how to welcome all students to the course through an inclusive syllabus, how and when
to provide course materials in multiple modalities and formats, and the various technologies useful for connecting with student writers of different backgrounds and physical or learning capabilities.

- Teacher training should occur in the setting (e.g., fully online or hybrid) and modality (e.g., asynchronous or synchronous) and using the media (e.g., text, audio, video) through which the teacher will be expected to perform.
- Teacher training should include individualized instructional and mentoring opportunities that support the teacher's unique capabilities and growth.
- Online writing teachers should be provided with an online network to associate and communicate with other online writing teachers at the institution.

**Effective Practice 7.7:** Novice OWI teachers should be assigned experienced OWI mentors while teaching their first two regular OWCs.

**Effective Practice 7.8:** When possible, institutions/units/writing programs should help teachers to progress into fully online teaching. For example, they may want to assign new OWI teachers to hybrid courses to build practical experience.

**Effective Practice 7.9:** Workshops and/or other in-service training in OWI concepts and techniques should be offered by institutions/units/writing programs on a regular basis and at times that are accessible to teachers. Teachers active in OWI also should receive compensated opportunities for ongoing professional development through such experiences as workshops, conferences, and research.

**Effective Practice 7.10:** The OWC itself should be observed on a regular basis and judged for the content and quality markers determined by the WPA or unit.

**Effective Practice 7.11:** Online writing teachers should be evaluated/assessed by a peer or supervisor who has similar training and equal or superior abilities/experience in writing instruction generally and OWI particularly.

**Effective Practice 7.12:** OWI teacher assessment should occur in the setting and modalities that the teacher uses in the online writing course.

**Effective Practice 7.13:** OWI teacher assessment should be engaged as rigorously as—and not more rigorously than—it would be in a similar traditional onsite course.

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**OWI Principle 8:** Online writing teachers should receive fair and equitable compensation for their work.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 8**

The work involved with OWI is new to some institutions and, as such, requires additional effort on the part of WPAs and faculty. At a minimum, the efforts involved in developing and teaching new OWCs should be presumed to represent intellectual and pedagogical labor equivalent to (and no less than)
developing a new onsite writing course. Thus, also at a minimum, the compensation currently in place for teachers concerning the development of a new onsite course also should apply when asking teachers to develop an online course.

Other issues arise in terms of how much time and effort go into OWI-based teaching. For example, new research indicates that there is a quantifiably heavier reading load for teachers particularly in asynchronous settings, as well as a heavier reading and writing load for both teachers and students (Griffin & Minter, 2012). In the online writing setting, teachers need to build informational redundancy into a Web-based, LMS format. In other words, they often need to provide a syllabus in more than one form or in more than one online space. Assignments need to be written and distributed in more than one module or more than one format for ease of finding and retrieval. Furthermore, teachers need to provide content and instructional accessibility through redundant voice, visual, and text-based materials, in keeping with OWI Principle 1.

Altering course materials in these ways requires time and energy as well as thoughtful literacy approaches and knowledgeable language choices. Although some effective practice strategies can help to mitigate time load issues, they may add up for teachers. Therefore, the Committee recommends additional compensation for first-time OWI teachers who are learning how to accommodate such necessary organizational and pedagogical strategies. Compensation in various forms (e.g., pay adjustments, course load modifications, and technology purchases) should be provided.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 8**

**Effective Practice 8.1:** To the extent that developing an online writing program, new OWC, or online writing workshop often requires additional preparatory, individual learning, and instructional time, such developers should receive appropriate compensation.

**Effective Practice 8.2:** First-time OWI teachers should receive appropriate compensation to accommodate learning and putting into practice the exigencies of OWCs.

**Effective Practice 8.3:** Given the principled requirement for training in OWI (see OWI Principle 7), new OWI teachers in training and their trainers should receive appropriate compensation commensurate with their time and effort.

**Effective Practice 8.4:** Given the principled requirement for training in OWL tutoring (see OWI Principle 14), new OWL tutors in training and their trainers should receive appropriate compensation commensurate with their time and effort.

**Effective Practice 8.5:** At various times in the institutional or unit teaching cycle, when new OWI courses, revised OWI courses, or new technologies are developed and/or provided, OWI teachers and trainers should receive compensation commensurate with their time and effort.

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OWI Principle 9: OWCs should be capped responsibly at 20 students per course with 15 being a preferable number.
Rationale for OWI Principle 9

The CCCC’s *Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* (1989), regarding the teaching conditions necessary for a quality education, stated that no more than 20 students (and preferably 15) should be in a college-level writing course. Further, it indicated that teachers should have no more than 60 students of writing in any one term. These guidelines were written in 1989 before the major onset of OWCs that continue to increase in number. Teaching writing through digital media is a text-intensive enterprise, even when voice and video are used. Text-heavy writing instruction leads to a high literacy load in terms of reading and writing for teachers and students, as noted in the rationale for OWI Principle 8. Because contemporary writing pedagogy encourages high-quality, individualized teacher-to-student interactions as well as peer reading and written discussion opportunities, the literacy load must be made manageable. Given these realities and the necessity to provide a robustly accessible teaching and learning environment (see OWI Principle 4), the maximum number of students in an OWC should adhere to these teaching conditions.

