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LMS Problem-Posing Academic Relationships Between Faculty and Students: A Post-Intentional Phenomenological Study of Dialogical Relationships in Asynchronous Online Courses

Sheri L. Prupis
Old Dominion University, sheri.prupis@gmail.com

LMS PROBLEM-POSING ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FACULTY

AND STUDENTS:

A POST-INTENTIONAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF DIALOGICAL

RELATIONSHIPS IN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSES

by

Sheri L. Prupis
B.A. January 1977, Rutgers University
M.A. June 1983, New York University

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Approved by:

Shana Pribesh (Director)

Laura Smithers (Member)

Chris Glass (Member)

ABSTRACT

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Sheri Lynn Prupis
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Director: Dr. Shana Pribesh

Drawing on Freire's Engaged Pedagogy as a theoretical framework, I investigated the manifestation of dialogical relationships between faculty and students in fully asynchronous online courses. Employing a post-intentional phenomenological methodology, I examined how students and faculty held varying expectations for relationships in asynchronous online courses. The findings revealed that while students preferred transactional exchanges, faculty aspired to foster more profound and more enduring relationships with their students. This divergence can be partly attributed to the transactional exchange structure of Learning Management Systems (LMS), which heavily influences how faculty design and deliver courses and how students participate.

Keywords: asynchronous online courses, dialogical relationships, community colleges, Learning Management Systems, engaged pedagogy

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, my Real American Hero®, Robert Prupis (1928 – 2021), who taught me by example that I was capable of anything.

And to my mom, my Ashet Chayil, Gloria Markowitz Prupis (1930 -2014), who supported me in every stage of my life, even when she did not understand what I was doing.

And to my future, Miriam, Naomi, Liana, and Gila Avezov, and Reuben Prupis, who remind me every day why education is important.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Felton and Lambert stated that "student-faculty relationships are a primary factor in learning, belonging, and persistence" (p. 2). This declaration is supported by 40 years of research (Astin, 1977; Mayhew et al., 2016; Tinto, 1987). Felton and Lambert (2020) stressed that the classroom is "the single most important place for fostering undergraduate relationships" (p. 11). These relationships are critical to student success. Today, a college education is often reduced to transactions; get a credential to get a job. While education can and should lead to job attainment, it should not be at the cost of transformation for students (Felton & Lambert, 2020). Forty-five years ago, Astin's research demonstrated that "student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable, or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic" (Astin, 1977, p. 223). These relationships are focused on where students and faculty meet in their courses (Felton & Lambert, 2020).

Examining the faculty-student academic relationship's nature, quality, and success is not new (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Zimmerman, 2020). In the early 1900s, Chase (1916) noted that faculty were asking:

> Is distance between teacher and pupil, professor and student, an insuperable difficulty? What is involved in teaching? What are its essential elements? If propinquity of the two persons concerned is essential, it is not because telling is teaching and hearing is learning, for we know that in one ear and out the other is the course that is traveled by most of what is told students unless it is arrested and fixed by more effective educational processes. (p. 64)

What happens to the faculty-student relationship when the teachers and the learners are separated by distance and mediated by a learning management system?

Background of Study

Distance and online education are often interchangeable (Moore et al., 2010). However, there is a nuanced difference between them. With a long history spanning nearly two centuries, distance education is instruction between faculty and students who are not physically together during a specified class time (Casey, 2008).

Online education, which is only one type of distance education, dominates today (Anderson, 2009). Limited by the technologies available until the mid-1900s, distance education students engaged in independent study. New technologies including the robust internet allowed for two-way communications and changed how distance education courses are offered (Casey, 2008). Online education now transcends the distance of space using reliable audio and video conferencing, allowing for the shift from independent study to collaborative study. Garrison and Shale (1987) included three characteristics in their definition of distance education: educational communication (1) occurs non-contiguously, (2) is two-way and is for learning, and (3) uses technology that makes it possible to have two-way communication (Garrison & Shale, 1987). Anderson (2009) pointed out that these characteristics define one type of distance education, referred to as online education or online learning.

Online courses are delivered both synchronously and asynchronously. Asynchronous courses are characterized by the ability of the student to learn at their own pace and at a location separate from the faculty. Asynchronous courses do not occur in real-time (Kung-Ming & Khoon-Seng, 2009). The advantages of asynchronous courses include student flexibility and time to reflect upon one's learning. Disadvantages include the loss of visual or aural cues, immediacy

of interaction with faculty and peers, and the dependency on reading and writing skills (Said et al., 2015). Conversely, synchronous courses occur in real-time. However, faculty and students are separated geographically. The advantages of synchronous courses include the immediacy of interaction, albeit over a technological medium, and access to visual and aural cues. Disadvantages highlight scheduling issues because students may live in different time zones, and faculty may have difficulty managing interactions (Kung-Ming & Khoon-Seng, 2009).

Distance education has its roots in university extension, continuing education, and adult programs rather than as part of the mainstream university (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). The purpose was both democratizing education, giving nontraditional students access to a liberal arts education, and practical, increasing enrollment and tuition dollars. Over the last 25 years, distance education in the form of online learning has become part of the college mainstream (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006).

Student enrollment in online courses and programs has increased since 2012 (Allen et al., 2016; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021b;). Due to the separation of faculty and student in time and space in online courses, teaching and learning differ from face-to-face courses (Moore, 1997, 2019; Xi & Smith, 2014). Moore (1997, 2019), Garrison and Arbaugh (2007), and Hilton (2013) suggested that creating and sustaining a robust faculty and student relationship, where faculty and student create an environment that allows for shared responsibility of learning diminishes the limitations inherent in online environments. This study explored how the faculty-student relationship manifests in online courses not conducted in real-time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote distance classes became the solution for community college students' continuity of access to education. Rather than meeting face-to-face

on campus in a classroom, students and faculty used technology such as learning management systems and video conferencing to sustain instruction. This technology separated students and faculty geographically and often temporally. This pivot to remote distance classes was necessary to limit exposure to the virus, but college students generally perceived distance classes during the pandemic as undesirable (Garner, 2021; Williams June, 2020a).

Community colleges experienced deeper enrollment declines than other higher education institutions in the United States during COVID-19 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021). Fall 2021 enrollment fell further than 2020 enrollments that were already less than 2019, for a two-year loss of 15% (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021). Community colleges, already struggling with declining enrollment, were anxious (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021) to bring students back to campus for face-to-face classes (Williams June, 2020b).

There was an unexpected twist. Nineteen months into the pandemic, students returned to campus and enrolled in distance rather than face-to-face courses (Gardner, 2021). In an article focusing on Tennessee community colleges, 60% of Fall 2021 students initially registered for on-campus, in-person courses. The conventional wisdom was that students would prefer to return to in-person classes. That number reversed as 68% subsequently opted to take their courses online at a distance (Gardner, 2021). Before and throughout the first two semesters of COVID-19, college students and faculty reported that they did not like online courses. More recently, students and faculty have perceived an improvement in the quality of these courses (Williams June, 2020a; Gardner, 2021). Tapping into this new demand for online courses may help slow the tide of declining enrollment at community colleges. Such trends indicate that students will continue to want online courses, and colleges should keep offering them (Gardner, 2021).

Community college online courses offerings must be effective. Effective learning is transformational and dialogical relationships are critical to that transformation (Freire, 1968/1996; Hilton, 2013; hooks, 1994; Warr & Sampson, 2020). Therefore, it is critical to examine what happens in asynchronous courses for the sake of the students and the institution.

Online Learning Enrollment Trends

Between Fall 2012 and 2018, online course enrollments increased by 29%, from 5.4 to 6.9 million, while overall Fall enrollment declined by 5% from 20.6 to 19.6 million (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021b). The number of students enrolled in a mix of online and face-to-face courses increased by 33%, from 2.8 to 3.7 million students, during that same time. The number of students enrolled in online-only courses also increased from 2.6 to 3.3 million; however, that rate of increase has slowed (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021b). In Fall 2019, 37% of students participated in at least one online course (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.a). Of that 37%, nearly half enrolled exclusively in distance classes. During Fall 2020 at the height of COVID-19, 72.8% of all students were enrolled in distance courses (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021a). Ninety-six percent of public 4-year and 97% of 2-year institutions offered online courses or fully online programs.

While the 2020/2021 explosion of remote online courses began to slow down as colleges returned to on-campus courses (Gardner, 2021), the upward trajectory of online classes that began in 2013 is likely to continue (Allen et al., 2016). Both students and faculty have become increasingly comfortable with online courses, and in 2021 reported that the quality of online courses improved (Seaman & Johnson, 2021). Married students, full-time students, and students with children were more likely to desire increased online courses (Seaman & Johnson, 2021).

More so, students want the flexibility of online classes, preferably those that do not meet time requirements, as exemplified by the Tennessee students interviewed in the Chronicle article, "How do we rebuild? Community colleges try to claw their way back" (Gardner, 2021).

Theoretical Foundation

Freire (1968/1996) and hooks (1994) were deeply committed to education's transformative role in oppressed adults' lives. For Freire, the oppressed adult was the peasant in Brazil and Chile. Vital to Freire's work was the partnership of faculty and student in the learning process. Their dialogue transformed both faculty and student as they learned together. Freire consistently used the expression that faculty learned *with* the student (Freire, 1968/1996, p.74).

Similarly, hooks viewed the transformative relationship as vital to the classroom experience of both faculty and student; however, she focused on women of color on the fringes of the feminist movement. Today's marginalized student is likely to be of color, economically disadvantaged, from a lower socio-economic neighborhood, and have attended under-resourced K-12 schools (Seaman & Johnson, 2021). The adult classroom context for both Freire and hooks was the face-to-face physical classroom. Still, as an increasing percentage of students enrolled in classes online, this classroom context changed from one of physical proximity and immediacy to one separated by time and space (Moore, 1997).

Transformational learning is a critical component of a college education, according to Johansson and Felten (2014). The authors defined transformational learning as "characterized by a deep and enduring change in thinking that is evidenced through changed ways of being in the world" (p. 3). Students are changed by their relationships with faculty, other students, and their experiences. The faculty and staff on campus help students question their beliefs and ideologies and expose them to new ideas and experiences (Hoggan & Browning, 2019). Community

colleges purport that their mission is to transform their students' lives and generational

trajectories (Hoggan & Browning, 2019). Hoggan and Browning (2019) wrote about the vital

role transformative learning has for community college students' improved retention. Freire

(1968/1996) and hooks (1994) used education transformatively by teaching *with* students rather

than *to* students (Freire, 1968/1996, p. 74). But, if teachers only teach *to* and not *with* the student,

community colleges fail their students and perpetuate the status quo. Freire (1968/1996) stressed

the folly of teaching *to* the student rather than *with* the student. Teaching *to* the student

perpetuates the status quo, teaching *with* the student allows for both teacher and student to be

transformed and to transform the lives around them.

Freire (1968/1996) and hooks (1994) highlighted that engaged pedagogy is the shared

agency of faculty and students that allows them all to participate in the co-construction of

knowledge. hooks (1994) described Freire's work as engaged pedagogy, though she

acknowledged that his work falls under many pedagogical categories, including critical,

liberatory, radical, and transformative pedagogy. Hooks (1994) also captured the meaning of

Freire's engaged pedagogy by focusing on sharing power and authority of teaching and learning

in the classroom between the faculty and students. Every student and faculty have responsibility

for collaboration, "making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a

responsibility to contribute" (hooks, 1994, p. 39). For students and faculty to share responsibility

for learning, power can no longer be held by the faculty member, but must be decentralized.

Engaged pedagogy is active participation of both the faculty and the student. It links theory to

practice and empowers the student (hooks, 1994).

Freire's concept of engaged pedagogy is exemplified through problem-posing education,

which requires a dialogical relationship between faculty and students and aims to empower

students to take responsibility for their learning (Freire, 1968/1996). This model connects theory with action and promotes learning through dialogue, which is necessary for engaged pedagogy (Freire, 1968/1996; Hilton, 2013; hooks, 1994). Through dialogue, students can question, contribute, and reflect on issues, and classroom participants can share diverse backgrounds and understanding, leading to the social construction of knowledge (hooks, 1994). For transformational learning to occur, faculty must learn with students through dialogue rather than teach to them (Freire, 1968/1996). Problem-posing education addresses the limitations of the traditional banking of education model, which sees students as passive recipients of knowledge from the teacher and does not encourage critical thinking or self-responsibility (Freire, 1968/1996).

Freire's concept of conscientização is central to his educational philosophy. Conscientização is a critical consciousness-raising and empowerment process involving developing a critical awareness of one's social and political reality, recognizing systemic oppressions and injustices in society, and taking action to transform that reality (Freire, 1968/1996). This process is necessary for individuals to become active participants in their own liberation, challenge dominant power structures, and work towards a more just and equitable society. Through conscientization, individuals become aware of their agency and the power to effect change.

Freire's engaged pedagogy is actualized through problem-posing education and requires a dialogical relationship between faculty and students. The model promotes critical thinking, self-responsibility, and the social construction of knowledge. Conscientização is a key aspect of this educational philosophy. It promotes critical consciousness-raising and empowerment, leading to social transformation and creating a more democratic and just society.

Identification of the Problem

Learning management systems, the technological platform used to deliver asynchronous online classes, perpetuate the hierarchy between faculty and student and emphasize and facilitate the banking model of education (Boyd, 2016; Farag et al., 2022). The problem is how faculty and students can connect in asynchronous online courses to participate in engaged pedagogy. Moore (2019) highlighted the psychological and pedagogical distance between faculty and students created in asynchronous courses. This distance interferes with faculty and student dialogical relationships (Moore, 1997).

The Community of Inquiry paradigm attempts to codify faculty and student perceptions of faculty-student engagement (Richardson et al., 2016; Shea & Bidjerano, 2012) by presenting a conceptual structure for understanding learning in the online environment (Garrison et al., 2000). Garrison et al. (2000) explained collaborative learning experience through three integrated elements of presence: social, cognitive, and teaching. Garrison et al. (2000) maintained that meaningful learning in higher education (cognitive presence) happens through dialogue and discourse among students (social presence), designed, facilitated, and mediated by the faculty (teaching presence).

Glazier (2021) wrote in her work on connecting in the online classroom that expanding student access to higher education, long a goal of community colleges, can be realized through online courses. However, faculty must connect with students (Glazier, 2021). In addition to understanding the components of the faculty-student relationship, as articulated in the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007), it is necessary to identify and explore the manifestation of this relationship during the online course.

Purpose of Study

This post-intentional phenomenological study explored the dialogical relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. Asynchronous online courses separate faculty and students temporally and geographically (Moore, 1997). The dialogical relationship is the purposeful, positive interaction between faculty and student (Moore, 1997, 2019). Much of the research conducted in online courses focused on the characteristics and the relationships between those characteristics in those courses (Warr & Sampson, 2020). Additional research highlighted the development of online communities and the different modalities that impact community and student learning (Warr & Sampson, 2020). As the classroom environment increasingly moves online, it is important to examine if community colleges are transforming the life of students through engaged pedagogy or if they are simply perpetuating the status quo through the banking of education facilitated by learning management systems. Warr and Sampson (2020) noted that most research ignores the role of dialogue in online courses. Their research specifically explored dialogue in an online educational doctoral program. My study explored how dialogical relationships manifest in community college asynchronous courses.

Research Foci

The following research foci guided this study.

1. How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?

2. What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?

Professional Significance

The faculty-student dialogical relationship in an online environment may affect students' deep learning and success (Garrison et al., 2000; Glazier, 2021). Findings from this study may benefit college presidents, college administrators, deans, and academic department chairs who think about online learning and the use of learning management systems to deliver classes. Hoggan and Browning (2019) argued that the central role of community colleges is to transform their students to improve graduation rates and career outcomes. Specifically, they argued that "transformational learning needs are not extracurricular; they *are* academic learning needs" (p.3). Understanding the challenges unique to asynchronous online courses in creating transformational learning opportunities is imperative. In her research, Glazier (2016, 2021) discovered that retention gaps for students enrolled in online courses can be lessened through increased connection with their faculty. Faculty and instructional designers are tasked with designing asynchronous courses. Understanding the role of the faculty-student relationship in student success may help design and deliver asynchronous courses.

Research demonstrated a gap in the number of students who dropped out of online classes compared to face-to-face classes (Glazier, 2016; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). Glazier (2021) expressed concern that "online classes don't work so well – students are checked out, professors are absent, and technologies fall short" (p. 2). Research on faculty-student relationships will add to the body of literature focused on ways to think about asynchronous courses. Some studies have indicated a significant difference in retention and completion for community college students when examining age, gender, and Pell Grant status of students in online courses (Gregory & Lampley, 2016). My participants' stories about their academic relationships created a fuller picture exploring faculty-student relationships in asynchronous online courses.

Methodology Overview

This study utilized post-intentional phenomenological methodology to investigate the becoming of faculty relationships with their students in asynchronous courses. According to Vagle (2018). The primary objective of phenomenology is to examine the experience of being in relation with others. Phenom ology is a toll for uncovering things that have become so habitual that we do not realize their presence or significance (Vagle, 2018). This study explored how faculty members design asynchronous to create dialogue with their students as well as how both faculty and students experienced this relationship.

A phenomenon is not simply its essence, as commonly explained by early phenomenologists; instead, it is the totality, the whole, of all the elements connected to the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). A post-intentional phenomenological approach captured and explored the dialogical relationship within an asynchronous online classroom. This approach allowed for a more nuanced and complex understanding of the online relationship experience, highlighting the multiple perspectives and interconnectedness of the various elements that make up the phenomenon.

Sampling

The sample for this study was chosen purposefully. As stated by Moustakas (1994), co-researchers or study participants need to have experienced the phenomenon and be "intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings" (p. 107). Specific cases are chosen in a purposeful sample to include different perspectives of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Groenewald, 2004). The purposeful sample yielded faculty with specific features, including current community college faculty who had taught at least three years in an asynchronous online format, to capture some of their pre-COVID-19 experience.

Data Gathering

van Manen (2014) warned that phenomena should be viewed through the lived experience of the participants and not the conceptualized experience. The starting point for gathering data in this study consisted of individual, one-hour interviews with 11 full-time faculty at three community colleges who have taught asynchronously. Faculty were asked to journal about their ongoing experiences with their students using guiding questions in their asynchronous courses. Eight of the 11 submitted journals to me. Faculty were interviewed a second time. The original plan was to gain observer access to one asynchronous course at each college to watch the courses unfold. However, the computer information security officers refused to provide me with access, even though I had IRB approval. Instead, each of the 11 faculty participants gave me a tour of the current asynchronous class offered through the college's learning management system. Thirty-minute individual interviews were conducted with 12 students at two of the three colleges to better understand the relationship between faculty and students. These multiple data sources coupled with my field notes and my post-reflexion journal helped develop the stories exploring the experiences of dialogical relationships in asynchronous online courses.

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Delimitations

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The study was influenced by a post-modernist/post-constructivist paradigm (Jones et al., 2014). Life is experienced subjectively, each person making meaning from their experience. Thus, there is not a single reality that describes what happens in a distance education classroom. Each faculty member, each student may experience the commonalities differently (Mack, 2010). The post-modernism paradigm relies on the researcher and participant's co-work (Hays & Singh,

2012). This paradigm aligned with the researcher/co-researcher construction of knowledge required within the phenomenology methodology.

This study took place in the late summer and fall of 2022. The three community colleges represented are located east of the Mississippi. Faculty participants were from all three colleges, student participants were from two of the colleges. Faculty was required to be full-time and have at least three years of teaching experience in an asynchronous online environment. Students were required to have completed at least two asynchronous online courses and could not be a current student of one of the faculty participants.

Definitions of Key Terms

- *Andragogy:* Andragogy is a teaching methodology customized to meet adult learners' learning needs. Compared to pedagogy, which is aimed at children, andragogy prioritizes self-directed learning and is designed to take advantage of the life experiences of adult learners and provide them with greater control over their learning experience.

- *Asynchronous:* Two events or interactions that are not happening simultaneously.

- *Asynchronous online course:* The course format is such that faculty and students are separated temporally and geographically.

- *Banking concept of education:* Students are passive learners, while faculty "deposit" content/knowledge into the students' minds (Freire, 1968/1996).

- *Community college:* A community college is a publicly funded post-secondary educational institution with open enrollment offering both academic and workforce programs.

- *Co-construction of knowledge:* Collaborative learning among students leading to new understanding.

- *Cognitive presence:* Processes and efforts used by students when learning as described by the Community of Inquiry framework.

- *Community of Inquiry (CoI):* A theoretical framework for understanding the process of online learning through social, cognitive, and teaching presence.

- *Critical dialogue:* An ongoing conversation in an educational environment between faculty and students.

- *Dialogical relationship:* The purposeful, positive interaction between faculty and student (Moore, 1997, 2019); it is how engaged pedagogy is actualized.

- *Distance education:* Instruction occurs between faculty and student, where both distance and time separate the faculty and student, and the instruction happens away from the college campus (Casey, 2008; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006).

- *Engaged pedagogy:* A model of classroom teaching and learning that shares agency and responsibility for the co-construction of knowledge between the faculty and the students (Freire, 1968/1996).

- *Faculty:* Instructor in a community college who meets the requirements of the accrediting body.

- *Learning management system:* A centralized online platform providing a comprehensive, systemized method for managing and delivering online courses.