Coordinating the statement cited above with the principles of the *CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers* (2009) and with OWI Principle 1 of this document, any OWC solely comprised of physically-, learning-, linguistically-, or socioeconomically-challenged writing students (i.e., sometimes called “developmental” or “basic” writers) should have no more than 15 students. In such cases, teachers should be assigned a maximum of 45 such writing students per term. The added concerns of assisting students with basic reading and writing skills in a text-intensive online setting requires additional time and especially thoughtful writing on teachers’ parts, as well as possible offline phone or in-person interventions. Fifteen students remains a reasonable number in these conditions.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 9

This OWI Principle stands without example effective practices as the Principle itself clearly articulates effective practice in this area.

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Institutional Principles

**OWI Principle 10:** Students should be prepared by the institution and their teachers for the unique technological and pedagogical components of OWI.

Rationale for OWI Principle 10

Adequate preparation is another issue of access, enabling students to succeed in a different learning environment by assisting them with technological and cognitive challenges. Any individual online course should include some form of orientation for students. Sometimes such orientation is left to general technology or advising units and is not provided within each course. Having been appropriately oriented to the institution’s LMS (in keeping with Effective Practice 2.1), for example, students still need to understand what the OWC will be like. For this understanding, they need formal preparation particular to learning writing online. For instance, unlike some online courses, an OWC is not a self-paced or
individually managed course in that regular and frequent student-to-group and student-to-teacher interactions are necessary within a well-defined time frame.

To this end, a clear OWI orientation program should be provided at the institutional or unit level such that students are made aware of the unique requirements and technological opportunities of the OWC. Whether an institutional or unit trainer prepares and delivers such orientation, teachers should be primed to support and/or repeat elements of that training in the OWC to assist with student success. Neither institutional/unit administrators nor teachers should assume that because many students are frequent technology users, they will be successful with OWI. Indeed, the kind of online communicating that tech-savvy students do in their personal lives often is fast, frequent, and informal, which typically is not the kind of communicating they will need to do regularly to be successful in OWCs.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 10

**Effective Practice 10.1:** Appropriate OWI preparation should begin with interface familiarization and experiential exercises that make clear the public (i.e., communication to/from the teacher and among all students in the course) and private (i.e., communication between the teacher and individual student) spaces. Students need to be introduced to the writing-course specific uses of the LMS. At a minimum, students need to know where to access their assignments and readings, where to post and retrieve formal writing, where to meet and write publicly with peers, and where to communicate privately with the teacher and peers.

**Effective Practice 10.2:** Preparation for OWI should include specific lessons and examples regarding the study habits and skills (e.g., time management, self-motivation, and organization) students will need prior to taking an OWC. Optimally, the teacher should be a part of this process. Specifics may include such factors as the time needed to draft and redraft an essay and how that affects timing for sharing the draft online with peer group members, for example.

**Effective Practice 10.3:** Institutions offering OWCs should create resources for students before the course is taught for the first time to help students gain an understanding of the differences between writing in a traditional setting and in their specific online learning setting.

**Effective Practice 10.4:** Following from OWI Principle 2, the institution should provide 24/7, accessible technical support for any LMS or other approved software or technology used for meeting with or participating in the OWC. Teachers should not be considered the primary IT expert for the OWC.

**Effective Practice 10.5:** Teachers should conduct trial runs prior to the term with the enrolled students to create comfort with the environment among the students.

**Effective Practice 10.6:** Students should receive accessible back-up plans for when technology fails, either on their end or the institution’s end.

**Effective Practice 10.7:** In most cases, teachers should make use of the institutionally approved software and/or LMS on which students are prepared for the OWC. Although composition teachers may desire to bring additional, often free, software into the OWC, they should: (1) have a clear pedagogical rationale for doing so; (2) have appropriate permission to do so; (3) make
sure that it is accessible to all students; and (4) prepare students adequately for the change and/or addition to the LMS.

**Effective Practice 10.8:** Students should be apprised of the time teachers will require for formal or informal conferences with teachers. Typically, OWC students should meet teachers in digital or technology-assisted media (e.g., phone or Skype) in keeping with the nature of the course although they may request a phone (if desired) or onsite (if feasible) conference with the teacher.

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**OWI Principle 11:** Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 11**

Students’ motivation as learners often is improved by a sense of interpersonal connectedness to others within a course. Composition teachers long have practiced pedagogy of collaboration and individualization in which students are encouraged to see themselves as connected to their peers while being unique writers. It is believed generally that such writing courses inspire student success and satisfaction.

To that end, student investment is thought to be fostered when OWCs create community among teachers and students. Developing community is driven both by the institution and faculty interaction with students. Institutions not only must be committed to students and the delivery of highest quality OWI, but such a commitment should be communicated clearly by institutional leadership. It also should be fostered by an instructional practice of ongoing, student-centered evaluation of course work and learning.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 11**

**Effective Practice 11.1:** OWCs should have no more than 20 registered students (see **OWI Principle 9**). Online environments have built-in community meeting spaces. However, classes larger than 20 make it difficult for students to know each other and each other’s writing, which often requires written personal attention to a large number of peer discourse opportunities. Furthermore, larger classes make personalized connections between teacher and students and among students and peers difficult.

**Effective Practice 11.2:** OWC teachers should develop course community early by employing “icebreakers” and other activities that make use of the LMS and that engage student writing.

**Effective Practice 11.3:** Instructors should set expectations about course objectives, assignments, and learning by communicating with students one-to-one and as a group, regularly and systematically, using both asynchronous and synchronous modalities.

**Effective Practice 11.4:** As with any composition course, teachers should respond to students’ formal projects in a timely manner that has been outlined clearly for students (see **Effective**
Practice 3.12). Particular to OWI, however, they should employ the kinds of strategies suggested in Effective Practice 3.3 and Effective Practice 3.4, and take advantage of the unique opportunities of the online environment as described in Effective Practice 3.2.

Effective Practice 11.5: Informal student writing integrated in the course (e.g., asynchronous discussions, blogs, reading responses) should use the technological opportunities that most likely will elicit meaningful responses among class participants.

Effective Practice 11.6: Teachers should seek regular, course-specific feedback on OWI course implementation and activities, instructional goals, and performance. Such meta-feedback should make use of private communication venues within the LMS in order to develop the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student. When possible, for student comfort, such feedback should be collected anonymously and implemented publicly.

Effective Practice 11.7: Teachers should develop forums, threads, and assessments in which students can have open discussions, either with or without teacher involvement, about course dynamics. Not only does the OWC provide a place for course-specific self-reflection, it can also provide an ideal setting for more broadly evaluating the nature of student learning such as online modalities for writing, the effectiveness of the LMS, and the like. If students are given opportunities to express their experiences and to vent their frustrations, perhaps in threads like “Lounge” or “Comments about our learning platform” or in an anonymous midterm course evaluation, that might engender a greater willingness to persevere in a new or different learning setting. Additionally, such communications enable OWI teachers to make adjustments and provide feedback to their administrators.

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OWI Principle 12: Institutions should foster teacher satisfaction in online writing courses as rigorously as they do for student and programmatic success.

Rationale for OWI Principle 12

Teacher satisfaction in an OWI environment is critical. Many teachers learned their craft in traditional, onsite settings, so they may experience anxiety and/or dissatisfaction in this newer educational setting. Teacher satisfaction is dependent on a number of affective factors, including being personally suited to teaching online and being comfortable communicating with students using digital/electronic means.

Teachers should be helped to understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of teaching an OWC in their institution, which includes such pedagogical factors as understanding how communication in the OWC environment differs and learning the benefits and challenges of the asynchronous and the synchronous modalities. Developing that understanding includes clearly describing any employment conditions specific to teaching an OWC course in the institution such as onsite and/or online office requirements; whether teaching an online course is understood to be equal in time or weight to a traditional onsite course; and how teaching an OWC is assessed for job retention, promotion, and tenure.
Time is a particularly sensitive issue for teachers, onsite as well as online. However, a standing misconception is that teaching and learning in an online environment is less time-intensive than teaching on campus because the teaching and learning often can be accomplished asynchronously and at one’s own convenience. Research consistently has indicated that teaching online can be more time-intensive (Allen & Seaman, 2010; Seaman, 2009; Worley and Tesdell, 2009) because most communications and interactions (e.g., instruction, assignments, questions, answers, and grades) in OWCs are fully online. Teaching writing online involves focused teacher responses that are crafted to specific student compositions. Unlike what people might imagine can be done in other disciplines, most of these communications cannot be automated; there is no “leveraging” or “scalability” of these essentially unique interactions (as compared to, for example, providing the same content video to hundreds, if not thousands, of students). To that end, concerns about time management can be an issue that contributes to teacher dissatisfaction.

With their individual habits, logistics, time management, and personal career issues, teachers who are more suited to online modalities can engage the students and invest them in their own learning online, all of which contribute to teacher satisfaction.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 12**

**Effective Practice 12.1:** Teachers should have the choice of whether to teach in an OWI-based or traditional setting. Institutions should allow for teachers’ preference for teaching onsite, hybrid, or fully online courses and settings.

**Effective Practice 12.2:** WPAs should provide adequate training and professional development to all OWI teachers prior to their first OWC teaching experience. (See OWI Principle 7 for more specifics of this practice.)

**Effective Practice 12.3:** Employment requirements for teaching writing online should be stated clearly when new teachers are hired. Changing requirements should be communicated to all teachers as soon as possible. Individual teachers should have adequate opportunity to discuss with the WPA how any changes relative to OWI may affect their careers.

**Effective Practice 12.4:** All teachers who do or who might teach using OWI should be educated about the relative benefits and challenges of teaching an OWC in their institutional context, such as:

- Time required to conduct “in-class activities” when meeting both asynchronously and synchronously.
- Time required for assessment of student writing (e.g., traditional essays, other writing, and asynchronous discussions) regardless of genre (i.e., formal or informal), modality (i.e., asynchronous or synchronous), or media (i.e., text-based or voice/video).
- Time required for “office hours” and information about whether these are to be met online, onsite, or both.
- Time required for formal or informal conferences with students. Typically, OWC teachers should meet students using digital or technology-assisted media (e.g., phone or Skype) in keeping with the nature of the course, although students may request a face-to-face conference with the teacher. Such requests should be accommodated when feasible.
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- Whether teaching an OWC is understood to be equal in time or weight to a traditional onsite course.
- How teaching OWGs are assessed for job retention, promotion, and tenure.
- To what degree the institution will be increasing its OWCs and, therefore, its need for more online writing teachers.

Effective Practice 12.5: All teachers who teach or who might teach through OWI should be provided professional OWI-focused materials and encouraged strongly to study these materials prior to and during training and/or teaching in the OWI setting.

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OWI Principle 13: OWI students should be provided support components through online/digital media as a primary resource; they should have access to onsite support components as a secondary set of resources.

Rationale for OWI Principle 13

Writing instruction that is conducted online requires online support systems. Such support should take the form of online writing labs (OWLs; also known as online writing centers) as well as online libraries, online accessible information technology (IT) support, and distance-based student counseling. Such reinforcing programs provide student access to the same support components that students in traditional, onsite courses receive. This issue is one of access and inclusivity (see OWI Principle 1), but it also is one of enabling students to use the digital educational environment more fully (see OWI Principle 10). When students are in a “learn-anytime” environment, they should have broad access to support services.