- *Lived experience:* Individuals are considered to have "lived experiences" with personal knowledge through direct experience.

- *Phenomenology:* Phenomenology is a philosophical method that aims to comprehend the essence of human experience and consciousness. As described by Vagle (2018), phenomenology involves examining how individuals perceive the world, taking into

account their subjective perceptions, emotions, and beliefs. The goal is to explore the fundamental structures and patterns that shape our understanding of the world.

- *Post-intentional phenomenology:* This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness and complexity of the various elements that make up a phenomenon.

- *Problem-posing education:* A model of education that encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. It breaks down the traditional hierarchy between faculty and student and helps students develop critical thinking in an engaged learning environment (Freire, 1968/1996).

- *Online course:* An online course has three characteristics: educational communication (1) occurs non-contiguously, (2) is two-way and is for learning, and (3) uses technology that makes it possible to have two-way communication (Garrison & Shale, 1987).

- *Social construction of knowledge theory:* Learning is collaborative and social. Vygotsky developed the theory that meaning is socially constructed with others (Driscoll, 2005).

- *Social presence:* A sense of community experienced by a student in an online class as described within the Community of Inquiry Framework.

- *Student (at a community college):* A person who is completing a certificate or an associate degree.

- *Teaching presence:* The term teaching presence is used in the Community of Inquiry framework to describe the design and facilitation of an online course.

- *Theory of transactional distance:* A theory developed by Moore (1997) that stated that online (distance education) courses not only have geographic and temporal separation but cause a psychological and communication gap between faculty and students. It was

among the first theories developed explicitly for teaching and learning via technologies rather than the physical classroom.

- *Transformative (transformational) learning:* Transformative learning is the process by which, through learning, one redefines a problem to be able to reflect and change (Mezirow, 2000).

Chapter Summary

Without dialogue, interaction, and engagement between faculty and students, and between student and student, there is a potential loss in the learning process (Glazier, 2021). If faculty cannot create and maintain an asynchronous environment that promotes and encourages the growth of dialogue between classroom participants, students will lose out on co-construction of knowledge that leads to transformational learning. However, as Glazier (2021) emphatically stated, with human connection between faculty and student, or engaged pedagogy as described by Freire (1968/1996) and hooks (1994), student retention and student satisfaction can increase. This post-intentional phenomenological study explored the dialogical relationships in asynchronous online courses at community colleges through the lens of Freire's opposing models of education; the banking of education and problem posing education.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature that examines the theoretical framework, Engaged Pedagogy, as described by Freire (1968/1996). A brief history of asynchronous online courses is provided. Finally, different theories of teaching and learning in asynchronous online courses are reviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This post-intentional phenomenological study explored the relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. This chapter examines existing literature on engaged pedagogy and theories related to faculty-student interaction in asynchronous online courses in community colleges. Finally, several issues are raised about the use of technology tools, the changing role of faculty, and the advantages of asynchronous and synchronous engagement for students.

Traditional educational approaches have frequently come under fire for being hierarchical, dictatorial, and supportive of passive learning. Paulo Freire (1968/1996), a philosopher and educator from Brazil, created a critical pedagogy in response to this to empower students and advance social justice. The foundation of Freire's educational theories is the idea that knowledge is not a fixed, unchanging entity but rather a social construct that is constantly being produced and reproduced through human interaction. I explored the process of establishing relationships between instructors and students in asynchronous courses through the prism of Freire's educational paradigms. I read my data using the theoretical framework of Freire's educational models by utilizing Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "thinking with theory" approach. This strategy gave insight into how to understand relationship-building in online education.

Throughout the interviews with faculty regarding their experiences in asynchronous courses, a consistent language of presence was observed. Specifically, faculty frequently used the term "teacher presence" to describe their role. This concept of teacher presence is a crucial aspect of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework developed by Garrison (Garrison, 2009). Although the literature review includes a section on the CoI Framework to provide the faculty's

terminology some context, it should be noted that this framework was not employed as the analytical lens in this study.

Online courses and programs continue to grow throughout the United States. From Fall 2012 to 2014, higher education online course enrollment increased by seven percent. In late 2014, nearly 14% of all students enrolled in online-only classes (Allen et al., 2016). In 2016, 36% of all enrolled students took at least one online course (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). Online enrollment rates continue to increase even as enrollments in face-to-face classes decline (Allen et al., 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, enrollment in online courses exploded to nearly 75% of all undergraduate students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022) and fell back down to 59% as COVID-19 requirements waned (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.b). Experts predict online course demand will continue its upward trend that began in 2012 (Hill, 2023).

In a classroom, much more happens than delivering content from faculty to students. It is the questioning and engagement among students and between students and faculty where transformative learning occurs. Education is not possible without dialogue (Freire, 1968/1996). Students begin to make meaning through the social construction of knowledge by engaging in critical dialogue with one another and the faculty (Mello 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Shore and Freire (1987) defined critical dialogue as follows:

> Dialogue is not a mere technique to achieve some cognitive results; dialogue is a means to transform social relations in a classroom, and to raise awareness about relationships in society at large. Dialogue is a way to recreate knowledge as well as the way we learn. It is a mutual learning process where the teacher poses critical problems for inquiry. Dialogue rejects narrative lecturing where teacher talk silences and alienates students. In

a problem-posing participatory format, the teacher and students transform learning into a

collaborative process to illuminate and act on reality. This process is situated in the

thought, language, aspirations, and conditions of the students. (p. 11)

Transformation learning is learning that expands one's worldview. For it to occur, Freire

(1968/1996) stated that dialogical relationships must be present between the faculty and student.

A dialogical relationship is a positive interaction between the faculty and the student (Moore,

2019). Without the faculty-student connection, learning can return to the banking of education

model, where the faculty member, who is perceived as all knowing, presents content for

"ignorant" students to memorize but not deeply learn (Freire, 1968/1996). De Wever et al.

(2010) reiterated that learning is collaborative and socially mediated through discourse. The

social construction of knowledge theory has at its base, dialogue. Therefore, instructor presence,

engagement, and student interaction in asynchronous online environments are critical for co-

construction of knowledge (Mello, 2012).

Warr and Sampson (2020) studied the role of dialogue in an online educational doctoral

program by building upon the works of both Freire and Moore. The authors were interested in

the effectiveness of dialogue in online courses based upon different communication methods:

discussion boards – text based, VoiceThread – asynchronous video, and real time video. While

my research does not compare different communication methods used by students, it explored

how dialogical relationships unfold for faculty and student community college participants in

asynchronous courses. Students perceived asynchronous as most effective for providing time for

reflection, but they preferred real time video because of immediacy and ability to create stronger

engagement. The researchers recognized that graduate education students would have the human

capital to do the work required to create community, engagement, and dialogue. They expressed

concern that undergraduate experiences would differ and require further research (Warr & Sampson, 2020).

Bereiter (2002) and Garrison (1992) highlighted that students are both owners of knowledge and creators of knowledge "in sustained meaning-making processes" (Ouyang et al., 2020, p. 185). Dewey (in Moore, 1997), defined the concept of transaction is the interplay between individuals. When the individuals are separated by time and space, there is an impact on that interplay. The temporal and spatial distance creates communication and psychological space for potential faculty and student misunderstandings (Moore, 1997). Moore's theory of transactional distance maintained that faculty-student connections diminish transactional distance.

The Community of Inquiry Framework (CoI) is an instructional design model comprising teaching, social, and cognitive presences. This framework provides a schema to understand a student's educational experience in an online environment (Garrison, 1992). Garrison's Community of Inquiry work argued for the powerful reflexive nature of asynchronous text-based communication. The Community of Inquiry paradigm attempts to codify faculty and student perceptions of faculty-student engagement through instructor presence and social presence when learning happens asynchronously and is mediated by a learning management system. Warr and Sampson (2020) maintained that critical dialogue "complicates Garrison claims" (p. 861). Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, and Fund (2010) claimed that asynchronous courses allow for reflection and provide a lean form of dialogue. Garrison's early work focused on text-based asynchronous courses. He and his colleagues found that the strength of reflection outweighed the lack of visual cues. He claimed that it outweighed the "fast paced, spontaneous, and fleeting" (p. 6) nature of real-time interaction. According to Warr and Sampson (2020), asynchronous

interactions create a barrier for dialogue that is required for engaged pedagogy. However, asynchronous video can diminish some of those barriers. These authors argued that good design and facilitation in asynchronous courses can improve engaged pedagogy.

Distance Education / Online Education

Distance education, online learning, and eLearning are often interchangeable (Moore et al., 2010). However, there is a nuanced difference between these terms. Distance education, with a long history spanning nearly two centuries, is instruction between faculty and student separated by time and space (Casey, 2008). According to Casey (2008), vocational training via US Postal Service traces back to secretarial courses offered by Pitman Shorthand in 1852, and the University of Chicago offered the first recognized academic program in 1892. Over time, technology advanced, and distance education courses were delivered by radio and later by television. Radio and television created immediacy, which reduced the temporal space between instructor and student. In the 1960s, satellite communications made it possible to deliver instruction to offices. Internet capabilities allowed for two-way communications, changing how distance education courses were delivered (Casey, 2008). Distance education has always used the current technology of its time to span spatial and temporal distance (Anderson, 2009).

Distance education was an add-on to regular college education in the early years. It was not part of mainstream college activity; it served a different purpose. Distance learning was an opportunity to provide access to education to those who, for personal and societal reasons, could not attend classes at a college campus (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). In 1873, a Harvard professor's daughter, Anna Ticknor, created the Society to Encourage Studies at Home (Bergmann, 2001). The purpose was to "induce ladies to form the habit of devoting some part of every day to study of a systematic and thorough kind" (Bergmann, 2001, p. 451). Materials were

mailed to the women and learning was self-paced. Local Boston, wealthy, educated women served as volunteer readers of the student work. Distance education was also an opportunity to meet the needs of a specific audience. In 1891, Thomas Foster created a correspondence program about mine mapping for miners (Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). These two programs had different goals. Ticknor's Society worked to advanced liberal education among women, while Foster's program was about skills training and workforce development (Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006.) Well into the late 20th century, distance education programs were part of an outreach for colleges, not part of their core instructional model. However, these programs missed true engagement between peer students and faculty and students (Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006).

Online learning is a subset of distance education (Anderson, 2009; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Because of the technologies available until the mid-1900s, early distance education students were engaged in independent study, exemplified by the Ticknor Society. Online education transcends the distance of space with the use of robust real-time audio and video conferencing, allowing for the shift from independent study to collaborative study. Garrison and Shale (1987) included three characteristics in their definition of distance education: educational communication (1) occurs non-contiguously, (2) is two-way and is for learning, and (3) uses technology for two-way communication (Garrison & Shale, 1987). These characteristics define distance education as it occurs today, commonly called online education (Anderson, 2009).

The recent Higher Education Reauthorization Act (Federal Registry, 2020) codified the importance of instructor-student interaction in the learning process and now includes instructor-student interaction in its definition of online learning (Distance Education and Innovation, 2020,

para 345). This interaction differentiates online learning from correspondence courses. Freire's (1968/1996) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories on the social and dialogic nature of the instructor and student roles in learning demonstrate that this is not a new concept. Vygotsky (1978) discussed the social nature of learning, further emphasizing the importance of a student's environment in their learning development. Freire (1968/1996) drew attention to the dialogical nature of transformative learning by developing the problem-posing education model.

Colleges and universities have offered online courses for the last few decades (Allen et al., 2016). Though technology existed for online learning and teaching, many faculty still taught only face-to-face (F2F) in an actual physical classroom until forced to change because of pandemic-related campus shutdowns. These faculty did not have the skills to use these tools or understand online andragogy. Teaching faculty to use these tools was the easy part. The challenge was teaching faculty the andragogy for online learning and teaching.

Online enrollment growth rate increased before the pandemic, even as enrollments in on-ground classes declined. Coping with the pandemic sharply increased the number of faculty and students in online learning as colleges pivoted to remote learning. Nearly 32% of all higher education students were enrolled in at least one online course in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). Whatever the new normal post-pandemic looks like for colleges and universities, online learning is here to stay (Grajek, 2021).

Remote learning is the emergency translation of face-to-face courses into courses taught at a distance due to COVID-19-related campus shutdowns. In contrast, online learning is the intentional design and facilitation of learning and teaching in a distance space (Fried & Joo, 2020). Understanding the andragogy of learning and teaching online is not a simple transition from face-to-face. The faculty-student dialogical relationship may not be the same in an online

environment and in a face-to-face setting, which may have consequences for students' deep learning and success. These issues sparked my interest in understanding the relationship between faculty and students in asynchronous learning environments.

Educational Approaches to Knowledge

In the latter half of the 1900s, three main schools of thought influenced educational approaches to understanding knowledge acquisition: positivist, constructivist, and interactionalist. The first school of thought, characterized by a positivist approach, focused on knowledge as originating from a single source, where the teacher was the only authority, and the student needed to learn (Mello, 2012). Freire (1968/1996) referred to this approach as the banking of education.

The constructivist approach to knowledge recognizes the different sources of knowledge and the different relationships students have with that knowledge (Mello, 2012). The role of the faculty changed with this approach. "The professor instead of being the 'sage on the stage,' functions as the 'guide on the side'" (King, 1993, p. 30). The guide on the side model began to break down formal authority and allowed the student and the faculty to co-construct knowledge. No longer was the faculty the exclusive formal authority (Knowlton, 2018). Formal authority interrupts deep learning. Interaction between faculty and students, and student and student deepens learning (Freire 1968/1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Students do not need a faculty member to disseminate information in the age of the internet, nor is learning limited to a specific time slot. The instructor shifted from formal authority to pedagogical authority where student learning increased (Knowlton, 2018). This allowed faculty and students to approach a dialogical relationship. Dialogical relationships occur when there is interaction between the students and between the faculty and students (Moore,

1997). The instructor manages and facilitates the classroom, learning becomes decentralized among the students and the faculty, they share responsibility for co-construction of knowledge, and deeper learning occurs (Mello, 2012).

Freire's Models of Education

Freire's concept of engaged pedagogy is actualized through problem-posing education. Problem-posing education requires a dialogical relationship between faculty and student and aims to empower students to become responsible for their learning (Freire, 1968/1996). It connects theory with action (Freire, 1968/1996; Hilton, 2013; hooks, 1994). This happens through dialogue. Thus, dialogical relationships are necessary for engaged pedagogy (Warr & Sampson, 2020). Dialogue allows students to question, contribute, and reflect upon issues (Freire, 1968/1996; hooks, 1994; Warr & Samson, 2020). Dialogue also allows classroom participants to learn from one another and share diverse backgrounds and understanding (Hilton, 2013). Social construction of knowledge is shared among all the members of the classroom (hooks, 1994). Dialogue is at the base of social construction of knowledge (Warr & Sampson, 2020). For transformational learning to occur, faculty must learn *with* students through dialogue rather than teach *to* students (Freire, 1968/1996).

The problem-posing model repairs the issues of the traditional banking of education model that Freire (1968/1996) thought was prevalent in Brazil. Freire was critical of the banking of education model because it stifled students' abilities to be critical thinkers and took away their ability to be responsible for their own learning. While the problem-posing model emphasizes a dialogic process, the banking of education model shows students as passive recipients of faculty knowledge. In this model, the teacher is the sole source of knowledge and simply deposits knowledge into the minds of the students as though students were empty bank accounts.

The Theory of Transactional Data

While the definitions of distance education focused on the geographic and time gap between instructor and student, Moore (1997) contended that distance is a "pedagogical concept" (Moore, 1997, p. 22). The distance at the core of Moore's theory is not time- and space-bound; rather, it is a transactional distance (Gorsky & Caspi, 2005). Moore identified transactional distance as the communication and psychological space between the student and teacher (Chen, 2001; Gorsky & Caspi, 2005; Moore, 1997). When the individuals are separated by time and space, there is an impact on the interplay between faculty and student. The temporal and spatial distance creates communication and psychological space for potential faculty and student misunderstandings (Moore, 1997).

Transactional distance has three components: dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. As Moore (1997) described, transactional distance is influenced by these three components. Dialogue is the positive interaction for learning that develops between faculty and student (Moore, 2019). Structure is the design and facilitation of the course, determining how much flexibility there is for dialogue. Learner autonomy is the student's level of responsibility for their learning without the direction of the instructor (Moore, 1997; Vasiloudis et al., 2015). There is an inverse relationship between dialogue and transactional distance; increasing dialogue decreases transactional distance instructor (Moore, 1997, 2019; Vasiloudis et al., 2015). As structure becomes more rigid, transactional distance increases (Moore, 2019). Increased transactional distance requires learner autonomy to increase (Moore, 2019).

Dialogue

Freire (1968/1996) and hooks (1994) emphasized the necessity of a dialogical relationship between the faculty and student. Interaction can be positive, negative, social, or for

the construction of knowledge. However, a dialogical relationship is a positive interaction between the faculty and the student, with intent for learning (Freire, 1968/1996; Moore, 1997, 2019). Online learning environments, without incorporating dialogue, run the risk of reverting to the traditional banking model of education. Freire (1968/1996) coined the term "banking of education" to describe an environment where the instructor assumes the role of the all-knowing figure who presents information for students to memorize, but not to truly comprehend or apply. Farquhar (2013) stated that dialogue is both words and actions. Dialogue is influenced by course design, discipline, educational philosophy, and class size. If faculty and students cannot communicate through words, then the class structure must bear the educational transaction (Farquhar, 2013).

Structure

Structure includes design, delivery method, content, teaching strategies, and evaluation (Farquhar, 2013). Highly structured courses limit opportunities for dialogue. Student outcomes of discourse, reflection, and higher-order thinking are constrained by high structure (Farquhar, 2013). The more tightly faculty controlled the format and design of the course, the more highly structured the course is, resulting in less opportunities for dialogue and transactional distance increases. Learner autonomy increases when there is less opportunity for dialog in a highly structured course.

Learner Autonomy

As learner autonomy increases, transactional distance also increases. Farquhar (2013) postulated that learner autonomy must increase in highly structured courses, as they have little dialogue. Therefore, the student must take responsibility for their learning. Studies conducted by

Vasiloudis et al. (2015) and Chen and Willits (1998) found little to no relationship between learner autonomy and transactional distance.

Vasiloudis et al. (2015) conducted a study with 29 students in a postgraduate course. They completed a questionnaire that contained a psychometric autonomy-connectedness scale and a scale of transactional distance. The researchers specifically wanted to study the impact of learner autonomy on transactional distance. Their findings showed a limited relation between transactional distance and autonomy (Vasiloudis et al., 2015), confirming the results of Chen and Willits (1998).

Chen and Willits (1998) conducted a study to evaluate transactional distance theory in video conferencing classes. Responses to a survey measured the variables, dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy, and then factor analysis was conducted to determine the ideas involved. A separate question measured students' perception of transactional distance. Their findings only partially supported that dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy impacted transactional distance. As defined by course design and facilitation, the authors maintained that course structure might increase understanding between instructors and students (Chen & Willits, 1998). Farquhar (2013) questioned whether dialogue could be measured and defined. She stated that dialogue is the outcome of classroom transactions rather than input. Dialogue between instructor and student is critical for the construction of knowledge. Using a constructivist lens, according to Farquhar, may better explain low transactional distance (Farquhar, 2013).

Moore took a humanistic approach rather than a behaviorist approach to distance education. Thus, it is difficult to test this theory empirically. Researchers inconsistently defined the constructs of dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. Chen and Willits (1998) questioned explaining human behavior and emotion (transactional distance) through quantitative measures.

Gorsky and Caspi (2005) were troubled by the tautological nature of the relationships between the components and transactional distance. The theory stated that dialogue and transactional distance are inversely related, and both structure and learner autonomy are directly associated with transactional distance (Moore, 1997, 2019).

Community of Inquiry Framework

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework explains meaning and the construction of knowledge in a collaborative asynchronous online environment through three integrated elements of presence: social, cognitive, and teaching (Garrison et al., 2000). Garrison et al. (2000) maintained the necessity of all three presences for meaningful learning to occur. Cognitive presence, constructing meaning, happens through social presence. Social presence, dialogue and discourse among class participants happens through teaching presence. Teaching presence is the design and facilitation of the course (See Figure 1) (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). The CoI model expanded with two more elements: student self-regulated learning, learner presence (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012) and actual teacher actions during a course, instructor presence (Richardson et al., 2015).

Figure 1

The Community of Inquiry Theoretical Framework
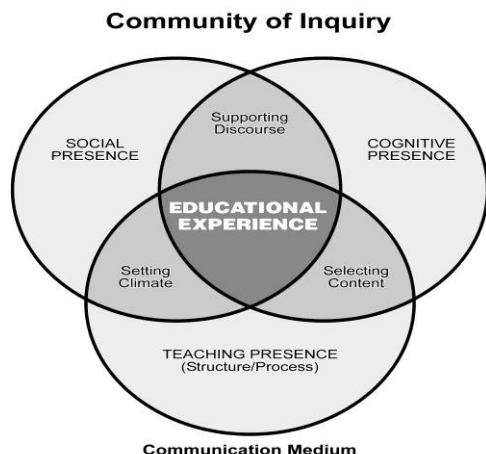
Teaching Presence

Teaching presence is "the design of the educational experience" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 90), facilitation, managing activities that promote student engagement, and direct instruction. Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) discussed the need for faculty to develop teaching presence by creating mini-lectures, posting lecture notes, and providing insightful and personal comments in the curriculum. They found that faculty needed to facilitate the interaction among the students, help guide them toward understanding, and help each student participate in that interaction in a way that brings about deep learning (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Finally, the authors expressed that faculty must provide direct instruction, including timely and meaningful feedback and assessments that allow students to grow (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007).