OWLs, for example, support the process-oriented elements of writing as well as its social nature. As do brick-and-mortar writing centers, OWLs foster one-to-one relationships between tutors and writers and provide tailored feedback and assistance to students as a complement to in-class, faculty-led instruction. Tailored, personalized feedback from peer or professional tutors can afford invaluable learning opportunities for student writers. With institutional and faculty support, students must be prepared to use OWLs as sites of interaction and dialogue and not as linear “drop-off” points to “fix” papers. OWLs can further benefit OWI students by strategically modeling asynchronous or synchronous interactions within the writing process.

Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 13

Effective Practice 13.1: At all institutions where OWI is practiced—whether or not an onsite writing center is available—an OOWL should be developed and provided to OWI students. Like the traditional writing center instruction that uses a one-to-one model and oral discussion between the student and the tutor, OOWL feedback uses a one-to-one model and interpersonal connections to address students within the online environment. Fundamentally, an OOWL is capable of providing appropriate support to OWI students. As such, an OOWL’s work should be understood as a dialogue-intensive exchange in which the tutor uses questions to engage the student and to interact with the text.
Effective Practice 13.2: OWL support should match the course modality and media. For instance, if the course is asynchronous, then asynchronous tutoring should be available. If the course is synchronous through voice and video, then the online tutor should be available synchronously through voice and video. For hybrid courses, both a traditional onsite writing center and an OWL should be available. Whenever possible, asynchronous and synchronous online tutorial support should be available to all online writing students, in keeping with an accessible OWL program (see OWI Principle 1).

Effective Practice 13.3: OWI teachers should teach their students how to use the OWL, how to read and interpret any textual feedback or advice, and how to make decisions about the uses of that feedback in their writing. Example strategies for accomplishing these goals include the following:

- Students should be disabused of the belief that OWLs are editing services where they can send their papers to be “fixed” and returned immediately. To this end, teacher instruction should include the fact that OWLs are teaching facilities and that using OWLs takes time, energy, discipline, and commitment on the part of the student.
- Teachers might ask students to make an appointment with a tutor at the OWL to work on an early draft of their essay. This guidance may help OWL tutors to set expectations with students and begin developing an ongoing relationship with them.
- In asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid OWCs, students can work with an online tutor in the “pre-writing” and drafting stages of writing either asynchronously, synchronously, or both, respective of their OWC modality. Students can then submit archives of those initial synchronous discussions with the final draft of their essay/writing piece to the teachers as a longitudinal record. To underscore their learning, students might be asked to write metacognitively about why and how they chose to use certain feedback.
- To encourage online interaction with students, asynchronous OWLs may provide both detailed expectations of online tutoring (i.e., copied and pasted from a standard statement and then individualized) and an initial response for the student. They might require the student to respond to the tutor's initial response before getting more feedback. This asynchronous exchange of text would be intended to encourage more robust conversation.

Effective Practice 13.4: Teachers should communicate with the institution’s OWL, providing valuable information about course assignments and writing expectations to be shared with the tutors.

Effective Practice 13.5: To encourage adequate online engagement with students, OWLs should have access to as many of the latest technologies as possible, including online interactive media, live chat, and mobile device applications.

Effective Practice 13.6: If both asynchronous and synchronous modalities are offered in the OWL, tutors and students should be led to use the modality most suited to their tutorial goals and particular needs. For example, asynchronous tutoring may work best with receiving both global and local response to a draft, while synchronous tutoring may work best with brainstorming an idea or working intensively with one of the student’s chosen concerns (e.g., thesis, introduction, and outline of arguments).
**Effective Practice 13.7:** Writing centers should continue to explore ways to engage students online, finding new means to interact with students and their texts as technology continues to provide new opportunities.

**Effective Practice 13.8:** OWI students should have equal access to institutional library resources. Online access to journal articles and books should be a priority; in its absence, a rapid-delivery system for copied journal articles and for borrowing books should be made available to students.

**Effective Practice 13.9:** OWI students should have online and phone access to institutional IT assistance with broad access. It is reasonable for the anytime learner to expect 24/7 access to accommodate the time flexible learning schedules made available by online courses.

**Effective Practice 13.10:** OWI students should have equal access to the institution’s full array of counseling. It is reasonable for the anytime learner to expect 24/7 access to accommodate the time flexible learning schedules made available by online courses.

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**OWI Principle 14:** Online writing lab administrators and tutors should undergo selection, training, and ongoing professional development activities that match the environment in which they will work.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 14**

As it is with writing instructors, tutor (peer or professional) training and ongoing professional development are paramount. Such training and orientation must address the distinctive nature of online writing tutoring in asynchronous and synchronous venues.

The OWL coordinator should be well-versed in both traditional writing center and OWL pedagogy and theory. This individual should be experienced with the environments and modalities in which the tutoring occurs. To this end, the coordinator should select online tutors for their (1) writing tutoring potential and/or experience; (2) strengths in expressing writing instruction *in writing*; and (3) comfort level with online technologies, which can be developed further in training. For OWL tutors to model technology use for students, it is crucial that they be trained through and with the settings, modalities, media, and technologies in which they will tutor. Further, they should receive individualized mentoring as well as any group training. All tutors should be trained to interact with students using diverse media—print and electronic text, audio, and video—and they should be prepared to work with students with diverse abilities and learning styles, in line with OWI Principle 1.

The OWL’s commitment to screening, training, and professional development will yield higher quality tutorial sessions that ultimately benefit all students. For peer and professional tutors alike, such commitment ultimately will refine and hone their practice and understanding of OWL tutoring.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 14**
Effective Practice 14.1: OWL administrators who will supervise OWL tutors should receive the same training, professional development, and assessment—as well as practical OWL experience—prior to training and managing OWL tutors.

Effective Practice 14.2: To assess an individual’s ability to work within the OWL environment, OWL administrators should develop role-play screening exercises that reflect the actual conferences that tutors will have with students.

- One example scenario is, with minimal direction, to have applicants critique a writing sample as if they were writing directly to the student, which tests an individual’s intuitive orientation to the pedagogy of a given OWL.
- Another example scenario is to ask applicants to explain orally what they see in the writing and then ask them to write their observations and advice in a manner comprehensible to typical students and to students with special needs and challenges. Training later can address specific strategies.

Effective Practice 14.3: As Effective Practice 3.1 indicates for OWI itself, tutoring in an OWI setting often uses text alone in the response/feedback to the writing. Hence, OWL tutors require equally strong practices, and they should use written language that is readable and comprehensible to all students without audio-enhanced or body-language-based explanation. Specifically, written instruction should use straightforward, plain, and linguistically direct rather than indirect language. It should avoid ambiguous rhetorical questions, phrasal verbs, idioms, and figurative language as much as possible.

Effective Practice 14.4: As Effective Practice 3.3 indicates for OWI itself, online written tutoring should take advantage of the opportunities of the word processing system, text editor, html creator, and the LMS to mirror the types of online writing students most often read. These include:

- Writing shorter, chunky paragraphs
- Using formatting tools wisely to highlight information with adequate white space, colors, and readable fonts
- Providing captioned graphics where useful
- Drawing (when tools allow)
- Striking out words and substituting others to provide clear examples of revision strategies
- Using highlighting strategically

Effective Practice 14.5: As Effective Practice 3.4 indicates for OWI itself, tutoring in the text-centric OWI environment should be explicit and problem-centered. An example strategy for problem-centered, text-based tutoring that uses explicit language is a “four-step intervention process”:

A. Identify the problem;
B. Explain why it is a problem;
C. Demonstrate how to address (revise) and avoid the problem, and
D. Give the student something to do in revision—a way to change the writing and an instruction to try a revision action.
Effective Practice 14.6: As Effective Practice 3.3 and Effective Practice 3.5 indicate for OWI itself, text-based tutor response to student writing should be explicit in how to improve the writing, if that is the goal of the response. When there is no face-to-face explanatory opportunity and text is the primary means of tutoring, example strategies for intervening in a clearly written, problem-centered manner include:

- Asking open-ended (e.g., wh- [i.e., what, when, where, why, who] and how) questions
- Demonstrating how to do something
- Illustrating by examples, anecdotes, and numbers
- Modeling by writing at the level that is being required of the student
- Explaining terms and actions that might be unclear otherwise
- Providing doable tasks with instructions to try them out

Effective Practice 14.7: As Effective Practice 7.5 indicates for OWI itself, tutor technology training should occur using the actual technology platform the tutors will use with students.

Effective Practice 14.8: As Effective Practice 7.6 indicates for OWI itself, tutor pedagogy training should occur using the actual technology platform that tutors will use with students.

Effective Practice 14.9: Tutor training should be grounded in practical role-play exercises that hone an individual’s subject-area expertise and, more importantly, the ability to tutor writing online. Specifically, useful pedagogy training should ask OWL trainees to complete asynchronous and synchronous simulations with the goal of developing personal skill and comfort.

Effective Practice 14.10: Tutor trainees should be paired with veteran OWL tutors who can offer asynchronous and synchronous mentoring and commentary on their performance.

Effective Practice 14.11: Both tutor trainees and experienced tutors should be given multiple opportunities for self-reflection about their OWL tutoring practices.

Effective Practice 14.12: As Effective Practice 7.6 indicates for OWI itself, both during and after training, tutors should have access to an online network (e.g., listservs, email distribution lists, or social networking pages) of fellow tutors with whom they can associate for support and professional development.

Effective Practice 14.13: OWL administrators and tutors alike should receive compensated opportunities for ongoing professional development through such venues as workshops, conferences, and research.

Effective Practice 14.14: OWL tutor assessment should be engaged as rigorously as—and not more rigorously than—it would be in a similar traditional onsite writing center.

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Research and Exploration
**OWI Principle 15:** OWI/OWL administrators and teachers/tutors should be committed to ongoing research into their programs and courses as well as the very principles in this document.

**Rationale for OWI Principle 15**

Emerging from the Committee’s work is a repeatedly articulated need for professional development in the area of OWI and OWLs (see OWI Principle 12 and OWI Principle 14). To be sure, there is urgent need to educate the writing community on OWI and OWLs and to help direct the teaching and learning of our students with what is known about state of the art and effective practices. Advances in OWI and OWLs should be grounded in valid and reliable research findings and systematic information dissemination. OWI and OWLs are particularly well positioned as sites of ongoing research in that almost all interactions are saved and archived (e.g., via email, platform communication, online group discussion, writing revisions), enabling empirical analysis.

Therefore, to bolster the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for OWI and OWLs, OWI and OWL administrators and teachers/tutors alike should be committed to ongoing research of their courses, students, and programs. Such research should draw directly from these courses, students, and programs when appropriate. Such pedagogically driven research must be validated both by the scholarly community and administrators in composition studies. Empirical, repeatable, and longitudinal research that addresses questions regarding the phenomena of OWI and OWLs will drive a deeper understanding of OWI and OWLs, ultimately benefiting students and the teaching and learning of writing in online contexts. Both qualitative and quantitative methodological designs can be employed to address key questions surrounding OWI and OWL outcomes, processes, and participant perspectives.