Instructor Presence

Instructor presence is an element split out from teaching presence. It focuses on the instructor who moderates the social and cognitive presence in a designed course (Richardson et al., 2015). Instructor presence occurs "at the intersection of teaching and social presence" (Richardson et al., 2016, p. 83). Specifically, Richardson et al. (2015) defined instructor presence as "the specific actions and behaviors taken by the instructor that projects him/herself as a real person" (Richardson et al., 2015, p. 259). Instructor presence happens while the course is being taught and not during the design stage. The distinction between teaching presence and instructor presence is increasingly vital as more courses are developed by professional instructional designers and taught by "non-designer instructors" (Richardson et al., 2015, p.259). This distinction becomes even more amplified as colleges turn to adjuncts to teach already prepared courses.

Social Presence

Social presence is the sense that there is community, where students can "project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves as 'real people'" (Garrison et al., 2000, p.89). Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) explained that online social presence makes up for the absence of visual cues in on-ground classes. They stated that social presence consists of three categories: emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion.

Learning Presence

A community of learners in an online collaborative learning environment allows for reflection and collaboration (Garrison & Akyol, 2015). Shea and Bidjerano (2012) found the teaching, social, and cognitive presence model to be limiting. It did not account for individual learner characteristics. Thus, in their 2012 research Shea and Bidjerano added a fourth presence to the Community of Inquiry model, self-regulated learning. They referred to this presence as learning presence. The self-regulated learning model is a "cyclical, recursive process encompassing goal setting, planning, executing actions, monitoring, self-reflection and self-assessment" (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012, p. 317). The learning presence modifies both social and teaching presence in the Community of Inquiry model.

Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence allows students to "construct meaning through sustained communication" (Garrison et al., 2000, p.89). It is based on the practical inquiry model (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Cognitive presence requires social presence. Group cohesion allows for interaction in a safe, nonjudgmental environment, which leads to community. The community has a common purpose and through discourse, threaded discussion, allows for reflection and construction of knowledge.

Metacognition happens at the individual learner level, as discussed by Shea and Bidjerano (2012) in their introduction of learning presence and at the collaborative level (Garrison & Akyol 2015). The construction of knowledge occurs at the individual level as part of reflection and self-regulated learning. In a collaborative online environment, the construction of knowledge occurs with a co-regulation of learning. This co-metacognitive work happens at the intersection of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Garrison & Akyol, 2015). This is where the dialogical relationship between the students and the faculty occurs.

Garrison's later work with Cleveland-Innes and Fung (2010) demonstrated the interdependence and causal relationships between the different types of presences. The goal was cognitive presence, deep, meaningful learning as perceived by the student. Both social and teaching presence were required for cognitive learning to take place. Teaching presence directed both social and cognitive presence. At the same time, social presence was the mediating variable between teaching presence and cognitive presence (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010). The relationship between teaching, social and cognitive presence is iterative. Identifying the problem, the process of inquiry, starts with social presence. Social presence creates teaching presence. Cognitive presence together with social presence constructs knowledge (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). Cognitive presence is the learning, but it requires social presence. Teaching presence supports social and cognitive presence by designing it into online course activities and managing and encouraging it among students (Garrison et al., 2000).

<div align="center">**Social Construction of Knowledge**</div>

Ouyang et al. (2020) built their work upon overlapping theories of the social construction of knowledge. These theories were put into practice through a learning-community approach to encourage instructor-student collaboration (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). Vygotsky (1978)

detailed three motifs within the learning process of sociocultural learning theory: culture, language, and zone of proximal development. The constructive process of learning highlights the dynamic and subjective nature of learning. Students create their own construct based on prior knowledge (Bereiter, 2002).

While not explicitly quoting Freire's banking model of education, the researchers pointed out that sociocultural learning perspectives are not a simple transfer of information from the instructor to the student. Students have no ownership in attaining knowledge, and the process lacks critical thinking. In contrast, sociocultural processes of learning require active participation and interaction among and between instructors and students. Bereiter (2002) and Garrison (1992) built upon this in their emphasis that students are both owners of knowledge and creators of knowledge "in sustained meaning-making processes" (Ouyang et al., 2020, p. 185). This leads directly to Ouyang et al.'s (2020) research question. "Whether, to what extent, and how did the instructor and students build a collaborative partnership in an online learning community course" (Ouyang et al., 2020, p. 187)?

Being Human

Throughout this study, the concept of "being human" was frequently discussed. It is used in two different contexts. According to Freire, being more fully human refers to the compassionate relationship between faculty and students, and the transformative impact it can have. The faculty participants also use the term "human," echoing its meaning from the Community of Inquiry framework. They are referring to how faculty members embody themselves using words, video, and voice in an asynchronous course.

Freire (1968/1996) believed that education should help people realize their full potential as human beings. He emphasized the importance of critically analyzing the world and acting to

change it as essential components of being a fully human being. To foster critical consciousness and give people the power to influence their own lives and communities, Freire placed a strong emphasis on teacher-student communication and collaboration. Traditional education, in which professors serve as authority figures who convey knowledge to submissive students, was criticized by Freire as supporting preexisting power structures. He thought that this method was demeaning and prohibited people from engaging completely in society and exerting their agency. Instead, he argued for an educational approach built on respect for one another and knowledge that is jointly created by instructors and students. In this model, educators and learners collaborate to critically assess the world and take appropriate action to transform it.

Freire (1968/1996) believed that education is a potent tool for bringing about social change and building a more just and equal society. Education could foster a more democratic and participative society by enabling people to critically analyze the world and take action. His idea of using education to bring about social change is still relevant and motivating today. The CoI model, developed by Garrison (1992), highlights the significance of social, cognitive, and teaching presence in creating an effective and engrossing learning experience for students. In the context of human embodiment, the CoI model acknowledges the body's importance and its role in the learning process.

Garrison and Akyol (2013) defined social presence as the feeling of being together in a shared learning environment. To establish a sense of social presence, it is crucial to recognize the embodied nature of communication and engage students in activities that promote community and connection. This may involve using video conferencing tools for real-time discussions or incorporating collaborative projects that encourage students to work together in a shared space.

The CoI model emphasizes the significance of embodiment in the learning process and underscores the need to create a supportive and captivating learning environment that promotes social and cognitive presence. By acknowledging the embodied nature of communication and learning, the CoI model provides a framework for creating a more human-centered and engaging learning experience for students (Garrison & Akyol, 2015).

Freire and Garrison both emphasize the importance of being human and embodiment in the context of education. However, their approaches differ in certain respects. Freire's (1968/1996) notion of being human is rooted in critical consciousness and social transformation. For Freire, being more fully human means being able to examine the world critically and take action to transform it. In his models of education, he emphasizes the importance of dialogue and collaboration between teachers and students, which he believes will enable individuals to develop their critical consciousness and take an active role in shaping their own lives and communities.

Garrison's CoI model also recognizes the importance of being human and embodiment in the context of education but emphasizes a more collaborative and constructivist approach to learning (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). The CoI model emphasizes the importance of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence in creating a meaningful and engaging learning experience for students. Garrison's approach emphasizes the embodied nature of communication and the importance of engaging students in activities that promote a sense of community and connection.

Freire and Garrison recognized the importance of active learning and critical thinking in promoting meaningful learning experiences. However, Freire placed a greater emphasis on social justice and transformative action, while Garrison emphasized collaboration and the creation of a

supportive learning community. In terms of embodiment, both Freire (1968/1996) and Garrison and Akyol (2013) recognized the importance of the body and its role in the learning process. Freire emphasized the importance of embodied dialogue and communication, while Garrison emphasized the embodied nature of communication and the need to engage students in activities that promote a sense of community and connection.

Using Tools for Engagement

Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle, and Brightspace are often the center of the technological learning ecosystem at higher education institutions. However, many instructors and students were dissatisfied with the tools available in the LMS (Lambropoulos et al., 2012; Northey et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2020; Ross, 2019). Students complained that the LMS tools were not natural. In addition, students had to take the extra step of opening their LMS to find out if there was new content, assignments, or interaction (Ross, 2019). Learning Management Systems, supported by the educational institution, are instructor-centric, while social media tools are end-user/student-centric. In a variety of studies (Lambropoulos et al., 2012; Northey et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2020; Ross, 2019) instructors introduced commercially available social media tools into their courses. Students were already comfortable with tools like Facebook (Northey et al., 2015). Faculty wanted to create authentic communication experiences for students by using tools commonly used in business like Teams (Park & Kim, 2020) and Slack (Ross, 2019). Northey et al. (2015) added Facebook to face-to-face (F2F) marketing classes and compared their participation and performance with students in F2F classes without Facebook. Those students in the hybrid courses performed better than the F2F-only students. The hybrid model allowed students to contemplate and assimilate the materials and previous discussion, allowing for the social construction of knowledge. Park and

Kim (2020) and Ross (2019) found that students were more satisfied using social media tools like Teams and Slack to communicate with their instructors over the learning management system's tools. Both studies demonstrated increased activity with communication tools and increased engagement.

Changing Role of Faculty

Many instructors experienced a change in their role when they taught their first online courses (Burgess, 2015; Cook-Sather, 2014; Fischer, 2018; Glenn, 2018; Ouyang et al., 2019; Park & Kim, 2020; Rasi & Vuojarvi, 2018; Ross, 2019; Smits & Voogt, 2017; Trammell & Aldrich, 2016). Asynchronous learning, often called out for its ability to allow reflection among students before they participate, also allows for reflection on the part of faculty (Cook-Sather, 2014). Learning became two-way for faculty, with faculty learning from students in an asynchronous environment (Coppola et al., 2002). The role of faculty in an online course changed with a change in the teaching mode. Faculty became more connected to their students. Preparing the course required more work as managing the interaction was as important as conveying content (Coppola et al., 2002). It is difficult to tease out student-faculty from student-student interaction, as the improved communications improved both types of engagement. Northey et al. were specifically interested in the porous boundaries of the two relationships (Northey et al., 2015, Warr & Sampson, 2020). Several researchers strove to minimize disembodied presence in their courses (Burgess, 2015; Rasi & Vuojarvi, 2018). One way to increase faculty development was by creating audio recordings for assessment feedback. Students indicated that they appreciated the formative audio feedback because it promoted an emotional connection with their faculty (Rasi & Vuojarvi, 2018).

Ouyang et al. (2020) demonstrated that intentional course design allows for community building within a class. Students can become engaged by giving students various options on how to participate, coupled with social and instructor presence (Ouyang et al., 2020). The experience of teaching online and participating in the design team changed the faculty member's role. This is an intentional change. Cook-Sather (2014) stated that what is learned is irreversible and cannot become unknowable. Thus, the instructor, instructional designer, and student consultant's combined work changed the faculty member's role (Barbera et al., 2017; Cook-Sather, 2014).

Several researchers were concerned about student motivation in the asynchronous course (Burgess, 2015; Northey et al., 2015) precisely because participation was in the individual students' hands. Northey et al. (2015) gave participation points for both in-class and Facebook discussions. Students earned more Facebook points than F2F discussion points (Northey et al., 2015). Burgess (2015) made an interesting point related to motivation. Motivation is not only a student issue. It is equally important to pay attention to the faculty members' motivation. Faculty who motivated their students through tasks that increased student engagement and connected with each student led to improved student retention (Glenn, 2018). Towards the end of the semester, teaching only online courses, Burgess missed the physical immediacy and engagement of the F2F classroom that motivated her work (Burgess, 2015).

Asynchronous versus Synchronous Communications

Asynchronous communications allow students time for reflection and the opportunity for all student voices to be heard (Burgess, 2018). Synchronous communications allow for embodied presence and make it easier for students and faculty to develop relationships (Lambropoulos, 2012). As Glenn (2018) discovered on her journey to teaching online courses and then returning to teaching F2F classes, one may incorporate asynchronous tools into a synchronous class. In her

narrative, she maintained that F2F communications have the human touch, but adding asynchronous components allows students to reflect and respond more thoughtfully. Asynchronous tools are not a substitute for human connection, according to Lambropoulos (2012), though the right asynchronous tools help in the social construction of knowledge. Perhaps the most exciting work was that of Warr and Sampson (2020). They created three different modalities for student communications. Students preferred the modalities in the following order: synchronous video, asynchronous video, and asynchronous text-based discussion. Asynchronous video allowed for student voices to be heard, literally and figuratively. Students preferred the small group synchronous video chats because they were able to engage in real-time. One student commented that it led to "conceptualizing topics for deep discussion" (Warr & Sampson, 2020, p. 865). This is precisely the purpose of critical dialogue. The right combination of asynchronous and synchronous communications allows for reflection, hearing all voices, and immediacy and spontaneity that creates deeper connections.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, an overview of the literature on engaged pedagogy, theories, and frameworks of dialogical relationships in asynchronous courses, and the social construction of knowledge was provided. The utilization of technology, the shifting role of professors, and the advantages of asynchronous and synchronous courses for students were only a few of the concerns relating to asynchronous courses that were brought up. The post-intentional phenomenological technique that was utilized to direct the data collection and analysis procedure will be covered in detail in the following chapter, Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study explored how dialogical-academic relationships develop in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. Asynchronous online courses are characterized by educational communication occurring beyond the limitations of time and space, are for learning purposes, and two-way communications are facilitated through technology (Garrison & Shale, 1987). The study focused on dialogical relationships: positive, purposeful, academic interactions between class participants, faculty-student, and student-student (Moore, 1997). Distance education has a long history dating back nearly two centuries and has been facilitated by various technologies such as correspondence, television, video, and the internet (Casey, 2008). Online education has transcended distance limitations using robust real-time audio and video conferencing, enabling a shift from independent study to collaborative study.

According to Vagle (2018), "the primary purpose of phenomenology…is to study what it is like as we *find-ourselves-being-in-relation-with others*" (p. 20). Phenomenology enables bringing to light aspects of our experiences that may have become so commonplace that we no longer perceive them, allowing us "to reveal things that have become so 'normal' that we do not even notice what might be at work and what might be assumed" (Vagle, 2018, p. 10). Rather than simply describing the essence of a phenomenon as experienced by many individuals, post-intentional phenomenology seeks to explore the entirety of the phenomenon, including all connected elements (Vagle, 2018). In this study, a post-intentional phenomenological approach was employed to investigate faculty-student dialogical-academic relationships in asynchronous online courses.

Identification of the Problem

The problem I sought to investigate is how engagement and connectivity between faculty and students occur in asynchronous online courses. According to Moore (2019), the psychological and pedagogical distance between faculty and students can impede their dialogical relationships. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework aims to codify faculty and student perceptions of engagement through the concept of presence (Richardson et al., 2016; Shea & Bidjerano, 2012). Glazier (2021) suggested that community colleges can expand student access to higher education by providing online courses. However, this requires faculty to connect with students actively.

This study is informed by Freire's work on engaged pedagogy, specifically his two models of education (Freire, 1968/1996). The first model, known as the banking of education, emphasizes the hierarchical superiority of faculty over students and focuses on feeding content to the students. The second model, problem-posing education, involves a process of learning *with* students that includes naming the problem, identifying its root cause, and taking action to address it. For transformative learning to occur, theory must lead to action requiring dialogue between faculty and students and among students. According to Freire (1968/1996) "without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no education" (pp. 73-74.) Using Freire's two models of education as my analytical framework, I explored how dialogical relationships are formed or hindered in asynchronous online courses from the perspectives of both faculty and students.

Research Foci

The following research foci guide this study:

1. How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?

2. What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?

Methodology Research Design

The principles of post-intentional phenomenological methodology guided my research design. Qualitative approaches study the complexities of phenomena in natural settings (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012). The researcher is the primary data gatherer and analyst (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Soule and Freeman (2019) defined intentionality to mean:

> that when we think, experience, or direct our gaze towards an object, something appears to us, is there, or has affected us, whether we are conscious of it or not. For phenomenologists, this connectedness between ourselves and the world in its appearing is what phenomenologists study. (p. 857)

Therefore, a phenomenon has no absolute beginning. It is not linear like a tree but rather messy like a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I am not looking for the universal essence of dialogical relationships as required by hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2013) but rather the messy and unique relationships between faculty and student within a community college asynchronous class (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

The research design aimed to gain a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of the phenomenon of interest, the lived experiences of the participants, and my own experiences as the researcher. I explored the complexity and messiness (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of dialogical relationships in asynchronous online courses and how they are influenced by factors such as technology, course design, and instructor-student interactions.

The methodological process I used in my research was the iterative five-component post-intentional phenomenology described by Vagle (2018). Thus, I had "to revisit all five components throughout the research process" (p. 139). I started by identifying the phenomena I wanted to study: the dialogical relationship between faculty and students in asynchronous, online classes. In this step, Vagle (2018) recommended that the researcher identify the theory used throughout the research process. I used Freire's engaged pedagogy models of education as my lens throughout my research.

The next step was to plan a process for gathering appropriate materials by which I could begin to investigate my phenomenon of academic relationships. I developed a plan to speak with faculty twice, have the faculty journal, provide me with a course tour, and interview students. My journaling constituted the post-reflexion plan in step three.

Thinking with theory is a crucial step in post-intentional phenomenology methodology (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and is entangled with Vagle's (2018) whole-part-whole analysis of the phenomenological data gathered. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described a method of "thinking about both theory and data" (p. 5). The approach was to read and reread Freire during my holistic read-through of the data and the line-by-line read-through. Writing and reading my post-reflexion journal was weaved into this process. The fifth step in Vagle's approach is writing the actual text.

The Inseparability of Phenomena and Instruments

The physicist-turned-philosopher Barad (2007) is renowned for their important writings on the nature of phenomena and the function of tools in shaping understanding of reality. Agential realism, a philosophical stance that emphasizes the inseparability of the observer and the observed forms the basis of Barad's perspective. According to Barad, our understanding of

the world is always mediated by instruments, which are not mere tools but are themselves part of the phenomenon they help to measure. It is impossible to separate the instrument from what we see.

This viewpoint challenges conventional ontological assumptions, which hold that there is an objective reality independent of human observation. Instead, Barad contends that humans can only make claims about the world through the use of tools, and that our knowledge is always situated and contextual. The act of observation is an act of participation in the phenomenon because the instrument is a component of it. This concept has significant implications for a variety of disciplines, including physics, social sciences, and education. We are compelled to reevaluate our assumptions about what we can know and how we may know it when we acknowledge the entanglement of instruments and phenomena. Barad's work encouraged me to think more deeply about the nature of reality and our relationship to it.

Phenomenology versus Grounded Theory

Data collection methods and sampling approaches used for phenomenology and grounded theory may be similar, often conflating the two methods (Urcia, 2021). Both may use purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews to understand the participant's lived experience of an event or phenomenon, and both may employ an interpretive-constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, grounded theory, with its roots in sociology, includes a layer of theoretical sampling and uses the analysis of this data to develop a theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology, with roots in philosophy, is used to understand participants' lived experiences as told through their voices (Moustakas, 1994) and to give voice to the obvious within the phenomenon (Vagle 2018). The theory generated through this method is grounded in large, collected data (Hays & Singh, 2012.)

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher's perspective on knowledge and philosophical assumptions can impact their research. As such, it is crucial to communicate one's epistemological stance and positionality to others (Mack, 2010). By doing so, researchers can clarify their worldview, theoretical framework, and assumptions, which can enhance the credibility and transparency of their research. Sharing one's epistemological stance and positionality can also help readers understand how the researcher approaches and interprets their data, which can facilitate critical reflection and evaluation of the research findings. Therefore, researchers need to be transparent and explicit about their epistemological stance and positionality when reporting their research.

Positionality

My positionality is shaped by my extensive experience in administering and teaching online and in-person classes at community colleges and four-year institutions. As the director of teaching and learning technologies for Virginia's 23 community colleges, I comprehensively understand the issues that influence teaching and learning. Additionally, my role in facilitating the emergency pivot from face-to-face to asynchronous instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of online education.

My interest in the formation of dialogical relationships in community college asynchronous classes was influenced by two broad sources. First, I drew upon the writings of Freire (1968/1996) and hooks (1995), which emphasized the importance of critical dialogue in the construction of knowledge and transformative learning. Second, my interest was grounded in my observation of specific teachers' impact on students' passion for science. This experience highlighted the significance of the relationship between teachers and students and the potential

for transformative learning to arise from meaningful engagement with faculty, peers, content, and the real world in the in-between space (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

As an experienced educator and administrator, my positionality provided valuable insights into factors interconnected with teaching and learning in community college asynchronous classes. My interest in dialogical relationships and transformative learning reflects a commitment to promoting meaningful and engaging educational experiences for community college students.

Epistemological Stance

Traditional qualitative methods uncover an objective truth about a phenomenon. In contrast, post-qualitative methods are used to destabilize dominant discourses and center the reflexivity and the researcher's subjectivity, beliefs, values, and experiences in shaping the research and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). An epistemological stance refers to an individual's beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. The researcher's epistemological stance reflects their perspective on how they understand the phenomenon they are studying and how they go about acquiring knowledge about it (Crotty, 1998). My epistemological stance is a continual work-in-progress. I am influenced by a post-constructivist paradigm (Jones et al., 2014) which emphasizes the subjective nature of experience. Thus, this stance acknowledges that no one reality describes what happens in a distance education classroom. Each faculty member, and each student may experience the commonalities differently (Mack, 2010).