**Example Effective Practices for OWI Principle 15**

**Effective Practice 15.1:** Qualitative studies that investigate the processes of asynchronous and/or synchronous OWI or OWL interactions should be designed and deployed. Such studies might explore student and teacher/tutor behaviors, actions, and relationships within the context of the actual exchanges. Studies might examine participant perceptions of OWI or OWLs (e.g., benefits, challenges, experiences) via interviews with students, teachers/tutors, and administrators.

**Effective Practice 15.2:** Quantitative studies that investigate student performance in terms of learning outcomes or benchmarks, grades, and course retention should be designed and deployed. From an administrative perspective, return on investment studies also can be deployed to help understand the financial impact (and potential benefits and challenges) of OWI or of an OWL to institutions.

**Effective Practice 15.3:** Where possible, longitudinal research should be designed and institutionally funded to understand the differing complexities of learning to read and write in digital, online, and distributed online educational settings.

**Effective Practice 15.4:** OWI and OWL administrators and teachers/tutors should engage actively in the scholarly conversation by sharing research findings at regional and national conferences and through peer-reviewed journals and other academic publications.
Effective Practice 15.5: OWI and OWL administrators and teachers/tutors should share research findings with the general public in suitable venues to assist with setting appropriate expectations for and understanding of OWI and OWLs.

Conclusion

The Committee intends to continue its work with identifying OWI Principles and Effective Practices for OWI as a means of validating this document. Additionally, we will work to present example effective practices using various media for the Web that will be accessible to CCCC members, WPAs, writing teachers, and writing tutors nationwide.
References


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Appendix A
Definitions and Acronyms
Following are key definitions and how they are used in the specific context of OWI for the purposes of this document.

- **Accessible**: An information technology system that is accessible is one that can be operated in a variety of ways and does not rely on a user’s single sense or ability. For example, a system that provides output only in visual format may not be accessible to people with visual impairments, and a system that provides output only in audio format may not be accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some individuals with physical and/or learning disabilities may need accessibility-related software or peripheral devices in order to use systems that comply with Section 508 (Guide to Disability Rights Laws). For the purposes of this document, accessibility issues also include those that affect multilingual writers and writers with socioeconomic inequality for whom literal access to technology has or can be problematic.

- **Assistive technology or devices**: Assistive technology is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities” (29 U.S.C. Sec 2202[2]). Examples include screen reader software, screen magnifiers, adapted keyboard and alternative input/output devices, mobility devices, assistive hearing devices, and can include learning software, among many other things.

- **Asynchronous**: Referring to a learning modality that permits participants to communicate over flexible time periods; typically, there is a significant time lag (non-real-time) between and among interactions. Most often, asynchronous interactions occur through text although one-way voice and video communications also can be asynchronous.

- **Digital environment**: A learning setting that is computer-based or that uses other integrated technologies that can be accessed anywhere and anytime.

- **Disability**: According to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), “the term ‘disability’ means an individual has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of his/her major life activities or there is a record of such an impairment or an individual is regarded as having such an impairment.” Caused by injury, disease or medical condition, or neurological, chemical, or developmental factors, severe disabilities affect about 12% of the U.S. population.

- **Distributed environment**: A learning setting that is linked through a computer network while being geographically dispersed.

- **Fully online**: Any writing course that meets in a completely online-based setting through computer mediation with no scheduled face-to-face interactions among or between students and faculty.

- **Hybrid**: Sometimes called “blended,” any writing course that meets in both a distance-based or computer-mediated setting and in a traditional onsite classroom.

- **Learning Management System (LMS)**: Also known as a “Course Management System” (CMS). Some of the most common examples are Blackboard, Moodle, Angel, and Sakai. These are online sites that house the course’s content and facilitate communication among teacher and students.

- **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**: Also known as scalable online educational experience (SOE³). College classes that are (1) extremely large with as many as 50,000 or more participants, (2) open access to all who can pay when they are not free, (3) online with potential for both
asynchronous and synchronous components, and (4) courses that enable various set-ups such as credit, noncredit, drop-in, or enrolled participants.

- **Multimodal**: Strategically using modes of communication beyond traditional alphabetic text, for example, still image, motion video, and sound.
- **Online environment**: A learning setting that is Internet-based (e.g., through the World Wide Web) or Intranet-based (e.g., through a common server).
- **Online**: Referring to any communication or activity, such as instruction, that is mediated by digital, Internet-connected technologies. In most contexts, the word *online* refers to text-based technologies (e.g., discussion boards, emails, blogs, chat), but it also can refer to other media, such as audio (e.g., podcasts) and video (e.g., video presentations, live video meetings).
- **OWC**: Online writing course.
- **OWI**: Online writing instruction.
- **OWL**: Online writing lab or online writing center
- **Synchronous**: Referring to a learning modality that permits participants to communicate in real time or nearly in real time. Many real-time synchronous interactions occur through two-way voice or voice and video. Many near-real-time synchronous interactions transpire using text in a chat-based scenario.
Instructor Informed Consent

Title of Study
Advanced Communication Online Writing Instruction: Using Social Presence to Humanize the Virtual Classroom

Informed Consent Form
This form describes a research project, which is studying social presence in the online classroom and the types of technology instructors use in addition to an LMS in order to further student engagement and promote transfer of learning.