I was initially uncomfortable in the post-international, post-structural, post-qualitative space of onto-epistemological thinking and research. My religious background and my facilities in statistics and quantitative data and analytics put me firmly in the positivist camp. However, it

is not one truth nor one set of best practices that I was seeking during my research. Furthermore, my stance emphasizes the importance of my role as the researcher in understanding the phenomenon being studied. It explored relationships in asynchronous, online courses, foregrounded by the faculty and students' subjective experience. This meant opening myself up and fully jumping into the post space.

Researcher Bias

I approached this study with my own experiences, ideas, and research literature influences like all researchers. Thus, not only does the researcher have extensive experience, but there is also a potential for bias. I committed to keeping a post-reflexion journal to ensure that there is "openness to the mystery," Gelassenheit, as stated by Heidegger (1959/1966). Post-reflexion journaling is different from bracketing. Bracketing minimizes the researcher's a priori knowledge and theories to allow participants' voices to be heard (Groenewald, 2004; Hays & Singh, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Post-reflexion journaling is a way to question myself during all stages of research (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020) and understand the role my assumptions play in gathering, analyzing, and writing about the phenomenon (Urcia, 2021).

<center>**Context of the Study**</center>

The study investigated how critical dialogical relationships were formed between faculty and students in online community college courses, using the theoretical perspective of Freire (1968/1996), which emphasized transformative learning through critical dialogue and engaged pedagogy. The study is relevant given the growing popularity and importance of online education and the need for students to engage in meaningful learning experiences that foster transformative learning.

The study was conducted at three colleges, referred to as Northeast Community College, Northern Community College, and Central Community College, pseudonyms, all located east of the Mississippi (See Appendix A). These colleges were feeder institutions located near a local four-year state university and most students planned to transfer.

The interviews with students and faculty were conducted using video conferencing via Zoom, with all students participating from their homes, and faculty either at home or in their college offices. When the interviews took place, I was traveling for work and conducted the interviews from either my home office or a hotel room.

Asynchronous online courses are facilitated via learning management systems (LMS), with communications and relationships between faculty and students mediated by the LMS. Two colleges used Blackboard and one college used Moodle as their LMS. Because the LMS was a central vehicle for relationships, I planned to observe relationships unfolding as a lurker in one course at each college. Although I had written IRB approval from each college, local computer information security officers denied access. Instead, faculty participants provided me with a guided course tour.

Participants

Groenewald (2004) recommended non-probability, purposeful sampling when conducting phenomenological research by including participants who have experienced the phenomenon and are "intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings" (Moustakes, 1994, p. 107). Specific cases in a purposeful sample are selected to include different perspectives of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than gathering a particular sample size, participants are chosen for "the amount of detail they can provide about a phenomenon" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 8). Qualitative research typically involves small sample sizes and purposeful

sampling allows for a focused exploration of the phenomenon. I wanted to learn about the depth of the phenomenon rather than the breadth. Creswell (2013) recommended a sample size of ten for phenomenological studies.

I planned to interview at least nine faculty members and 18 students from three different community colleges for a total of 27 participants. Recruitment was done through introductory letters sent by the colleges or direct emails from me (See Appendix B). To participate, faculty members were required to have taught asynchronous online classes for at least three years. Student criteria included being 18 or older, currently enrolled in a community college (but not in any of the participating faculty members' classes), and completing at least one asynchronous class within the last year. Faculty responded to the recruitment emails and volunteered to participate. Initially, 18 faculty members were recruited for the first interviews. Eleven participated in the second interviews and were included in the study. Eight of those eleven submitted journals and all eleven provided me with a course tour. To recruit students, each faculty member was asked to email past students inviting them to participate in the study. Ultimately, students volunteered from two colleges but none from Northeast Community College. I wanted to "elucidate the particular" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158).

Data Gathering

van Manen (2014) emphasized the importance of viewing phenomena through the lens of the lived experience of the participants, rather than a conceptualized experience. Lived experience is the subjectively described direct personal experience, while conceptualized experience interprets that lived experience. In line with this perspective, the data gathering for this study began with semi-structured interviews with faculty members, conducted over video

conferencing using Zoom. Faculty members were invited to speak about their experiences developing academic relationships with their students in asynchronous classes. The interviews were conducted twice for each faculty participant and lasted approximately one hour. The interview questions are provided in Appendix C.

Following the first interview, the faculty participants were asked to keep a journal for four weeks (see Appendix D). The purpose of this journal was to give the faculty members time to reflect on dialogical-academic relationships, engaged pedagogy, and connections in their online classes. They were given specific prompts for entries and the opportunity to write freely in their journals. The journals captured the faculty's conceptualized experience of their relationships with students. Moreover, students who had completed at least one asynchronous class were each interviewed in a single, semi-structured session (see Appendix E) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the faculty-student relationship from the student's perspective. All interviews captured the lived experiences of the faculty and students.

Since this study explored dialogical-academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous classes, I planned to observe the phenomenon as it was manifesting (Kuntz, 2015) by being a lurker, an observer, in three ongoing asynchronous classes, one at each college. However, the computer information security officers did not allow access to the courses, despite IRB approval from all three colleges. As a result, faculty participants were asked to guide me through their courses, which was referred to as the "course tour." These multiple data sources used in conjunction with one another helped explore dialogical relationships in asynchronous online courses and provide insight for each research foci (See Table 1).

Table 1

Research Foci Aligned with Phenomenological Data Sources

Research Foci	Data Sources
1. How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?	• Transcripts from Zoom video-recordings of faculty interviews (interviews 1 and 2) • Faculty journals • Faculty-led course tours • Researcher's field notes • Researcher's post-reflexion journal
2. What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?	• Transcripts from Zoom video-recordings of faculty interviews (interviews 1 and 2) • Faculty journals • Faculty-led course tours • Transcripts from Zoom video-recordings of student interviews • Researcher's field notes • Researcher's post-reflexion journal

All interviews were recorded using Zoom and were automatically transcribed. I reviewed and corrected all the transcriptions due to errors ranging from miswritten words to misidentified speakers. To aid in the analysis of the data, I kept a post-reflexion journal with my thoughts, questions, and beginning analysis of the interviews, journal entries, course tours, and readings. Field notes were taken during the course tours to capture the observations of the online course environment.

Confidentiality

All information regarding faculty and student identities is and will remain confidential. In addition to obtaining written consent from the faculty and student (Appendix F and G), each participant had multiple opportunities to opt out at any time or choose not to answer a question. The written consent forms, with identifying information, are filed separately from interview transcripts, journals, and field notes. The written research referred to participants by pseudonym rather than by their actual name and college affiliation (See Appendix H). This is intended to keep the identities of both faculty and student participants confidential.

All copies of recordings, notes, and written materials were removed from all servers, and stored on a single, non-networked hard drive. Access to data has only been afforded to approved principal and co-principal investigators. De-identified information is used in this dissertation and presentations and may be used for subsequent publications.

Data Analysis

I utilized the whole-part-whole approach to data analysis, as described by Vagle (2018) and Jackson and Mazzei (2012). Using Vagle's (2018) approach, I engaged in a "careful reading of these phenomenological materials in dynamic and playful dialogue with the theories" (p. 157). After completing the data gathering, I read through the interview transcripts, journal submissions, and course tours in their entirety without making any margin notations or underlining. This holistic reading aimed to gain an overall understanding of the data. After the initial reading, I noted anything that came to mind in my post-reflexion journal, such as connections to other interviews or literature, or random thoughts.

During the line-by-line reading, I analyzed key passages through the lens of Freire's (1968/1996) models of banking of education and problem-posing education using Jackson and

Mazzei's (2012) method of "thinking about both theory and data" (p. 5). This approach "moves away from an interpretive stance and embraces the mutually constitutive nature" (p. 11) of theory and data.

While reading data with theory, I organized my thinking with theory using Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage, which allowed me to connect the participants' experiences with Freire's (1968/1996) models of education. I avoided using themes and coding, as they can be reductionist (Freeman, 2017) and can lead to the fallacy of "people's tendency to look for patterns when none exist" (Goldstein, 2011, p. 81). Pascale (2011) warned that themes and coding "is the language of scientific discovery, the language of Cartesian dualism" (p. 105). In other words, "if you think you have to find a theme, you probably will" (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 716). Post-intentional phenomenology does not use traditional coding and themes. Therefore, I employed Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) process of plugging in instead of looking for themes.

Limitations

The research plan has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study focuses solely on asynchronous courses, which is only one of several modalities in which students and faculty can learn. Secondly, the research is restricted to asynchronous courses taught and taken during and after COVID-19. Additionally, while this study analyzes the dialogical connection between faculty and students, learning can occur without a dialogical connection, and thus this study may not capture all ways in which learning occurs in an asynchronous class. Finally, it is important to note that phenomenological data gathering captures a moment in time and represents one iteration of inquiry (Bridges-Rhoads et al., 2016, p. 548). However, each iteration adds to the body of knowledge.

I approached this study with my own experiences, ideas, and research literature influences. Thus, not only do I have extensive experience in leading online efforts at the community college level, but there is also a potential for my experience to become a priori assumptions during data gathering and analysis. To make sure that I maintained "openness to the mystery," *Gelassenheit*, as stated by Heidegger (1959/1966), I engaged in Vagle's post-reflexion journaling, a way to question ourselves during all stages of research. It provided a way for me to be reflective and understand how my assumptions might impact understanding a phenomenon (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020; Urcia, 2021).

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous courses. These insights can inform the design and implementation of asynchronous courses and contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding online education. The study also provides a foundation for future research to build upon and expand our understanding of the complexities of online education.

Summary

Chapter Three presented a comprehensive outline of the study's research purpose, which involved the use of a qualitative design and a post-intentional phenomenological approach. The chapter discussed the research setting and the participant selection strategy. It also provided a detailed plan for data collection and analysis, as well as information about the researcher's positionality. Additionally, the chapter addressed the limitations of the study. Moving forward to Chapter Four, I present insights gained from conversations with faculty and students, as well as their own observations. These revelations offer a more thorough comprehension of the research issue and the research method from several angles.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS: THINKING WITH FREIRE

Vagle (2009) conceptualized post-intentional phenomenology to relate how phenomena are always in the process of becoming. This methodology voices the relationship between the object and subject (Kuntz, 2015). Rather than trying to discover the universal essence of the faculty-student dialogical relationship as required by hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2013), my work was framed to explore the messy and unique relationships between faculty and students within a community college asynchronous class (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In this study, I examined the faculty-student relationship in asynchronous online courses. I organized the findings around the two research foci:

1. How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?

2. What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?

This chapter is structured into three sections. The first section includes a review of the methodology used and an account of the experiences that emerged during data gathering and analysis. Subsequently, an overview of the theoretical framework informs the analysis while keeping Freire's ideas at the forefront. To provide context for the next two sections, the chapter introduces the role of Learning Management Systems, the concept of being more fully human, and faculty and student perspectives on relationships. The remaining two sections delve into the exploration of each of the two research foci.

Data Gathering

For this study, I interviewed faculty at three community colleges in the Northeast and Central regions of the United States. Additionally, I interviewed students from two of those

colleges. An Internal Review Board (IRB) application was submitted to Old Dominion University (ODU) College of Education and Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix I). Upon approval from ODU, I submitted applications to seven community colleges throughout the United States. The first three colleges that approved the IRB were included in the study (Appendix J, K, L).

Faculty Recruitment

Northeast Community College (NECC) provided me with a list of faculty, who taught asynchronous courses over the previous year. I emailed 77 full-time faculty to recruit them as participants for the study. Central Community College (CCC) referred me to their distance learning offerings website, where I gathered emails for 174 full-time faculty. Northeast Community College (NCC) opted to send my recruitment email to their faculty list on my behalf. Approximately 25% of the emails at NECC and NCC were undeliverable. Another 20% of the faculty responded that they did not meet eligibility requirements. To be included in the study, faculty needed to be currently employed full-time by a community college with at least three years of experience teaching asynchronous online courses. Several faculty responded with encouragement but explained that because of their professional or personal responsibilities, they were unable to participate at this time. Most of my emails were not responded to. A total of 16 faculty, seven from NECC, seven from CCC, and two from NCC, completed a first interview with me. Each signed an informed consent form. Upon completion of the first interview, faculty were reminded of my request that they keep a journal for one month, and that they would be scheduled for a second interview approximately six weeks later. One faculty member subsequently dropped out and one faculty member revealed during her interview that she had never taught asynchronously. Eleven faculty completed the second interview and provided me

with a course tour. Of those 11, eight submitted their journals to me. The information gathered from all 11 faculty was included for analysis.

van Manen (2014) warned that phenomena should be viewed through the lens of the lived experience of the participants and not the conceptualized experience. The starting point for gathering the data was two 60-minute interviews with faculty who have taught asynchronously. The interviews were supplemented by participant journaling. At the end of the first interview (via video conferencing), the faculty were asked to keep a journal for four weeks, allowing them to reflect on dialogical relationships, critical pedagogy, and connections in their online class. Participants were provided with specific prompts for journal entries and the opportunity to write freely in their journals. The interviews and journaling captured the lived and conceptualized experiences of the faculty.

Since my first research focus was to explore the manifestation of academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous classes, I planned to observe the phenomenon as it was manifesting (Kuntz, 2015). Initially, I intended only to conduct interviews and ask faculty to make journal entries. However, upon reading Kuntz (2015), it became apparent to me that the participants' perspectives alone would not capture the manifesting of faculty-student relationships – but that it was necessary to see how the relationships unfold. This required that I be a lurker, an observer, in ongoing asynchronous classes. While I received IRB approval at all three colleges to observe in at least one asynchronous class at each college, I could not get approval from the colleges' Computer Information Security Office (CISO). I needed another way to get a glimpse into these courses. Instead of being a lurker or observer in a few classes, I asked each faculty member to give me a course tour of a current, ongoing course. All 11 faculty gave me course tours. Thus, rather than relying only on their perceptions, I could see how

relationships were designed and facilitated within the Learning Management System within the course. I did lose the ability to watch a relationship manifest (or not). This was offset by gaining insight into how faculty facilitate (or not) the relationship. During the tours of the asynchronous online courses, faculty participants' demeanor changed noticeably. They became more animated and excited while showing me their courses, revealing their passion for teaching, working with students, and for their discipline. These multiple data sources, used together, helped me to explore how faculty create faculty-student academic relationships in asynchronous online courses.

The faculty interviews were conducted through the Zoom video conference platform and recorded with written and oral consent of the participants. Both the faculty member and I had our cameras on, and the sessions were recorded. Semi-structured interview questions were developed to help guide me through the process, however, my goal was to have a conversation between colleagues rather than a formal interview. The first interviews with faculty were conducted in August and September 2022. The second interviews took place in October and November 2022. After the first interview, faculty were sent a thank you note with the journal prompt and a journal reminder two weeks later. Eight of the 11 faculty completed journal entries. The second faculty interviews began with their course tours. Faculty opened their courses in the Learning Management System and shared the screen so that I could see the course in its current ongoing state. During the course tour, faculty showed me how they set up their courses and discussed their thought processes for why and how they designed their courses. With their permission, I grabbed screenshots to help capture the role of the designed course in faculty-student relationships. No student information was captured in these screenshots. During the course tour, we discussed how faculty-student relationships are encouraged, what makes a student successful,

and how to identify an unsuccessful student. The second interview ended with faculty reflections on their role in designing and facilitating their asynchronous course and their connection to the faculty-student relationship. After both interviews, faculty were sent a thank you email which included a summary of the interview as well as a paragraph summarizing my theoretical framework. All faculty were offered an opportunity to review their transcript; none accepted the offer.

While this study does not highlight differences in faculty-student relationships that might be due to faculty members' gender, age, ethnicity and rage, and discipline, I will discuss some insights influenced by faculty race and specific discipline. The following faculty demographic characteristics are not mutually exclusive. Of the 11 faculty included in the study, six were women, and five were men. In addition, six faculty presented as White, two as Black, one as Hispanic, one as Jewish, and one as disabled. Faculty taught English, literature and composition, finance, computer science, anthropology, and nursing. Based on how many years they taught and how many prior years in the industry, I estimated faculty to range in age from 33 – 65 years.

Student Recruitment

One-time, 20–40-minute interviews (via video conferencing) were conducted with students who have completed an asynchronous class to develop a fuller picture of the relationship between faculty and students. The 16 faculty who completed the first interview were asked to recommend past students, who are not currently enrolled in their courses. A thank you note and a request to recruit students were sent to the faculty (Appendix M). I provided faculty with a flyer to send to their past students (Appendix N). Students must have been community college students within the last 12 months, have completed at least two asynchronous courses,

could not be currently enrolled in any classes taught by faculty participants. and be at least 18 years old.

Although my research focuses on the faculty role in creating the faculty-student relationship, this phenomenon cannot be understood without the student perspective. Student recruitment was a bit more complicated. Several faculty confirmed that they emailed students from past semesters. I amended my IRBs to all three colleges to permit me to offer students a $10 Amazon e-gift certificate. All three colleges approved this change. Sixteen students reached out to me to volunteer to be interviewed. Of the 16, 12 students participated. Four were from CCC, eight were from NCC. Unfortunately, the third college, NECC, did not yield any students. Though not originally planned, I reached out to administrative contacts at NECC. Even with their recruitment assistance, no students participated from NECC. Ultimately, I could not do a one-for-one match between faculty and students because there appeared to be little difference in the responses between students of the two colleges. I opted to include them even though there were no students from NECC.

Student interviews were conducted via Zoom in October 2022. The interviews were guided by semi-structured questions. All Zoom interviews were recorded (audio and video) and auto-transcribed with each student's written and oral consent. Except for one student, whose camera was not working, all students had their cameras on. Students were verbally offered an opportunity to review their transcripts; none did. They received a short thank you note with their e-gift card within a few hours of the interview.

While this study does not focus on differences due to students' gender, race, age, or major, I did track their demographic information. Nine students were female, three were male. Eight students presented as white, two as Black, one as Middle Eastern, and one as Indian.

Students ranged in age from their early 20s to 45 years. Students majored in neuroscience, engineering, nursing/health care, criminal justice, and accounting.

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis was based on the post-intentional phenomenology whole-part-whole approach (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Vagle, 2018). I first listened and read through my interviews with the faculty and students, read the faculty journals, watched the faculty-led course tours, and reviewed my field notes and post-reflexion journal to holistically develop my understanding of the data. Following the holistic reading, I did several line-by-line readings, at which time I employed Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory approach. Here, I infused Freire's theories of banking of education and problem-posing education. Throughout the analysis, I employed Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory approach to help identify how faculty-student relationships manifest. I described the lived experiences of faculty and students in this relationship as told to me.

As encouraged by Vagle (2018), my analysis began simultaneously with my data gathering. I started keeping my post-reflexion journal during the literature review. While I was trying to set up my second interviews with the faculty, one faculty member gave me resistance. He did not want to provide me with access to his course. Before my plans changed from being an observer to getting a course tour, I asked him if he would take some screenshots of one of the discussion boards so that I could follow the development of the relationships. In very terse terms, he informed me that he "does not utilize a discussion board. I give direct feedback to students within their submissions" (Professor Craig, personal communication, October 6, 2022). A few days later, I was flying out of town and brought a methodology-related article to read on the plane. Augustine (2014) wrote that "this problem statement was too specific because it

concluded beforehand that participants' reading experiences were embodied" (p. 749. italics added). It suddenly dawned on me that I had *concluded beforehand* that faculty were using the Learning Management System (LMS) structure to organize their relationships with their students. This revelation changed my conversation with the faculty during the second interview. I reframed the conversation to let them tell me how they created opportunities for faculty-student relationships. I also changed how I listened to faculty during and when I reviewed the interviews. I began to listen to what they were telling me rather than what I expected to hear. I knew it was important to capture this revelation sooner rather than later. My computer was not available for me to add this experience to my post. I used the only paper that I could find. I wrote my revelation on a barf bag. This served to be a reminder to me about how I listened and how I asked questions. The structure of my questions influenced the faculty responses (Barad, 2007). I had been letting the structure of the LMS, which I am so familiar with, dictate my questions. I talked about the faculty-student relationship rather than LMS tools in the second interviews. My subsequent interactions with Professor Craig became friendly. The second interview, which was to last under an hour, went on for over two hours as we discussed issues of teaching and learning in asynchronous courses. In a twist of fate, I ultimately determined that the transactional exchange structure of Learning Management Systems does influence how faculty design and facilitate their courses and how students engage.

The post-qualitative methodology space that I worked in created a challenge for me. St. Pierre (2021) expressed it best: "one of the lessons I've learned is how very hard it is to escape our training" (p. 4). My initial training as a quantitative sociologist encouraged my positivist instinct. Thus, I was inclined to find common themes in my data throughout my faculty interviews. However, thematic analysis is reductionist and loses the richness of post-intentional

phenomenology. Freeman (2017) explained, "the major critique, then, of categorical thinking is that it organizes complex entities into systems of categories that create a knowledge structure far removed from its source" (p. 28). I wanted to assemble the obvious, as Vagle (2018) asserts, the purpose of phenomenology is to make visible the things that we take for granted. To accomplish this, I utilized the whole-part-whole methodology, which involved closely examining all the interviews with faculty members and students over a concentrated two-week period. This allowed me to fully immerse myself in the data. I frequently revisited the transcripts and analyzed them through the lens of Freire, following Augustine's (2014) approach of assembling and integrating participants' experiences with theoretical ideas. Through this process, I gained a deeper understanding of the experiences of faculty and students in asynchronous courses.

Freire: Problem-Posing Education

Incorporating Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory analytical framework necessitated the use of a guiding theory. For my work, I drew mainly from Freire's (1968/1996) two educational models: banking of education and problem-posing education. Freire outlined these contrasting models in his foundational work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which presents his engaged pedagogy theory and asserts that teaching is a political act of achieving liberation through education.

As highlighted by Freire (1968/1996), the banking of education model is hierarchical, with the teacher viewed as the all-knowing authority who deposits knowledge into the passive student's empty mind. This model encourages memorization over discovery and understanding, with students treated as mere containers to be filled by the teacher. Freire observed that "Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the

narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into "containers," into "receptacles to be "filled" by the teacher" (Freire, 1968/1996, p. 52-53).

In contrast, Freire's problem-posing education model emphasizes the transformative potential of education. The teacher does not solely possess knowledge but can be discovered through dialogue between faculty and students. In this model, faculty learn and discover *with* their students rather than solely teaching *to* them. Freire (1968/1996) argued that:

the teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. (p. 58).

In problem-posing education, learning is a reciprocal, collaborative process that relies on a relationship between faculty and students. For Freire, learning was not merely an academic pursuit but a means of becoming more fully human. This process occurs through one's voice being heard and through interaction with others.

Community of Inquiry

Freire's (1968/1996) work predated online asynchronous courses by several decades (though not distance, correspondence courses). Nevertheless, his model laid the foundation for the idealized relationship between faculty and student. In contrast, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework provided insight into the transactional nature of interrelationships between faculty and students within asynchronous classes (Garrison, 1992; Garrison & Akyol, 2015; Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010; Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010; Richardson et al., 2015; Shea & Bidjerano, 2012). The CoI framework demonstrates how teaching, social, and cognitive presence can create collaborative learning communities and promote deep learning

experiences among students in asynchronous classes (Garrison et al., 2000). Knowledge is

contextual (Vygotsky, 1978) and is discoverable through mutual understanding (Garrison, 1992).

The three presences, social, teaching, and cognitive, are mutually dependent. Teaching presence

involves designing and facilitating learning; social presence refers to dialogue and discourse

among class participants; and cognitive presence pertains to the mutual construction of

knowledge meaning among students (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010). Throughout our

conversations, faculty participants raised the concept of presence. They often stressed the

importance of being perceived as "real" and "present" by students in the course. Several faculty

members explained that being present was the first step in creating an environment fostering

discourse between faculty and students.

Learning Management Systems

In Chapter Two, I discussed how the early days of distance learning were characterized

by correspondence education, which involved students receiving materials, self-paced learning,

and returning completed work to instructors (Bergmann, 2001; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt,

2006). The internet and online learning environments created a more structured approach to

course materials for distance learners (Coppola, Hilts, & Rotter, 2002). While there were some

course-aided-instruction (CAI) products in the 1980s, they were limited to mainframes and

personal computers and did not facilitate collaborative learning. Lotus Notes, Web Course in a

Box, and WebBoard in the 1990s were among the first recognizable learning management

systems (LMSs). By the early 2000s, LMSs such as WebCT, Angel, Blackboard, Moodle, and

Sakai were widely available to colleges and accessible to remote students via the internet

(History of virtual learning environments, 2022). With the adoption of a single LMS, colleges

began to standardize their learning environment across the institution (Weller, 2020). However,

this also led to software sedimentation, where the ideas embedded in the LMS become mandatory, shifting the focus from teaching and learning to the LMS tool (Lanier, 2002).

Learning Management Systems function more as classroom administrative tools than true learning management systems, according to Farag et al. (2022). They are primarily used to organize grades, course content, and assignments and do not necessarily facilitate problem-posing education but rather align more with Freire's banking education model. In this study, all three colleges used a specific LMS, which imposed structure on the course design (Weller, 2020).

During my conversations with faculty, I fell into the trap of discussing the use of announcements and discussion boards instead of how faculty engage with their students. This difference in conversation highlights the need to focus on more significant questions about teaching and learning beyond the LMS tool.

To Be More Fully Human

Freire (1968/1996) believed that for education to be transformative, faculty and students must become more fully human. This means that the faculty-student relationship should be based on humanization. However, Learning Management Systems (LMSs) may impede this process, as they perpetuate the banking of education model and create a hierarchical relationship between faculty and students. Farag et al. (2022) noted that:

> The term itself, 'learning management system' carries a level of semantic weight and underlying value – that learning is something to be 'managed' (rather than created, explored, shared, or engaged) which implies the existence of a manager who controls the process, and through a 'system' (rather than through a community or environment) which invokes a sense of something synthetic and engineered. (p. 2217)

This perpetuates the banking of education model, which has an inherent hierarchical relationship between faculty and student. Learning Management Systems excel at content management. "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire, 1968/1996, p. 54).

Similarly, the Community of Inquiry framework suggests that faculty and students need to be more fully human to create a learning community. It uses the interdependent elements of teaching, social, and cognitive presence to understand how to make faculty and students embodied within asynchronous courses (Richardson, Besser, et al., 2016). Faculty participants discussed their attempts at being more human by using personal language and creating videos that show their voices and faces. Professor Rochelle noted that students responded better when her face was visible in the video rather than using a URL that students had to click on (See Figure 2). Faculty participants presented themselves as more human, available, and accessible to their students, sending introductory emails before the semester started and sharing personal details and interests. Faculty participants also emphasized the importance of trust, availability, and presence to create a sense of community and collaboration among students.

Figure 2

Get to Know Your Instructor Video

The term "presence" was discussed, with some faculty participants attributing the concept to instructional designers who teach the Community of Inquiry framework. Faculty recognized that it is their responsibility to take the first step in creating a relationship with their students and showing their whole person, including their love for their discipline.

In the Fall of 2022, as I finished my data gathering, I spoke at a national conference focusing on teaching, learning, and educational technologies. This was my first time talking about my work to colleagues to get feedback. The audience included higher education vice presidents, directors of teaching and learning technologies, and distance learning. I shared with this audience that my faculty participants used the language of trust, availability, and humanness. However, I was puzzled by the specific use of the word presence. In conversation with my faculty participants, it felt as if the faculty learned this from instructional designers who have "internalized" the concepts of Community of Inquiry, specifically, teaching and social presence. My conference audience, all talking at once, chimed in that they have taught the CoI framework to faculty. Community of Inquiry concepts of presence tend to be included in faculty development related to educational technology tools and pedagogy. And now they hear (as did I during my data gathering) the language of CoI, the language of presence parroted back. The

conference audience indicated that during their colleges' professional development sessions, faculty are given a checklist based on CoI. Their faculty were reminded to create social presence by presenting oneself as real and creating community to allow students to collaborate and communicate (Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

Within text, faculty use "I" and descriptions of their actions; smart phones make it easy for faculty to create videos that show themselves and their voices making them even more human for students. Faculty participants talked about writing emails and announcements and using video to make themselves "more human" to students. They also use emails and announcements to connect with their students. In one case, Professor Ellen at NECC dyed her hair blue to make herself more relatable to students. Students can also be more fully human by sharing personal information and photos on the class list. It made the students more real for the faculty. In many asynchronous courses presented by the faculty participants, the first discussion prompt encouraged students to discuss their major, career goals, and personal items related to their current employment, family, and pets. The faculty believed that responses to this prompt helped create a learning community among students of their asynchronous classes. In response to the Department of Education, Title IV, Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) regulations, two of the three colleges required that asynchronous courses include an 'about the instructor' section and a discussion prompt to learn about students. Students are required to respond to at least two posts from their classmates.

While four faculty did not present as white, only two raised race as a factor of importance. Professor Neal, a Black male computer science professor, added that non-Black students, be they of color or white, need to see a competent Black male role model.

And then they appreciate that they know, for some of the students, like representation and understanding that, like I'm of a different, like a different race, is helpful, and so that they enjoy that too, and not just a faceless individual, teaching them remotely.

At CCC, Faculty 4, a white female literature professor, discussed the departmental approach to connecting to asynchronous students:

Part of that conversation is in our department. We're really focusing on anti-racist, pedagogy and diversity, equity, and inclusion. That's like the goal of most of the work that we're doing right now. So, part of that was like making ourselves accessible to students online, so that no matter what their background or identity, they felt like they could, you know, come to the teachers, come to the professors as a resource and really feel, heard, and seen and felt like they had an ally in us. So, because of that I try to create some open-ended kind of assignments to try to engage with students online.

Faculty members recognized the importance of humanizing online courses, utilizing strategies such as personal pronouns, videos, and open-ended assignments. Discussion prompts and efforts towards representation and inclusivity were seen as effective in building a supportive online learning community. Some faculty members and departments prioritized anti-racist pedagogy, diversity, equity, and inclusion. These efforts create an inclusive online environment where students feel heard, seen, and valued.

Does an LMS allow for students and faculty to be more fully human and dialogue with one another? It may depend on the prompt that is posted. Three of the faculty participants created problem-posing scenarios. For example, a nursing faculty required that students post a real case study on traumatic brain injury. Students discussed the similarities and differences between their cases. The subsequent discussion became meaningful and created a social and cognitive

presence. Other faculty participants created their dialogue with students outside the LMS. Some use popular social media tools for dialog, such as Discord. Others employ external synchronous opportunities.

Freire reinforced the importance of praxis; both reflection and action are necessary for transformation. Reflection with action is verbalism, and action without reflection is activism (Freire, 1968/1996). Anthropology and Humanities Professor Allyna exemplified how she provided her students with opportunities for praxis. She required her students to go to museums. Their experience in the museum was their action. They were reflective in writing assignments and in dialogue with one another and the professor in the discussion board. Because LMSs are not situated in immediate time, they enabled reflection. However, this reflection may be in isolation, without action, and without dialogue (Larraemendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). Learning Management Systems may hinder the ability of faculty and students to become more fully human and engage in transformative education. However, by using personal language, creating problem-posing scenarios, and providing opportunities for reflection and action, faculty members can promote a more humanizing educational experience.

Faculty and Student Views on Relationship

At first glance, both faculty and students agree on the significance of appearing human and establishing a relationship in asynchronous courses. According to Professor Joanne "students know there is an actual human being behind the course materials and the communication they will receive in the course." Professor Ronnie also emphasized his availability to students, stating that "they can ask me any question. It doesn't have to be about the course." Student Rubin, a Central Community College student, added that "having a student-teacher relationship is definitely important. It helps the student better understand what the course is." However, upon

closer examination of the striations within the surface, the term "relationship" holds different meanings for faculty and students (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). Faculty members focused on trust, being human, and making themselves available to students beyond the course. This aligns with Freire's dialogical relationships, as expressed by Professor Helen, who stated that "faculty should be making ourselves accessible to students online, so that no matter what their background or identity, they felt like they could come to the teachers as a resource and really feel heard and seen."

In contrast, students viewed their interactions with faculty in terms of transactions. They saught faculty assistance to get to the correct answers and complete assignments, as stated by Northern Community College Student Midge, who frequently reached out for help with complex problems or feedback. Student Naomi, Central Community College said, "in fact, I don't even know what many of them look like, I've never had to communicate with many of the faculty either." Student Liana, also at CCC, was quite clear in her comment that, "I'm not there to like, form a bond with the Professor. I'm just there for the content." This is akin to Freire's Banking of Education, where students want faculty assistance to get the correct answers to complete assignments and the course successfully. While students acknowledge the importance of faculty support, they are less likely to consider faculty-student relationships as meaningful. Northeast Community College Student Susan said, "I don't think you have a connection with an asynchronous instructor. I wouldn't be comfortable emailing a professor that I have an asynchronous course with about asking for recommendations or anything like that." However, students made exceptions for teachers who go above and beyond. Several students established a more personal connection with their English literature professor, who made herself available and checked in on their progress. The exception for the student was a great teacher. Several students

had the same English literature teacher. Forty-five-year-old, Student Rubin, made the distinction that "the majority of my teachers make themselves available. But my English professor, we actually email each other and text each other. And she still checks in with me to see how my work is going." The following section further explores these differing perspectives on the importance and purpose of faculty-student relationships.

Vignettes

Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology supports the notion that researchers should have an equal role in the research process. However, I am concerned that my insights might be representational, reductionist, and essentialist. Barad (2007) reminded us that the instrument we use to measure and focus on what is viewed is part of what we see. We cannot separate the instrument from the results.

> Making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations-not in the sense of making them up ex nihilo, or out of language, beliefs, or ideas, but in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form. And yet the fact that we make knowledge not from outside but as part of the world does not mean that knowledge is necessarily subjective (a notion that already presumes the preexisting distinction between object and subject that feeds representationalism thinking). At the same time, objectivity cannot be about producing undistorted representations from afar; rather, objectivity is about being accountable to the specific materializations of which we are a part (Barad, 2007, p. 91).

Barad's work (2007) offered a concrete example using a Freirean lens to dismantle hierarchies. This means recognizing the need to break down hierarchies not only among researchers, methods, participants, and analysis but also to ensure that everyone involved plays a role without

privileging one over the other in the same way that Freire (1968/1996) emphasized the need to dismantle the faculty-student hierarchy. Barad's example is the microscope calibrated to view either waves or particles. This does not imply that waves do not exist when observing particles and vice versa. Instead, it is the nature of the instrument to be part of what we see and to influence what we see. As the instrument through which these insights manifest, I must consider how my writing may be representational, reductionist, and/or essentialist.

Research Focus 1: How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?

There is a nuanced difference between my two research foci. The first focus guiding this analysis is how dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course, emphasizing how faculty participants set the stage for these relationships. The second focus, which will be discussed later, delves into the lived experience of faculty and students in this relationship. Faculty tend to have a higher-level view of the relationship than students, who often approach the relationship more transactional and goal-driven. However, students' opinions may become more philosophical over time. If interviewed in five or ten years, they may develop a deeper understanding of the relationship, similar to that of the faculty.

Trust

Establishing trust is critical to creating a human connection with students in asynchronous courses. Faculty members play a vital role in building trust, availability, and presence in the virtual classroom, taking the first step in developing relationships with their students. Sharing personal details and interests and emphasizing diversity and equity are essential to fostering a sense of community and collaboration among students. By doing so, faculty

members can provide a more human element to their courses and help students feel heard, seen, and valued.

"In an asynchronous course," Professor Craig of Northern Community College said, "the only way to determine whether a student is truly engaged and participating is by what the student chooses to share with the faculty member." As such, establishing trust is crucial to the success of the course. Freire (1968/1996) emphasized the importance of trust in being fully human and enabling dialogue. This was echoed by Garrison (2009), who stressed that social presence and purposeful communication can only happen in a trusting environment.

Cheating violates the trust that faculty members are trying to build with their students. It is worth noting that trust is necessary at the content level and in administrative interactions such as submitting assignments. Professor Ellen expressed frustration when students submitted work they found on websites and passed it off as their own. "I go bananas when they submit their assignment to Chegg or CourseHero and then submit it in for a grade as their own work."

Freire (1968/1996) would likely view cheating as a symptom of an education system prioritizing competition and individual achievement over cooperation and collective learning. Rather than simply punishing the student for cheating, he would suggest looking at the root causes of this behavior.

Getting to Know My Students

Faculty members play a crucial role in building relationships with their students in asynchronous courses by creating opportunities for self-introduction and ongoing interactions. For instance, Professor Ronnie asked his students to introduce themselves in a two-paragraph response that included personal facts and goals, which he used to form connections with his students throughout the semester. Professor Rochelle, a nursing professor at CCC, posted weekly

announcements and reached out to students who were not participating to ensure they stayed on track, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Central Community College English composition Professor Helen required extensive writing throughout the semester. She emphasized the sense of community that she felt when responding to student writing individually. Peer review assignments, such as those used by NCC Professor Craig in his Holocaust poetry course, provided opportunities for students to gain new perspectives and understanding through the experiences of their classmates. Professor Mark allowed his students to introduce themselves in their first assignment. He stated:

> As I read them I just highlight it and paste it onto a word document. Then, during the semester, if they respond, I can go down to that person because they're in alphabetical order. I grade them in alpha order, and then I can go to that list and I go. Oh, that's the student that went on an African safari or something, and then I'll mention that back at some point during the semester.

Professor Mark used this information to create personal connections with his students.

Freire's problem-posing education model emphasized creating solidarity and understanding between class participants. By sharing profound experiences and gaining new perspectives, students can begin to understand course materials through the perspectives of others. While discussion boards are commonly used to foster this sense of community in asynchronous courses, some faculty members found it challenging to replicate the energy of in-person discussions. Professor Craig preferred to invite students to optional video conferencing meetings to build trust and used peer review assignments to help students get to know each other.

The Faculty-Student Relationship in Assessments

Freire's (1968/1996) model of problem-posing education and Garrison's (2000) Community of Inquiry framework share some commonalities, such as the importance of collaboration and critical dialogue. These commonalities differ in their goals for education. Freire stressed social transformation and the empowerment of learners, while Garrison's CoI focused on explaining the transactional relationships in an online environment leading to cognitive development.

In the Community of Inquiry framework, faculty and students develop social presence, which is defined as the "ability of participants to identify with the group or course of study, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop personal and affective relationships progressively by way of projecting their individual personalities" (Garrison & Akyol, 2013, p. 7). Feedback on student work, as identified by faculty participants, is a critical area where faculty create relationships with their students. Faculty initiated conversations with assessment prompts, and students responded in their submissions. Two faculty indicated that assignment feedback helped to make up for missing immediate interaction of a face-to-face conversation. Professor Allyna was clear that:

> the relationship I build with a student in an online setting is based on the feedback that I give the students with regards to short paragraph or essay assignments or projects that they do, because I can respond, because I create questions that are personal.

Faculty continue the conversation with their assessment feedback, which is only useful if students know where to find it. Within the LMS there are several places for faculty to write their feedback, including general comments with the grade, comments inside the rubric, separate emails, and on the actual assignment. The Holocaust literature instructor, Professor Craig,

discussed that students often do not know where to find faculty feedback, so the opportunity for connection for relationship building is often lost. Complicating the continued conversation is that students could not respond to the grading feedback in the LMSs used by the three colleges. Thus, students must be proactive and email faculty to continue the conversations. Students have shared responsibility in creating and maintaining the conversations. The conversations do not occur until the students take an active step and respond. To address this issue, CCC Professor Blake regularly invited his students to meet via video conferencing. Professor Craig spoke at length about how feedback builds the faculty-student relationship:

> I always start my feedback with their first name. I'm going to start by saying that I was, I was intrigued with the perspective … This is part of my feedback, my written feedback, I try to make it not personal, but I try to make it very directly connected. It's easy for us to send the canned messages. But even if I do that I add something that's personal to the essay so that number one, students know I read it. Number two, that the students know that I didn't just read it, but I was considerate of it. And that I took the time then to write back to them with feedback not only on the material substance.

Some faculty create conversation through scaffolding assignments. This was especially true in computer science, web design, and finance courses. The conversation continued in the next assignment.

Freire (1968/1996) emphasized the importance of dialogue in the educational process, and feedback is crucial. Through feedback, faculty can engage in a dialogue with their students, providing guidance, support, and criticism. Faculty can build relationships with their students through the feedback they provide, but it requires effort on both sides to maintain the conversation and continue the dialogue. Freire would have viewed feedback as a tool for

empowering students, giving them the confidence and skills they need to become critical thinkers and active participants in their education.

      Auto Grader. During conversations with faculty participants on the role of feedback in creating a strong faculty-student relationship, some faculty members indicated that they used auto-grading tools to manage their time more efficiently. However, even those who used auto-grading, such as Professor Ronnie, a finance faculty member at CCC, emphasized the importance of providing students with feedback, especially in the first week. Professor Ronnie manually graded the syllabus quiz in the first week and provided personalized feedback to each student.

      We'll have a syllabus quiz at the end of the first week, and we manually grade that. We don't have it auto-graded that first week. We must go in and respond specifically to the student. So, they get a grade, and then we say, you know, even if it's just, hey great job, looking forward to meeting you, you know.

Faculty members found that using a mix of auto and manual grading provided students with opportunities to build skills while receiving personalized feedback. While some faculty members used auto grading to grade assignments, concerns have been raised that this approach may limit faculty-student engagement and result in autogenerated feedback that was not tailored to individual students. Professor Neal, a computer science faculty member at Northeast Community College, created a sophisticated auto-grading system that allowed students to submit programming assignments multiple times within a two-week period. The design provided him with detailed performance records (See Figure 3) for each student, allowing him to reach out and give students specific feedback to help them improve. He stated:

      It depends on each student because the system, what we have here is auto-graded assignments. They submit their homework, their programming assignments. The

computer analyzes their code to tell them if they've done it right or wrong, and then tells

them how they can approve. Then depending on the type of student, they will follow up

with me if they want to improve on it, and how they want to improve on it.