Who is conducting this study?
This study is being conducted by Lynn McCool, PhD, RPC candidate.

Why am I invited to participate in this study?
You are being asked to take part in this study because you are an instructor who either currently is teaching online or has taught online in the past and has used ancillary technology in conjunction with an LMS to facilitate an online advanced communication course.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to discover how social presence is created and what types of technologies instructors use in conjunction with the LMS of the course in order to create, maintain, and promote social presence and student transfer of learning.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do two actions.

1. Complete a survey
   - The survey will ask general questions about your technology use in the classroom.
   - The survey will be structured to protect participant confidentiality.
2. Be interviewed by the researcher.
You will be asked permission to allow the researcher to audio-record the one-time interview session.

Your participation will last for a one-hour interview session with the researcher at a date, time, and place to be determined amenable to both the researcher and interviewee occurring sometime between September 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016.

Recordings will be stored in a secure space.

Pseudonyms will be assigned to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

The interviewer will provide open-ended and semi-structured questions

**What are the possible risks and benefits of my participation?**

*Risks*--The possible risks related to your participation in this research are little to none.  
*Benefits*--You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this. We hope that this research will benefit society by providing new effective methods of using technology in the classroom.

**How will the information I provide be used?** The information you provide will be used for the following purposes: This data will be used in dissertation research study. The researcher, her major professor, and her committee members will see the interpretation of the data.

**What measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of data or to protect my privacy?**

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable laws and regulations. Records will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and analysis. These records may contain private information.

**Will I incur any costs from participating or will I be compensated?**

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.
What are my rights as a human research participant?
Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. Your choice of whether or not to participate will have no impact on you as a student/employee in any way.

Whom can I call if I have questions or problems?
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Lynn McCool, principal investigator at LBMcCool@iastate.edu, 515-779-0205, or Barb Blakely, major professor at blakely@iastate.edu, 515-294-3516. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, 1138 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011

Consent and Authorization Provisions
Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You did receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name
(printed)_____________________________________________________

(Participant’s 
Signature)________________________________________(Date)_____________
APPENDIX D

INSTRUCTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Instructors were asked the following semi-structured questions, grouped into two major categories:

Online Learning Environments

- What are the general characteristics of distance learning environments for OWI in business or technical communication (advanced communication courses)?
- What are the ideal characteristics of OWI participants in advanced communication online courses for (both instructors and students)?

Social Presence in Online Learning Environments

- What (theoretical) principles provide the grounding to build effective social presence in an advanced communication online writing instruction (OWI) environment?
- What conditions foster effective social presence in advanced communication online writing course (OWC)?
- From your (instructor's) perspective, what are the characteristics of social presence that promote student satisfaction within an advanced communication OWC?
- How do you feel about your ability as the instructor to create social presence in an advanced communication online writing course (OWC)?
- How do you feel about your ability to promote social presence in an advanced communication Online Writing Course?
- How do you feel about your ability to maintain social presence in an advanced communication Online Writing Course?
- What connection does social presence play team/group collaborative projects?
- What form of technology is your preferred medium to communicate with students in an advanced communication Online Writing Course?
- What is your rationale for your choice of this preferred technology form?
• Do you ever introduce other technology forms outside of those contained within the learning management system (LMS) to promote social presence (e.g. Twitter, Facebook other social media apps)?
• If so, what is your rationale for using a technology medium found outside of the LMS?
• How does a specific technology help to humanize the advanced communications online course experience?
APPENDIX E

INSTRUCTOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you provide a group/team collaborative project for students in your course?
2. How well did the group/team collaborative project work in your course?
3. Did you perceive team collaboration or group work to have any impact on students’ ability to connect with each other, build community, or make connections outside of the course?
4. How do you determine “success” or “failure” with collaborative student assignments?
5. When did teams form in your course? Early? Later?
6. What was the rationale for timing of teams?
7. What is your ideal online environment?
8. What do you do when a team does not function/work/collaborate effectively together?
9. How do you handle conflict within teams?
10. What strategies do you use to help team members connect with each other?
11. What strategies do you use to help individuals connect with peers in the course as a whole?
APPENDIX F

INSTRUCTOR SURVEY QUESTION SAMPLES

Q7 - EMOTIONAL/AFFECTIVE EXPRESSION: Your responses to the following questions should reflect your online experience overall for this particular c...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I introduced myself to the students in this course.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The introductions of myself and the students within this course helped us t...</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable interacting with students in this online course.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to form distinct impressions of some students in this online course...</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I projected a teaching persona to the students in this online course.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable communicating through the online medium.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online or web-based communication is an effective medium for social interac...</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to promote a feeling of online community in this course.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall this course met the learning objectives set by the department.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall the students for this course met my (the instructor's) expectations...</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13 - When you communicate a message to the team/group member(s) concerning a collaborative assignment, what is your preferred medium of comm.
APPENDIX G

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study
Advanced Communication Online Writing Instruction: Using Social Presence to Humanize the Virtual Classroom

Informed Consent Form
This form describes a research project, which is studying social presence in the online classroom and the types of technology instructors use in addition to an LMS in order to further student engagement and promote transfer of learning.

Who is conducting this study?
This study is being conducted by Lynn McCool, PhD, RPC candidate.

Why am I invited to participate in this study?
You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a student who either currently is taking an advanced communication course (314, 302, 309) online or has taken one online in the past.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to discover what types of technologies students use in conjunction with the LMS of the course in order to create, maintain, and promote social presence and transfer of learning to other contexts.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do two actions.