Figure 3

Professor Neal's Grader Than Dashboard for Student Assignments

Freire, according to Boyd (2016), did not object to the use of technology in the classroom but was concerned about its impact on the student-teacher relationship and on student empowerment. Kahn and Kellner (2007) noted that Freire introduced the technology of his time into the classroom. He used slide projectors in the 1970s and computers in the 1990s. Freire's principles of engaged pedagogy and critical consciousness emphasized the importance of dialogue, collaboration, and reflection in the learning process. Thus, auto-grading could counter these principles and limit opportunities for critical engagement and empowerment unless done right. However, as seen in the example of Professor Neal, auto-grading can be done in a way that is both efficient and effective in providing students with opportunities for skills-building and personalized feedback.

Ungraded. English Composition Professor Karen developed an innovative approach to grading that provided feedback to her students without assigning traditional grades. Her 16-week

course was divided into four segments, each containing four writing assignments. Instead of giving a grade for each assignment, she provided extensive feedback to each student. As part of the fourth assignment, students wrote a reflection that included the grade they felt they deserved. At the end of each segment, Professor Karen met with every student to negotiate their grade for that segment based on the feedback and reflection.

Professor Karen developed this ungrading method during the COVID-19 pandemic to make assessment more equitable and compassionate. She found that the approach built stronger relationships with her students and helped her rethink assessment and teaching. Students have responded positively to this approach, with only two students dropping the course in the last three years. Grades have improved, with the average going from 67% to 89%, and students have reported that ungrading is fairer and less stressful. They also felt that writing was more meaningful in this process. She sought to find:

> a way to try to make assessment more equitable and more compassionate, and what I didn't realize until I began this process what that it was a huge relationship builder. I felt like, yeah, for me and for the students a huge way to feel connected to feel like we're doing this together, you know, and it's helped me rethink assessment. But it's helped me rethink so many other things about teaching.

Negotiated grading requires dialogue, which fosters a faculty-student relationship. Students take ownership of their learning and realize that their grade reflects their effort and improvement, not just the quality of each essay. This approach allows for active learning between the faculty and students, diminishing the hierarchy between them. Professor Karen knew the trajectory of student learning after two semesters, but each student learned during the process. The ungrading method made invisible learning visible and resulted in more present students. Professor Karen's

ungrading approach has successfully improved grades, reduced stress, and fostered stronger faculty-student relationships in her classes. It is a testament to the power of dialogue and collaboration in education.

Types of Assignments. While skills development assignments are more likely to be auto-graded, assignments that demonstrate a student's ability to apply concepts are more likely to be manually graded and can be an opportunity for relationship-building between faculty and students. These creative assignments allow faculty to get to know students and their thought processes while also allowing students to learn and apply new concepts. Additionally, not all assignments are a single large end-of-semester project. Many are multi-part scaffolded projects, so students receive feedback while completing the assignment. Professor Ronnie shared:

> They write a four-to-five-page paper and produce an eight-to-ten-minute video that they share with me. And then we watch the video and respond to each one of those videos. So that takes up some time at the end of the semester to watch each one and provide feedback. It is something creative that they do to help me get to know them, and they respond to at least eight or ten questions that are very specific. But then they can go off on tangents all they want…

While many faculty members offer text-based feedback for assignments, Professor Mark believed that using his voice made him feel more fully human. Instead of written comments, he provided video feedback to his students.

> This is something I started right before pandemic, and I keep doing it just based on feedback, but I actually video grade. I can lay vocals on it while I'm recording my screen, so I'll just pull up their assignment, and if they do, miss items, I'll go through line by line. See, this is why you missed this. This is how we should do it. It is more personal

than screenshots, or just writing. You did this wrong then, so I try to show them what

they did wrong, but then also show them how to do it correctly, usually with a personal

video. Students respond to this. It's usually when they get a video, I'll get an email like,

thank you for doing that now. I understand. I really appreciate this. I wish more

instructors did it in computer science versus just you know, text, textual feedback or

static screens.

This approach made the feedback more personal, and students were more likely to engage in a

continued conversation through email.

First-generation students often face disadvantages, and a language barrier can be one of

them. Some faculty members reported that their first-generation students were unfamiliar with

the term "office hours" and thought it meant faculty were unavailable during that time. To

support these students, Professor Rochelle opted for multiple-choice questions instead of open-

ended ones. She stated:

The majority of it is case studies with multiple choice questions about the case study.

And I do it that way because a lot of my students speak English as their second language.

So, if they struggle with the actual writing of it for answers, then they can share their

knowledge a little bit. They're more comfortable with the um, multiple choice. But it's

not like you – it is harder multiple choices. We have to apply the case study to it. It's not

just memorizing one definition.

She recognized that some of her students may struggle with expressing their understanding of a

concept in writing.

While my discussions with faculty primarily focused on their asynchronous courses,

Professor Allyna emphasized that building a sense of community among students is equally

important regardless of the teaching and learning modality. To foster this, she incorporated an activity that required students to participate and engage with each other outside the classroom. For instance, she shared how she helped her students take a field trip to their local museums, which provided an opportunity for students to interact and learn in the real world.

> What I did in the classroom was to build a sense of community that the students were not just a one person going into a learning management system and working. I made my students go out into the community, to the museum. And yes, I am communicating with my students through the web, but I want them to be able to apply, especially sociology and entomology.

She was careful to not fall into the trap of the banking of education model. She had her students experience what is happening outside and bring it into the classroom. Through their reflections of the experiences, Professor Allyna could "know who you are. So that actually is my way of getting to know who the student is. The assignments I create are ways for me to get to know the students."

Professor Allyna's teaching philosophy centered on connecting the classroom with the real world (Freire, 1968/1998: Garrison, 2009). She believed in helping students understand the function of education and how it related to their long-term career goals. To achieve this, she incorporated activities encouraging students to connect course material with their own lives and experiences, such as visiting a museum.

Professor Allyna expressed concerns about over-reliance on third-party publisher materials in courses, as she believed it does not fully engage students in the learning process. Instead, she emphasized the importance of fostering connections between students and the world around them, including their own experiences and the experiences of others.

Course Discipline

According to the four English faculty who participated in this study, students were more likely to share their vulnerabilities with their instructor when writing in English courses based on their colleagues' feedback. This openness facilitated the creation of strong relationships between faculty and students. Professor Karen explained:

I think, in English, it kind of lends itself well to that kind of relationship. Students reveal themselves as they connect to the literature and then connect the literature to their own interests. It is as if they are talking to the professor.

The professor provided feedback in response to the student's writing, creating a foundation for a strong and supportive relationship. Echoing Freirean ideas, Professor Karen continued:

I think it's super important that students are seeing writing as a social act, that they're collaborating with other people in the class. Maybe they are not writing something, literally, co-writing something, but at least getting feedback. We're sharing ideas, you know. This is especially true when they do peer review.

This was certainly true in Professor Craig's Holocaust Poetry class. Some of the material students read was quite deep. The professor helped them connect the poetry to the real world, their own lives, and to each other through peer review. He shared:

Their writing is much more personal. Uh, and this is what usually generates good discussion at the very beginning of the semester, because they may not realize that you know, even 80 years later; not much is changed. So, we're still talking about people and human nature, and we're talking about conflict resolution. So, I try to give them as much opportunity to make it as personal as possible. It gives them the opportunity to have discussions about concepts without necessarily forcing them to have discussions about

the material, and then eventually, they're more willing to dive into the material,

personally sharing their ideas about critical issues, but also taking ownership of it.

The subject matter covered in this poetry class facilitated a valuable exchange of perspectives

among students, exemplifying Freire's problem-posing education model. Professor Craig added:

So, this would be a question that would allow us to connect to something like LGBTQ+

rights, or religious rights or cultural connections, especially when you talk about the

diversity of the student body. I happen to have a Black transwoman in my class now, and

her insight is so remarkable and so empowering that I just - I'm hoping that the other

students are feeding off of her because she's really opening up. She's a good model for,

you know, putting yourself out there. But the only way that the students can really

succeed in an environment like this one is, if they trust each other, that they have a sense

of security in the class, and it's hard to do that in a completely online course, which is

why I try to encourage some live virtual live meetings.

The literature explored in the class, and the ways in which students connected with it, had a

transformative impact due to its content.

Other classes have different purposes for creating community. Graphic design was

specifically offered online. Some of Professor Joanne's students do their best work

asynchronously:

If you think about it, you know, graphic designers and artists are very solitary workers

that we sort of just go into ourselves. We work on a project, and every so often, we have

to maybe present to a team, but for the most part we work alone and so I think that is why

asynchronous works so well for graphic design students.

Professor Ronnie was the lead faculty for the personal finance courses at Central Community College. The courses covered various financial topics, including investments, loans, and budgeting, and Professor Ronnie made sure that the material was personally applicable to each student. Because the course was very structured, I initially thought it would follow the banking model of education. However, during his course tour, I realized Professor Ronnie was learning *with* his students, making it a collaborative and interactive experience. The course was designed to be relevant to the students' real lives, who would eventually buy cars, houses, and make investments. Through praxis, reflection, and action, the course successfully transformed the students' lives. Student Miriam remarked that this class:

> …caused me to look differently at my finances. I might put down a larger down payment for a home to offset monthly obligations. I must not be in a rush to purchase big and little items. I also learned the importance of having a diversity of credit available.

Student Naomi spoke about her approach to retirement:

> When you're young it's so easy to think that retirement is so far away but comes really quickly. Since taking this class I have opened a 401K with my employer and am excited to get started on my future financial goals.

Professor Ronnie's impact went beyond the course. Former students would reach out to him years later to share how the course changed their personal finances and those of extended family. Course discipline plays a significant role in the faculty-student relationship by influencing student engagement, motivation, and relevance. Some courses aligned with different teaching and learning styles that made it easier for students to open up to each other and their faculty, while other disciplines were more relevant to students' career and life goals which helped students engage.

Synchronous Meetings in an Asynchronous Course

The literature cited examples of the benefits for both asynchronous and synchronous learning. Asynchronous learning allows reflection time and enables all student voices to be heard (Burgess, 2018). Synchronous interaction emphasizes the embodied presence and improves relationship building (Lambropoulos, 2012; Warr & Sampson, 2020).

During COVID-19, some colleges instituted a requirement that optional weekly live video conferences be offered to students in every asynchronous course. As web design Professor Mark explained, live video conferences were added to asynchronous courses:

Because of the pandemic, students were being forced to take their courses asynchronously, when they would have preferred to participate in face-to-face classes. At the request of the college, I started to offer live Q and A sessions. While it wasn't mandatory, it allowed students to get facetime with a professor for those who wouldn't get a connection via anything else during COVID.

This faculty member continued to offer these synchronous sessions after the campus and work reopened. Fewer students attended after the pandemic. At the same college, computer science Professor Blake noted:

At our school, when we have an asynchronous class, we are required once a week to have what they call a Q and A session which is synchronous, which is up to the students to join or not join. While that many students no longer opt in, the sessions are recorded. Of those that don't attend about 50% watch the recording.

Synchronous meetings in an asynchronous course appeared to help create connections between faculty and students during the pandemic. Faculty reported that the video conference sessions changed in nature since COVID-19. During COVID-19, more students participated.

Some faculty speculated that this was because students are more familiar with asynchronous courses. Participation has fallen off because students no longer need these sessions to find connections. Professor Mark wrote in his journal that he questioned the value of these sessions now that students have begun to live their lives in person again. He noted:

> I offer a synchronous live Q&A for my fully online asynchronous web sections, but no one attends. It seems most students in fully online asynchronous web sections no longer need these bonus sessions that were first implemented during the pandemic for those students who may not have wanted to be in an online only modality.

The faculty participants assumed that in 2023 students chose to take asynchronous courses, while during the pandemic, asynchronous modality was forced on them.

Some departments were innovative in how they chose to create a community for their asynchronous students. The computer science department at CCC created clubs, apprenticeship programs, a professional round table, and a learn-and-earn program with local businesses, all through synchronous video conferencing. The once-a-month roundtable with professionals in the industry speaking about their work is now held in a hybrid format that continues to target asynchronous students.

Faculty seemed to recognize the value of live synchronous connections with their students. They offered it in a variety of ways. Northeast Community College anthropology Professor Allyna discussed in her journal that she held drop-in synchronous hours and reminded her students to attend. Unfortunately, only 2 or 3 students took advantage of drop-in hours over the semester. Computer science Professor Neal used Calendry for students to set up convenient appointments. He said, "the more mature the student is, the more they'll set up a time to meet." Generally, students asked him questions through email. His response encouraged them to set up a

time to meet. He would respond that they should use Calendry "and we'll work on that together."

Students were likelier to set an appointment in response to this comment than to his open-ended

appeal that he was available. Students understood that he would use the synchronous meeting to

work on their problem together, demonstrating Freire's learning *with* rather than teaching *to*. Not

only did students leave those sessions with a deeper understanding of the content after "coding

together one-on-one" but they also created a relationship with the professor.

Nursing Professor Rochelle noted that different kinds of students take advantage of

synchronous meetings:

About fifteen percent; it's not a huge amount, but I mean when it does happen, they

usually become regulars. There are students who just need the grade so that they can get

into nursing school. They don't meet with me. But then you've got that right group. It's

so much more than that. For them, it isn't just help to improve their grade. They want the

relationship.

Professor Ellen pointed out that synchronous communication does not always involve video.

Webex has a texting component that some students take great advantage of. It notifies her on all

her devices. She promptly responds, which builds relationships and trust. "Students understand

that I'm available to them."

Professor Craig taught an asynchronous literature course on the Holocaust. When a

student emailed asking for a chat, he saw it as a positive message. It showed they understood that

his availability benefits them and that he was not posting material and then disappearing for 15

weeks. Reducing formality helped students feel more comfortable and secure. They knew there

was a face they could see if they wanted it. Professor Craig met every request. "After teaching

for 26 years, I tell my students that I haven't forgotten what it's like to be a student."

Professor Karen, who taught English composition, used synchronous sessions strategically in her asynchronous courses. Instead of grading every assignment her students completed, she provided feedback on four assignments and then required them to have a synchronous video conference with her to negotiate their grades. She met with them four times a semester. Professor Karen and her students believed these synchronous meetings resulted in stronger, more caring relationships.

According to Warr and Sampson (2020), the right combination of asynchronous and synchronous communications allows for reflection, hearing all voices, and immediacy and spontaneity, creating deeper connections. However, a college requiring a weekly or twice monthly optional live session did not achieve the same result. Purposefully built synchronous sessions were more effective in creating dialogue and relationships between faculty and student.

Research Focus 2: What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?

The experience of faculty and student participants in asynchronous courses varied, influenced by their respective roles and goals for the course. While faculty members aspired to connect deeply with their students and introduce them to new ways of thinking, students were primarily focused on submitting assignments and completing the course. "I'm not there to form a bond with the Professor," Student Liana told me, "I'm just there for the content." Faculty members recognized the importance of personal connections with their students. On the other hand, students desired faculty who could answer their practical questions. Despite their differences, faculty and students wanted the students to feel valued and seen in the course. English composition Professor Karen expressed her joy in reading and commenting on student work, as it allowed her to understand them beyond their role as students.

In Face-to-Face classes, I'd certainly talk with every student at some point during the class period, so I feel like I need to make some kind of personal connection with every asynchronous student each week. And one way to do that is to give feedback on their work, including on the smaller work. Hopefully, by leaving comments, the students feel more 'seen' and 'valued.' At the same time, leaving comments helps *me* feel more invested in the students' work—and in them as individuals. Reading and commenting on their early work is an extra treat for me because I get to learn more about them—and not just as students or as writers, but as humans who have full and beautiful and complicated lives.

The experiences of faculty and students in asynchronous online courses depend on a range of factors and may be shaped by individual preferences and circumstances. Successful engagement in these courses often required a willingness to adapt to new modes of learning and communication and a commitment to active participation and ongoing dialogue with other participants.

How Faculty and Students Feel About Asynchronous Courses

Faculty Point of View – Asynchronous Courses. When asked about their experiences teaching in different modalities, face-to-face, live online (video conferencing), and asynchronous, faculty members overwhelmingly expressed their preference for face-to-face or live online classes. They cited the immediacy of interaction, the ability to see student's faces, and the experience of the "aha!" moment as reasons why they favored these modalities for teaching and learning. "I still feel more of a connection, I would say, to my face-to-face students and my web [live online] students," said Professor Helen. Some faculty members expressed frustration

with teaching asynchronously. Professor Ellen, for instance, found it challenging to teach in this modality:

> It's always a frustration in my asynchronous web classes. I'm a very visual person and like to be able to put a face with a name. The thing I missed about face-to-face teaching is that couple of minutes before class or during break after class; fooling around in the corridor and joking about. I try and start every class that's synchronous with 'how's everybody feeling?' So, you just miss that.

Professor Craig expressed similar challenges:

> I love being in the classroom. There's no two ways about it. The face to face or the virtual live is my preference. I do teach the full distance by choice, but of course*, it doesn't give me the same drive and the same passion that I have when I'm, quote, actually teaching the course, close quote*. (Emphasis added)

The loss of energy and feedback is not the only thing faculty members missed about face-to-face teaching. They also felt a loss of immanence, as described by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the loss of creating a reality in the moment. Additionally, the lack of community is felt by both faculty and students. Professor Helen shared her experience of being back on campus: "It's just been really energizing to see the students on campus and to talk to colleagues in the office, because you know so much uh, what we do in terms of our own classes is very individualized, you know." Face-to-face teaching allowed for more opportunities to connect with other faculty members. "So, when I wasn't running into my coworkers in the hallway or the coffee pot, you know, I really missed those like points of connection where we could talk about our teaching." Professor Helen also spoke about the casual connections between students and faculty on campus. These interactions were challenging to replicate in an online environment:

I think what's the big thing that's missing is the student-to-student relationship. But I think what's really missing is the more casual ability to connect with each other. It's like the before or after class, especially with my lit students who are English majors. You know, I always have a couple of students who want to stay after class and keep talking, or they'll ask me a question before class. There's just more opportunity in face-to-face to have those informal connections. There's just like opportunities on campus and I just haven't figured out a way to do that online. I have that open chat if they want to. But it's just not the same.

Faculty members had varying preferences for different modalities of teaching. While some faculty preferred face-to-face teaching, others enjoyed teaching live online classes through video conferencing. The real-time nature of live online classes provided them with the immediacy of interaction lacking in asynchronous classes. Male faculty participants were even more likely to prefer live online classes, as they found it convenient for themselves and their students.

Nearly all faculty members mourned the loss of that moment in asynchronous classes when a student suddenly understood a concept, which they called the "Aha!" moment. Professors Rochelle, Helen, and Allyna, all female faculty members, described that moment as when they could see the "Aha! moment in their eyes", and it was one of the most rewarding experiences in teaching. However, faculty members who taught only asynchronously missed the high that came from the immediacy of student feedback.

Regardless of their preferences, faculty members missed the sense of community and their connections with their colleagues and students in face-to-face teaching. In Fall 2022, Blair Stamper wrote about the "Aha!" moment in an Educause article.

Due to the lack of direct interaction, many assume that 'Aha!' moments or sudden

realizations and comprehension are impossible to re-create in the online environment.

However, those breakthroughs in learning can occur during reflection. Thus, while

"Aha!" moments may not occur instantly, there are ample opportunities to encourage

students' comprehension. (Stamper, 2022)

Although many faculty members preferred face-to-face courses over online courses, they

all recognized the importance of online education in providing access to education to

underserved populations, which Larreamendy-Joerns and Leinhardt (2006) referred to as the

democratization of education. Central Community College acknowledged the need for flexible

modalities to accommodate students' work and personal lives, with 60% of their offerings being

online before the pandemic. Despite this, Professor Helen expressed a belief that face-to-face

courses are best for students:

They registered for a distance course. Perhaps it was the only way they fit into their

schedule. So, I begin these distance courses with the same type of, you know, I can wrap

my arms around you if you need me to, or I can stand back and watch you perform. The

choice is going to be yours, and all I can do is be available to you. Whether it's email or

voice or video, at any time they can break that barrier of a distance course and feel like

they might as well have been sitting in the classroom the whole time. The best service is

face-to-face. You know, eyeball to eyeball and lacking that, I have to try to create a

system where they feel like they could revert to something like that if that's what they

needed.

While flexible modalities are essential to cater to the students' needs, face-to-face teaching is

still the preferred modality for many faculty members. The faculty participants missed the energy

and feedback from students, the immediacy of interaction, and the casual connections with other faculty and students on campus. Nonetheless, they acknowledged online courses' significance in providing education access, especially for underserved populations.

      Student Point of View – Asynchronous Courses. During the pandemic, many students were required to take asynchronous courses. However, colleges have now resumed offering courses in a variety of modalities. In this study, students chose asynchronous courses because of family and work commitments, making it challenging to attend classes at specific times. Additionally, some students had health concerns and hesitated to return to campus. For others, asynchronous modality is their preferred way of learning. Student Miriam, a professional hair stylist in her late 20s, prefered taking her classes asynchronously. Student Miriam noted:

      Asynch is better, just because you can access the information as much as you need to. You can access that at two in the morning, if you can't sleep, and I think that that's just really valuable - that you always have that at your fingertips. Um. But yeah, I really think they're probably better.

      Many students face challenges in committing to on-campus classes due to work and family obligations. Student Rubin, a 45-year-old firefighter, emphasized the importance of convenience, stating that "something that's gonna work for me" is crucial. Lorraine, an older female student with full-time work, preferred the flexibility of asynchronous classes. Similarly, Student Gila, a single mom in her early 30s, chose asynchronous classes due to their flexibility.