3. Complete a survey
   • The survey will ask general questions about your technology use in the classroom.
   • The survey will be structured to protect participant confidentiality.

4. Write an open-ended response (reflection) to a series of questions prompts that ask you to describe your communication growth.
   • Pseudonyms will be assigned to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.
• Analysis of your survey and reflective responses will not affect your grades in any advanced communication course in which you might be currently enrolled. My findings will not be shared with your instructor.

What are the possible risks and benefits of my participation?

Risks--The possible risks related to your participation in this research are little to none.

Benefits--You may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this. We hope that this research will benefit society by providing new effective methods of using technology in the classroom.

How will the information I provide be used? The information you provide will be used for the following purposes: This data will be used in dissertation research study. The researcher, her major professor, and her committee members will see the interpretation of the data.

What measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of data or to protect my privacy?

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable laws and regulations. Records will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and analysis. These records may contain private information.

Will I incur any costs from participating or will I be compensated?

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What are my rights as a human research participant?

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. Your choice of whether or not to participate will have no impact on you as a student in any way.
Whom can I call if I have questions or problems?
You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Lynn McCool, principal investigator at LBMcCool@iastate.edu, 515-779-0205, or Barb Blakely, major professor at blakely@iastate.edu, 515-294-3516. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, 1138 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011

Consent and Authorization Provisions
Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You did receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name
(printed)_______________________________________________________

(Participant's Signature)________________________________________(Date)_____________
### APPENDIX H

#### STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS SAMPLES

Q3 - OPEN/INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION: Your responses to the following questions should reflect your online experience overall for the online EngL...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable interacting with others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I complimented others or the content of their messages.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I asked questions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I directly referred to the content of others’ posts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expressed agreement or disagreement with others or the content of others’...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable participating in online threaded discussions.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others communicated effectively using online communications tools (e.g. threaded)...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to student-to-student interaction, the type of student particip...</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to student-to-student interaction, the amount of student particip...</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the type of instructor particip...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to instructor-to-student interaction, the amount of instructor particip...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q16 - When you communicate a message to the team/group member(s) concerning a collaborative assignment, what is your preferred medium of techn...
APPENDIX I

STUDENT END-OF-COURSE REFLECTION PROMPTS

DIRECTIONS: Read and respond to the prompts below. Write a reflection in which you discuss your growth as a communicator throughout this semester.

- Overall, how have you grown as a communicator...
- What is something covered in the course material that you could do now that you could not do or did not fully understand at the beginning of the semester?

This course made use of team collaboration...

- How did you approach learning in this course? Was it different than other courses you have taken?
- What are some of the challenges of team collaboration?
- What are some of the rewards of team collaboration?
- Did collaborating with others make you feel more connected or less connected to other individuals in the course? Why/Why not?

This course discussed audience analysis...

- What did you learn about analyzing audience from this course?
- What have you learned, if anything, about analyzing audience from other experiences that you’ve had—such as other communication courses, courses in your major, internships, co-ops, a workplace—and what might you add to these other insights about audience?
### APPENDIX J

#### SAMPLE INSTRUCTOR ROLE-ORDERED MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>Distance learning classes are ... I found that I would communicate more individually with each student, but have a much more distant feeling from them if that makes sense. I have many more personal interactions with the students, but because I never met them face-to-face, it created quite the distance in the courses. The general characteristics are they’re distant.</td>
<td>TD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F2F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was teaching students from all over the world, especially in my summer classes, people go home to China or in one case Russia, and there was that physical distance which created challenges for teaching and for communicating between me and them and between members of the team.</td>
<td>TD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I guess those are the two main things. You have to provide them with the tools and then with a purpose for that interaction, for creating presence. One place that a lot of online classes breakdown is the instructor wants to be as distant as possible from it, and so the students also want to be as distant as possible from it. The course is designed for everybody to be distant, you know, the instructor puts up their video lectures and their quizzes that they don't have to grade because it’s graded automatically on Blackboard.</td>
<td>CPM-A/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They’re distant, the students are distant, everybody is ... Well, maybe not happy with it but they get what they pay for, right? They get the class finished, but it doesn't foster any of that social presence that is necessary for better learning, especially in the communication field.</td>
<td>TD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX K

### SAMPLE STUDENT ROLE-ORDERED MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>inside connection/ outside transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audra</td>
<td>“Collaborating with my group did make me feel more connected to the other individuals in this course. If the course had not called for collaboration, I would have never met my classmates and therefore would not have been able to connect with them.”</td>
<td>inside connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake</td>
<td>“As an example, I have interned the past few summers with McClure Engineering Company where I learned that my audience (surveyors) where blue collar workers who didn’t have much of a filter at times. After working with the field members for a while I found myself talking and acting like them to better communicate. This past summer when I moved into the office to help McClure’s land development team I immediately watched the team and how they talked and interacted. Needless to say, there was quite a difference in communication technique between the field group and office. Being able to recognize one’s audience is imperative, for it can make and break impressions as well as reputations.”</td>
<td>outside transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caely</td>
<td>“Without teamwork, this course will be a course that is done purely on my own and it is like that I am the only person in this course. Knowing that there are other people studying hard in this course behind a computer somewhere else in this world gives me an inspiration to work harder and not to fall behind.”</td>
<td>Inside connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damon</td>
<td>“This course…has helped me in my current internship and I know will further my abilities in the future.”</td>
<td>outside connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We had a few team bonding experiences and many off topic conversations when appropriate to get to know each other. This brought us together and made our projects seem as if one person was really the author.”</td>
<td>inside connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>