      I have a child, and I work full time. So that was going to be the best option for me. Um! As opposed to going into the classroom, I would have had to, you know, set aside to their time every you know, every time, every day of the week, or whatever week it was going to meet. Um, and that would be just too difficult for my schedule at this time.

Life circumstances pushed students towards taking online, asynchronous courses that offer more flexibility, but some still prefer the face-to-face learning experience. Student Charlie, a mid-40s male student using the GI Bill, preferred in-person classes but appreciated the flexibility of online. "I'm probably always going to prefer in person, but I really like the flexibility of the online." Student Susan, a female student in her early 20s, chose asynchronous courses but preferred to spend the entire day on campus for face-to-face classes. She shared:

But if I didn't have to, I would go to campus for all of my courses, and spend the whole day there, because I think it's so much better sitting in the classroom. I think, having meeting time with your professor is very helpful.

Student Mady, a 32-year-old single mom aiming for a Ph.D. in neuroscience, preferred in-person classes to connect with professors.

The shift towards asynchronous learning highlighted the need for more flexible and accessible education options. While some students preferred face-to-face learning, others found online courses more convenient and suitable for their lifestyles and schedule.

Learning Management System

Freire's (1968/1996) model of problem-posing education challenged the traditional faculty-student hierarchy. However, according to Farag et al. (2022), the design of learning management systems (LMSs) encourages "the worst forms of what Freire called banking education" (p. 2215) and "exacerbates the teacher-student dichotomy" (p. 2214).

Learning Management Systems were initially developed as content-sharing repositories for course support (Boyd, 2016).

The LMS is set up to be the primary source of information in a course, and the teacher is assigned as the expert designer of the learning experience, thus limiting the constructivist nature and mutuality of the learning process. (Boyd, 2016, p. 175)

Moving away from the banking education model, which promotes isolation and a hierarchy between faculty and students, is essential to create a collective identity in asynchronous courses. Freire's problem-posing model, which empowers both parties to share power and learning, is a better approach. Boyd (2016) explored "What would Paulo Freire think of Blackboard?" and emphasized the importance of building learning communities to facilitate dialogue. Creating a space for co-constructing knowledge and building a sense of community is essential in a well-designed asynchronous course.

The inherent structure of the learning management system presents limitations for asynchronous courses, and colleges often mandate a uniform setup for all courses to ensure consistency and ease of navigation for students. This uniformity facilitates easy navigation and reduces cognitive load (de Jong, 2010). Without this consistency, students would need to spend the initial week learning to navigate the course. However, it also creates a homogenous appearance and limits creativity and individuality in course design. Figure 4 shows the similarity of the navigation bars in three different courses.

Figure 4

LMS Course Navigation Bars
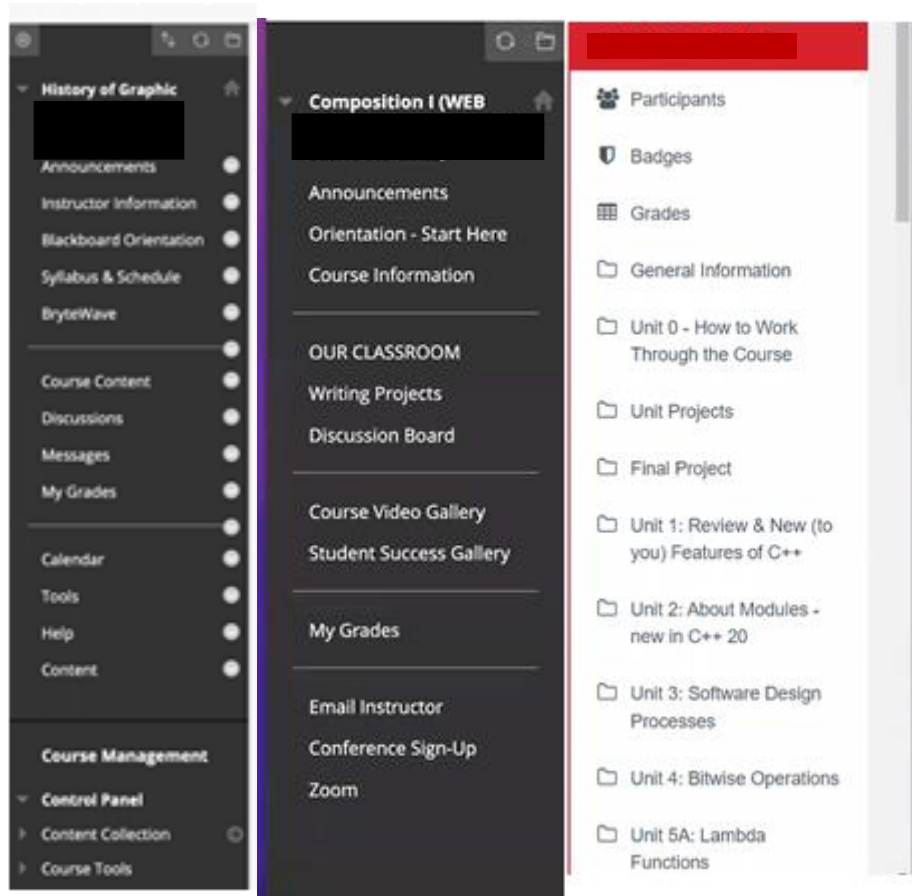
Faculty participants had varying opinions on the effectiveness of the LMS structure.

Professor Karen expressed concern that the LMS limited her creativity and drove her pedagogy.

"It's like the technology is then driving the pedagogy, and I don't like that at all." Professor

Rochelle felt that LMS vendors did not listen to feedback quickly enough, which made certain

tasks time-consuming. On the other hand, Professor Mark and Professor Helen appreciated the

LMS's structure, which helped students navigate their courses and allowed instructors the

freedom to create their course content. Professor Mark added:

> I like the structure. I think structure is good. From the student perspective, they know
>
> going into any of our courses that they're going to see a similar layout. So, they're not

going to be lost. They're going to understand that our classroom is where the meat of the course is going to be. Course information is where the syllabus and due dates are going to be so. Um, I like that. And from an instructor viewpoint, I enjoy the structure as well, because, while it provides a roadmap, we still have the freedom to kind of fill out all those destinations on the map.

Professor Helen modeled her course from a colleague's course shell. She did include an off-handed comment that technology is hard for her students.

This is how we organize our courses. That helps people to invest my time, and being creative in other ways and, like, gives me more time to respond to students and things like that. So, I'm okay, with like a structure to work from. I think that a lot of our students have problems with technology and just have a hard time with blackboard and technology in general. So that's I mean, that's the hindrance, community college students.

Faculty members from colleges with strict navigation consistency requirements were supported by their college instructional designers. Professor Allyna felt that instructional designers were better suited to design course delivery structures. Some faculty built components of their courses outside the LMS. Professor Blake created course materials outside the LMS and imported them into the platform. Computer Science Professor Neal built his own cloud-based environment outside of the LMS for student work but still used the LMS to organize course materials.

The faculty participants, with a couple of exceptions, did not raise concerns about how the LMS structure impacted their pedagogy or the community building and faculty-student relationships. Professor Karen expressed her dislike for technology dictating pedagogy. At the

same time, Professor Mark used the LMS to create a collaborative learning environment and a collective identity rather than letting the LMS dictate his goals. The student participants had a pragmatic view of the LMS. They wanted to easily find the materials they needed in the format they preferred whenever they needed them. Gila highlighted the need for students to learn how to be successful in asynchronous courses.

> It is self-motivation, I mean, because in the beginning it took me a minute to get it down. Like maybe a week or two, because I would have to go in and check every day to see what I'm required to do, because I didn't have a specific time or a meeting. I want to pay attention to it all. You have an assignment to do so. I have a couple of mishaps, you know. I missed a deadline. So just being like organized and looking at your um, the syllabus, and what's back into the class, and what you need to do to get, you know, um, a good grade, and then keeping track of your due dates, because there are things to do. I do look every week, you know, because things are due every week.

The student participants focused on different aspects of the LMS to navigate their courses. They found announcements, emails, and due dates to be crucial for understanding the requirements of their courses. Most students preferred email as it was convenient and easily accessible through their devices. Student Susan noted:

> …because I have it on my phone. I have it on my computer. I get notifications. If I need to respond to a teacher, It's really easy. And um, typically a lot of the professors prefer us to email them. They put it in their syllabus. Please email me with questions, don't use blackboard communication or whatever. So, I'm like. Oh, if I already have to email you. Having you email me is easier.

Student Susan explained that faculty who did not know how to organize their courses flooded their announcements with old due dates, causing confusion. Student Miriam found announcements less valuable, stating that they were easy to ignore. However, she recognized that some faculty used them to create a more personal connection with students by repeating announcements and checking in multiple times. She emphasized the importance of teachers reaching out to students and creating a space for questions and concerns.

> They do it to make the course feel more personal. Every class has announcements that check in with you, but only some teachers reach out. And even if it is a mass email to all the students, only some teachers do a mass email saying: How are you doing? It's midweek. You know. What do you need for me? What are your questions? And I think that's important.

Freire's (1968/1996) educational philosophy emphasized the significance of dialogue, critical thinking, and empowering students to take ownership of their learning. These principles are sometimes at odds with the limitations of LMS, which can restrict students' ability to engage fully in the learning process due to its inflexibility. The constraints of LMS impede the development of creativity, inquiry, and a culture of questioning, which Freire believed were crucial in education (Faraq et al., 2022).
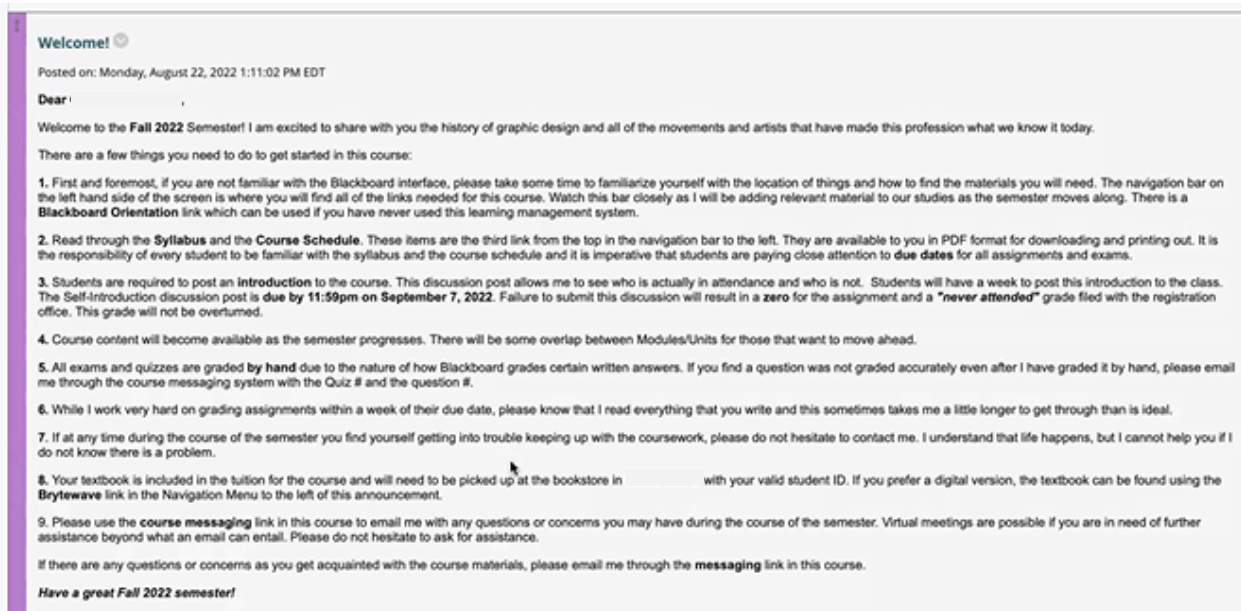
Course Design

The design of courses can be heavily influenced by the inherent structure of the learning management systems (LMS). In Northeast and Central Community Colleges, precise LMS navigation requirements must be adhered to. Consistency is emphasized, as faculty members believe that uniform design allows students to focus their cognitive resources on the course content rather than expending energy on navigating the course. Some faculty members

appreciate the enforced structure because it enables them to allocate their time to what they consider to be the critical aspects of the course. For students, the plain text of the LMS was boring. There was no indication of what was important (See Figure 5). Professor Blake, who worked in the ITS department, believed in a consistent course design across all courses, with the same layout (See Figure 6).

Figure 5

An Example of Plain Text in LMS Instructions

Figure 6

General Layout for All Courses
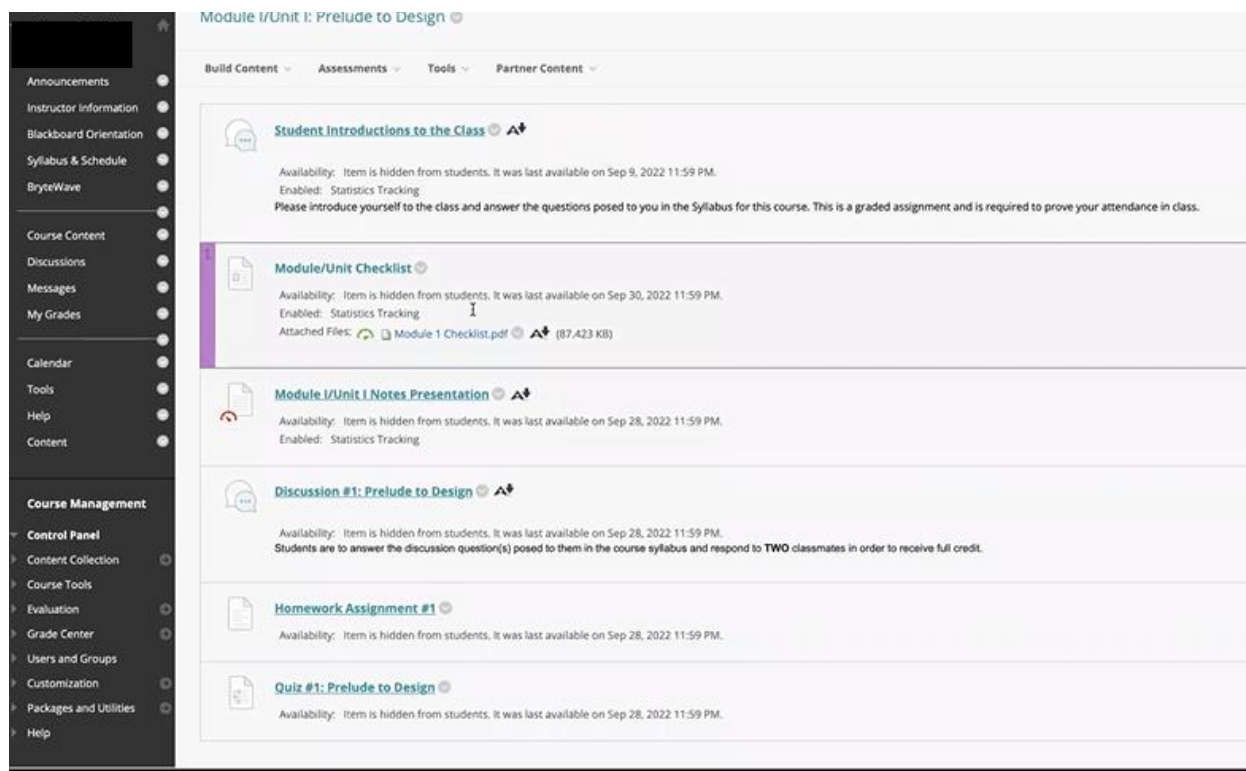
According to Professor Allyna, this approach allowed faculty to avoid worrying about course design, which may require skills they lack.

At Northern Community College, students complained about the lack of a consistent layout across courses, with every professor setting up their courses differently. Student Susan noted that figuring out the structure of each course and finding due dates was challenging, as not all professors provided assignment schedules. Student Martin expressed frustration with faculty members setting different due dates for the assignment in different online course locations.

Meanwhile, students at Central Community College praised the English Composition course and its instructor, Professor Karen, for her effective teaching and organization. Her use of colors on the page and creative approach helped students stay engaged, and she even renamed the "Assessments" section to "Writing Projects" to make it less intimidating.

> This is one of the areas we're allowed to rename. To me, assessments just sounds scary. So, I renamed it as writing projects, because that's the main thing that they're doing in a writing course. They're creating these writing projects.

Student Miriam, one of Professor Karen's students, appreciated the well-organized and easy-to-follow course layout. Professor Karen's course was a shining example of effective course design within the constraints of college consistency requirements (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

Simple But Well-Designed Section with Color and Picture

Professor Hillary has started using video previews instead of text-based URLs after being inspired by how inviting the video previews looked on Professor Karen's course page (See Figure 8).

Figure 8

Video Preview

According to Professor Allyna, designing a course within the LMS required rethinking traditional face-to-face course design and incorporating engaging elements such as welcome videos and other interactive features. She believed successful course design involves a "bleed" effect, where effective strategies from one course can be carried over to other courses. Professor Allyna was fortunate to have the assistance of an instructional designer, who helped her rearrange content within the LMS while still maintaining the integrity of her course. However, she acknowledged that designing and implementing course materials on the LMS can be a challenging and time-consuming process. "It's tempting to simply copy materials from one semester to the next, rather than investing time and effort into redesigning the course." She emphasized the importance of simplicity and accessibility for students, with clear instructions and easy-to-find materials. To achieve this, she strived for consistency in weekly assignments and discussions and an overall straightforward design.

Professor Ronnie aught a finance course that focused on personal finance. It was designed to be highly interactive and required regular engagement with students. While it is labor intensive for the faculty, the course was given to new faculty members because it was the largest enrolled course. This built-out course helped faculty helps them engage with students often. Professor Ronnie put a lot of upfront work into his course development, with a complex process that involved 45 separate steps that he tracked in a color-coded Excel workbook.

The Community of Inquiry model emphasizes the importance of designing courses that prioritize active and collaborative learning, foster community, and provide learners with guidance and support (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). Freire would likely be critical of a structured design template within an LMS that made all courses look alike (Boyd, 2016). He believed in a pedagogy of liberation that encouraged critical thinking and active engagement with the learning process. This approach values student agency and sees education as promoting social justice and transformation. A standardized approach to course design limited instructors' creativity and autonomy while ignoring the unique needs and interests of individual learners. Instead, Freire would advocate for a more student-centered approach to course design that encouraged active participation and meaningful interaction with the course content.

Discussion Board

While Learning Management Systems (LMSs) often have discussion boards to encourage communication, they may not fully "replicate the authentic dialogue and exchange of face-to-face discussions" (Faraq et al., 2022, p. 2218). Nevertheless, researchers such as Burgess (2015) and Warr & Sampson (2020) found that discussion boards provide more meaningful reflection opportunities than face-to-face discussions. Student participants varied in their opinion on the value of discussion boards. Some enjoyed the chance to hear from classmates. Others just saw it

as an easy way to earn points for their final grades. Faculty participants were generally

disappointed by the low level of participation in the discussion boards. Professor Rochelle had

success with her discussion boards because of her problem-posing prompts that engaged

students.

      Northeast and Central Community Colleges required faculty to initiate interaction with

their students. The U.S. Department of Education has implemented a similar requirement in its

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) policy (Distance Education and Innovation, 2020).

This policy requires faculty to engage with students in at least two of these four ways: by

providing direct instruction, assessing or providing feedback on coursework, providing

information or responding to questions about course content, or facilitating group discussions

related to content. These interactions must be regular and substantive, focusing on content rather

than just administrative topics such as due dates. Faculty often use discussion boards to engage

students and build a sense of community among them. In this format, faculty pose a question or

comment, and students add an initial post and then comment on two of their classmates' posts

(See Figure 9).

Figure 9

Discussion Board Guidelines

While discussion boards can foster social presence and collective identity (Garrison &

Akyol, 2013), some instructors find it challenging to recreate the energy of face-to-face

discussions. Professor Helen described the challenge: "I've had a hard time mirroring the kind of

energy of a discussion in the classroom when we're talking about the stories or the fiction. It's

just hard to get that energy online." On the other hand, Professor Rochelle demonstrated how

discussion boards could be used to create an environment where students and instructors learn

with each other. She said:

> When I used to do the discussion board, I thought they were the right thing to do, [but]
>
> they didn't really support what they were learning. You know they were just kind of
>
> random topics. And so, I've really redesigned a set of discussion boards to challenge
>
> them and have them go out and further investigate something, and then discuss it with
>
> your classmates and they love it.

Professor Rochelle found ways to leverage the power of discussion boards by using them to create problem-posing scenarios. She had her students research real-life traumatic brain injury cases, submit articles demonstrating their reality, and then write summaries for the discussion board. They then discussed the similarities and differences between the cases, generating lively back-and-forth conversations. Her students evaluate medicines and treatments, including pros, cons, and costs, leading to active dialogue and collaborative learning.

At Central Community College, faculty members were required to include at least one discussion board each week in their asynchronous courses to ensure interaction among students and to meet the RSI requirements. Faculty acknowledged the importance of interaction but were torn about the usefulness of discussion boards to achieve interaction. The RSI requirement was met using discussion boards, even when the quality of the discussion was not in evidence. Professor Blake described it as "like the introduction," a low-stakes assignment to help students get to know each other. Professor Ronnie emphasized the importance of discussion boards in online courses, as they allowed students to connect and express their opinions on real-life topics. In his class, students earned points for participating in the discussion boards.

In contrast, Professor Karen found that weekly discussion posts could be boring. She typically did not engage in the conversation unless issues arose.

> I usually don't insert myself in the conversation, unless you know things get problematic in some way. Um! But I do comment individually on student posts, and so it kind of became like two types of conversations. So, there is like the conversation that the students were having together publicly on the Discussion Board, and then there was like kind of a sub-conversation then with me like responding to their Discussion Board posts individually. So, I feel like that's one way that I was able to connect with students.

Professor Karen did respond individually to student posts, creating a separate conversation with each student. This allowed her to connect with students in a meaningful way while still promoting discussion in the class.

At Northern Community College, Professor Joanne also required weekly discussion boards, but with at least 40 students in her class, she found it difficult to respond to each student individually. Instead, she provided occasional general feedback, improving the responses' caliber. Students no longer waited for her comments and began conversing with each other.

Professor Neal, a computer science professor, recognized that most communication in online courses was between faculty and students, and other students missed hearing their classmates' questions. To address this, he encouraged his students to post their questions on a separate discussion board rather than emailing him privately. He waited 24 hours before responding, which enabled students to answer each other's questions. Some students may not find discussion boards to be a natural place to converse, Professor Neal's students last semester created their own Discord channel to communicate in real-time. Discord is a messaging platform that allows real-time and asynchronous communications using text, audio, or voice. This social media platform lives independently of the LMS.

> The private sector, especially in programming, is very interactive between programmers. And so, I realize the siloed type of teaching where it's like, it's a focus of the teacher and student role is not going to be conducive when you get to the real world, and I really wanted to get them to be used to that as it's known the community for help. Because when they get out of the school, I'm not going to be there, but the community of their peers is. And then I haven't taught them how to ask a proper question.

Professor Neal appreciated the student initiative to create a Discord channel dedicated to the course, as it mimicked communications in the private section.

The student participants reported feeling a lack of community in their asynchronous courses and often found it isolating to be completely online. Student Midge explained:

> I think definitely that's probably one of the biggest hits of an online class, especially because I get emails every week about what's happening on campus, and it feels like I'm kind of left out because I'm not on campus.

Student Mady suggested that discussion boards can help counteract feelings of isolation.

> It is isolating because you, when you're in a class, you know you kind of feed off of what the learning is, and you're able to connect with other classmates who may, you know, understand it, or may not understand. When there's no discussion board, you don't know who's in that class, so I wasn't able to connect with anybody who was taking the same class as me.

The ability of discussion boards to create a social and cognitive presence among students varies, as explained by some student participants. According to Student Midge, teachers usually do not participate in the discussion boards, which does not contribute to developing a robust faculty-student relationship. Some NCC students expressed disappointment with discussion boards, as nobody seemed to care about them. Student Liana pointed out that students often come up with the same responses and make up irrelevant things just to meet the word count. Student Mady shared that there was no sense of community in her class discussion board, as nobody participated in the discussion. However, Student Midge appreciated the discussion board:

> I think it definitely helps to connect you with your fellow classmates and to, I guess, help each other with areas like my calculus classes would often have discussions where we put

> on one or two difficult problems for the homework and the other classmates would come
>
> and say, Oh, this is how I solved that!

As students became more accustomed to discussion boards, Student Midge observed improved social presence, which can facilitate cognitive presence. In her calculus class, classmates would discuss challenging problems and help each other find solutions.

The efficacy of discussion boards is mixed. It depends on how well the faculty set up the discussion prompt. It also may depend on the particular students in that class and how well and often they respond to the prompt. Discussion boards can be beneficial in creating a sense of community and promoting shared learning among students. Student Evelyn expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to communicate with other students in the class, whether they agreed or disagreed with each other. Peer review was also a favorite among the students, with Student Rubin explaining how reading each other's assignments and providing feedback was helpful in their class.

> Being able to view things from what other people think. That was nice. And then just
>
> picking out things that I did not, you know, pick up with someone's proofreading my
>
> work, or you know they're like, hey? I know you meant this, but it sounds like this, and I
>
> was like Oh, I never! I would never have realized this way of thinking on my own.

Student Lorraine found the discussion boards a creative way to learn and engage with the subject matter. Similarly, Student Miriam felt like the discussion board provided a live class experience and used it to reach out to her classmates beyond the board. While initially hesitant, she appreciated the opportunity to connect with her classmates. Student Martin saw the practical value of participating in discussion boards as an easy way to earn points.

While Learning Management System (LMS) discussion boards have advantages, their use has several downsides. One of these downsides is that online discussions can lack the depth and richness of in-person discussions, limiting the quality of dialogue and engagement. Additionally, online discussions are prone to miscommunication and misunderstandings due to the absence of nonverbal cues and tone of voice. Some students may also feel uncomfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas online, which can limit their participation in the discussion. There is also the risk of students simply copying and pasting information from the internet without engaging with the material or critically evaluating the sources, which can negatively impact the learning experience. Finally, moderating and managing online discussions can be time-consuming and require significant effort from the instructor, which can be a challenge.

From a Freirean perspective, using discussion boards in online learning has potential and limitations. On the one hand, they provide a space for dialogue and reflection, which aligns with Freire's belief in the importance of critical reflection and dialogue in education (Freire, 1968/1996). However, they may not fully replicate the energy and authenticity of face-to-face discussions, which Freire saw as crucial for creating a sense of community and shared commitment to learning.

Despite these limitations, discussion boards can still serve as a tool for promoting student engagement and community building, an essential aspect of Freire's pedagogy (Freire, 1968/1996). By creating opportunities for problem-posing scenarios and real-life case studies, faculty members can encourage students to engage in critical thinking and dialogue, develop a collective identity and learn collaboratively. At the same time, there is a risk that discussion boards can become a mundane exercises, which runs counter to Freire's emphasis on the transformative potential of education. Faculty members must find ways to challenge and connect

with their students personally and promote dialogue beyond simple question-and-answer sessions. Ultimately, the success of discussion boards in online learning depends on how well they encourage dialogue and critical thinking and whether they allow for a transformative educational experience that empowers learners to challenge the status quo.

What Makes a Good Online Instructor

In my conversations with faculty and students, I noticed a significant difference in their outlook. Faculty were more concerned about fostering a sense of presence and community. According to faculty participants, these concepts were consistently reinforced by their local instructional designers during professional development. Professor Karen emphasized the importance of maintaining "teacher presence, to be there, in announcements and discussions. I believe strongly in feeding everything students do." Nevertheless, students tended to be more transactional in their approach to learning. They wanted an organized course with precise due dates. Student Charlie, Northern Community College, listed the top priorities for faculty as "clear due dates, more involvement, and timely grading."

While faculty and students agreed on the importance of student engagement and accessibility to faculty, their priorities were at different levels. Faculty commented that many of their successful students never engaged with them. They had students who disappeared or failed assignments and did not engage with them. Faculty did their best to reach out to these students, but the failing students generally did not respond to the faculty's efforts. Students tended to view their needs in a transactional manner, reminiscent of the banking model of education, whereas faculty strived to provide students with transformative learning experiences.

Faculty Perspective – Good Online Instructor. Faculty members considered it crucial to monitor the progress of their students. Several faculty mentioned that a good faculty member

knows when to intervene and reach out to students. Professor Blake emphasized the importance

of following clues and reaching out to students, especially during the first week of class, when it

appears they have not logged in or completed any work. "When a student sends you an email

asking a question, it's crucial to reply as promptly as possible. If you don't reply for days, the

student may think that you are not engaged with the class or with them." He recognized that

students need prompt responses to their inquiries. Professors Neal and Mark identified

responsiveness and communication as the two most critical skills that asynchronous faculty

members must possess. Students need to feel that faculty members are actively engaged with

them and are responsive to their needs by answering emails, posting clear due dates, and

providing feedback.

Faculty need to be intentional in their connections with their students. Through

journaling, Professor Blake was surprised to discover how many connection points he made with

his students during the week. He had not realized all his steps to reach out to his students.

Professor Karen expressed concern that it is easy to forget about teaching an asynchronous

course, saying:

> I think it can be easy for teachers to feel like an online course is out of their mind. When
>
> we teach in person, we actively think about the course throughout the week because we
>
> see the students regularly. However, with asynchronous courses, it can be easy to forget
>
> about it until it's time to grade the work.

As previously discussed, feedback is critical in creating and maintaining a conversation and

relationship between faculty and students. Professor Helen believed that "being on top of

feedback" is an essential skill for online faculty. If students have to wait too long for feedback,

"they feel disconnected from the course." Professor Helen acknowledged that being on top of

feedback can be challenging, especially when managing multiple courses. However, she made a concerted effort to prioritize grading for her online courses. She emphasized that in online courses, students place a greater emphasis on receiving timely feedback than in face-to-face courses where there may be some wiggle room. Professor Helen may be able to tell a face-to-face student that she is still working on grading their essay because she will see them in class on Tuesday.

In addition to being intentional in their connections with students, faculty stated that they must be clear about their course expectations and available to students. They must be willing to engage with students and provide personalized feedback. Faculty members should make themselves available by responding to emails promptly. Creating video announcements can effectively demonstrate to students that they are dealing with a person, not just a computer screen.

Faculty participants often noted the potential gap between face-to-face and online classrooms when discussing the qualities of a good online instructor. According to Professor Rochelle, the number one skill required is "communication, communication, communication." Not all communication is the same. Some communication, such as assignment feedback is substantive; other communication is administrative. Professor Rochelle emphasized that online instructors must clearly communicate because the lack of face-to-face interaction can make it difficult for students to understand course directions and navigate the course. Additionally, she stressed the importance of compassion, especially at the beginning of the semester. Being organized is another key trait that online instructors must possess.

Freire's (1968/1996) problem-posing education model advocated for destabilizing the faculty-student hierarchy, which leads to the goal of faculty learning *with* students rather than *to*

students. A crucial aspect of dismantling this hierarchy is for the faculty member to present themselves as more fully human through compassion and love to their students. In this study, the faculty participants identified that the most important way to become more human with their students in asynchronous courses was to demonstrate their passion and personality. Faculty members utilized videos and writing to show their love for their discipline and instill that same excitement in their students, thus creating an environment for learning. Professor Mark knew he successfully let his personality shine through because he received positive student comments. He stated that in his weekly video announcements, he infused real-life examples and some personality, so students do not feel like they are only getting a robotic presentation. He added that the personality comes through better on video than other communication forms.

Professor Allyna emphasized the importance of infusing one's passion into the course to distinguish oneself from pre-packaged courses lacking personal touch. "You can purchase a Web course that is prepackaged with all the supplements of the publisher. But for me that doesn't tell the student who my teacher is, and it could be anyone checking the student work."

Faculty members present themselves differently. Some share personal stories and pictures, while others focus on their passion for the discipline. Professor Helen emphasized sharing her enthusiasm and passion for English and literature with her students while maintaining a professional persona and avoiding sharing too much personal information.

> What I do share with my students is my love for this subject, my enthusiasm for the subject. So, I hope what part of my personality really comes across online is just like the passion that I feel for English and for my literature classes. I'm hesitant to share too much personal information with my students. I didn't want to get like too personal. I kind of like to have a professional kind of persona, but I do think like little touches.

Some student participants acknowledged that they responded positively to faculty personalities. It helped them view the faculty member as more than just a text on a page. Yet, others noted that they review their course to find the content, assessments, and administrative items and ignore the rest.

In addition to presenting oneself as more fully human, faculty members stressed the importance of connecting with their students. According to Freire's (1968/1996) problem-posing education model, being human is a process that happens in connection with others. To hear their students' voices, faculty members read every word of their work, provide thoughtful feedback on assignments, and respond quickly and thoughtfully to student emails. Even student participants who expressed interest only in the transactional nature of their courses, commented on their need to know their work was recognized and mattered. All 12 student participants referred to wanting to feel valued. Thus, it was necessary to them to know their voices were heard through feedback on their assessments. Professor Ronnie recorded his students' comments about themselves in a spreadsheet and used them in his feedback and emails to show that he heard and valued them, which he believed created the strongest relationship.

Student Perspective – Good Online Instructor. The students in this study identified several important skills for effective online instructors. One key skill was organization and responsiveness, which included clear and consistent due dates. Students like Student Charlie emphasized the importance of instructors being involved, grading in a timely fashion, and showing flexibility.

Students characterized faculty organizational skills into technology proficiency and course design. Student Lorraine was concerned about third-party publishers and their potential

impact on the course. Students were left with little support if faculty could not troubleshoot issues with publisher content and assignments.

> …and then the homework is done through another program, and it's nice if they are able to help you with questions about it. But some faculty say 'I don't really know that problem. You have to ask the people about that program.' So, then it's like, Okay, cool. Thanks. So, you're just here to make sure we turn in the homework.

Student Liana felt better use of the course announcements within the LMS could improve the course's overall organization. Student Susan, meanwhile, provided examples of what makes an excellent online instructor.

> There was another one for Psych 101 - a child development site. It was like almost like a game for our homework. So, we have to go in, and we'd like act as the kid, and we go, and we click different things and talk about how you like. It was an interactive homework assignment. You'd like act as a child and go like Oh, go pick up the like toy, and then you pick up the toy, and then your brother would get mad, and you have to resolve that from like what you were learning, it was really cool.

First, she emphasized the importance of communication and feedback from the instructor. Second, she cited a teacher who provided creative assignments as an example of what made her online learning experience positive.

> The students in this study identified communication, responsiveness, and feedback as the top skills online faculty need. However, they emphasized that communication should be one-way and that good online instructors should also be good listeners and learn from their students. As Student Evelyn put it: "you should learn from your students and be a good listener - that makes a good teaching professional."

Student Gila added that the faculty members who make regular announcements and reminders, and who provide good feedback, are the ones who are most helpful. She appreciated the reminders because, unlike in traditional classes, they do not meet regularly and can easily forget important dates or deadlines. Student Gila noted that it was helpful when instructors checked in on students' progress and offered additional assistance if needed. Overall, the students emphasized the importance of regular and effective communication in online courses.

Several students highlighted the importance of online faculty being accessible and available. Student Midge expressed joy when professors are responsive and open to helping students with their problems, stating that "not being disconnected" is crucial. Student Miriam added that accessibility helps create a comfortable learning environment, especially for younger students who may hesitate to ask for help.

Students stressed the importance of getting their questions answered promptly, as this allowed them to complete assignments efficiently. Student Lorraine appreciated the quick response time from her instructors, with most emails answered within 24 hours. She emphasized that being available to answer questions and respond to emails quickly is essential for online faculty.

Several students emphasized the importance of faculty being effective in their asynchronous courses and being personable and passionate about their subject matter. Student Midge highlighted the importance of accessibility and connection with students, stating that she appreciated professors who were available and willing to help. She also noted that a professor's personality and approachability came through in their text-based communications, which can help build a sense of rapport between students and faculty.

I feel like that. You get a little bit of personality, too, just like when you text with

somebody. You kind of pick up mannerisms and kind of get an idea in your head of, you

know, what they might act like, and just with how professional they are, and how

approachable they are just even through text, I think comes across.

Student Miriam echoed Student Midge's sentiments and added that a teacher's personality and

engagement in their teaching were critical to keeping students engaged in the course. She felt

that monotone delivery in videos made it difficult for students to stay interested and emphasized

the need for faculty to be "a little more peppy" in their delivery of online courses. Student

Miriam also noted that when faculty show that they care about their student's success and are

committed to helping them improve, it can make a big difference in students' attitudes toward

the course. She cited an example of a teacher who helped her improve her writing skills and

fostered a love of the subject matter, which led to her interest in taking more classes in the same

area.

And I thought that that was just kind of fantastic to promote growth, like within all the

students and myself. Because, like I said, I was not truly strong in the English, and I'm

pretty sure I wrote that down when we did our introduction. I was not excited for the

class. And now I'm finding myself asking, what other ones do you offer?

The student participants agreed that a good online instructor should possess the following

qualities: excellent communication skills, responsiveness to students' questions and concerns,

availability, passion for the subject they teach, an approachable and caring personality, and the

ability to create engaging and lively course content. Students also highlighted the importance of

feeling connected to the instructor and learning from them, as well as feeling comfortable asking

questions and seeking help when needed.

According to a Freirean view, a good online instructor would be committed to dialogue and collaboration, willing to learn from students, and focused on critical thinking and reflection. For Freire (1968/1996), education is a two-way process, where both teacher and student learn from each other. Therefore, a good online instructor is open to student feedback and adapts teaching methods to students' needs and experiences. Critical thinking and reflection are essential in education, and a good online instructor would create opportunities for students to engage in these activities through online discussions, assignments, and other activities.

Successful / Unsuccessful Asynchronous Student

The faculty participants were requested to delineate the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students. Their responses consistently portrayed successful students as those who regularly engaged with the course material, emphasizing the quality of their assignments and participation in online discussions. In contrast, unsuccessful students tended to be characterized as those who disappeared or disengaged from the course.

What is a Successful Student? During a discussion on successful students, Professor Allyna emphasized that to create a successful student is a deliberate effort on the part of the college. Faculty members must closely monitor students during the first few weeks of the semester, as this period is crucial. Creating a sense of community among students is vital. At NECC, a first-year course teaches students how to be successful, including navigating online courses. This is reinforced by the college's requirement that courses follow a consistent template.

Professor Blake looked for engagement among his students but emphasized that the quality of their work is the most significant indicator of success. He stressed the importance of student engagement, especially early in the semester. "I know successful students by the quality of their work. I have many successful asynchronous students that don't email me. I find

asynchronous students to be the best students. They're very independent. They're just going about doing their work." Professor Craig believed "it's all about taking ownership. And when I see students take ownership, I actually point that out to them."

Professor Joanne focused on the frequency with which students log in and go through course materials. "You know a successful student if they are referencing readings and lecture materials in their homework and their discussion questions." This indicated that they were engaged in the course. For Professor Hillary, successful students went above and beyond by making connections and providing more information than required. She recognized engaged students through their writing, comments, or expressions of enjoyment.

Faculty members play an essential role in creating successful students. Professor Joanne felt that her efforts in asynchronous classes have a positive response, resulting in a high success rate. Scaffolding assignments is an effective way to create successful students, as Professor Allyna did by starting with low-stakes assignments that build upon each other. "Early successes begat continued success."

Professor Neal created successful students by providing immediate and automated feedback on programming assignments. This system empowered and motivated students. Unfortunately, less motivated students were intimidated by it. He contacted these students one month into the semester to offer assistance. He shared:

> I created a system that automatically grades my students' programming assignments. It gives them instant feedback about what's right and what's wrong and how to fix it. I find this is empowering to the motivated students but for some reason this system scares away the less motivated or less determined students. How do I help those students? At the one month mark I usually send out an email to those students asking how I can help.

Faculty participants overwhelmingly agreed that creating successful students is a deliberate effort requiring faculty members' attention and effort. Faculty members can build a community of successful learners by monitoring students closely, scaffolding assignments, and providing prompt feedback. Despite my inquiry into their relationships with students, the faculty participants did not include relationships as a crucial factor for student success. Instead, they mentioned that independent students tended to be the most successful.

What is an Unsuccessful Student? Professor Allyna raised concerns about the college's success and retention rates for asynchronous students, stating, "it's an issue if I only have fifty percent of my students successfully completing with a C or better. It's dismal, and it makes me second-guess myself when I compare the success and retention rates of my face-to-face class."

Throughout my discussions with faculty participants, unsuccessful students were consistently described as unengaged, failing to submit assignments, and eventually dropping out of the course. Professor Hillary noted that "there are students who just drop out of the class." At the same time, Professor Allyna observed that unsuccessful students typically did not take the time to go through the materials and truly understand the course content. She also found that unsuccessful students tended to disengage from low-stakes assignments.

Professor Rochelle acknowledged that factors outside the classroom contributed to a student's disappearance and that it was important for faculty to pay attention to these factors in asynchronous courses where it can be more difficult to gauge a student's situation. The faculty discussed the challenge of reaching out to students who never submit anything. Professor Neal shared his approach of tracking all his students and emailing those who fall behind on assignments. However, even with this effort, he often did not receive a response from these students.

There is a time where you can submit warning grades, and that can trigger something. But if that doesn't work then and there's no in-person. I really don't know what else to do, And I've been actually trying to wrap my brain on how else I can reach out to them, because email is not there. And I don't have their phone number. I don't know what to do about these students, especially when I reach out to them, and ask if they're having any difficulty in the class. There's just no response.

Like Northeast Community College, Central Community College required faculty to complete success reports. According to Professor Rochelle, this report allows faculty to flag struggling or unengaged students, triggering the college to reach out to them. Professor Rochelle took the success reports seriously and has been involved in student success-oriented committees and programs.

As part of this success report. I have to look at that if they're struggling. I can put in a flag. If they aren't engaging, I can put in a flag through the college that they're not participating and depending on how many flags, it might trigger the college if this person is not engaging in any of their classes. Then the college will reach out and try and figure it out as well. I take the success reports very seriously. I've been on some committees that are student success oriented. I've worked with a couple of programs throughout the college about that because I know how important it is.

Meanwhile, Professor Ellen expressed her frustration with students who gave up, particularly those who stopped attending class or submitting their work. She tried reaching out to them through multiple emails and even warned them during midterm warnings to schedule an appointment with her to catch up on their work. However, she only heard back from a few

students, most of whom simply ghosted or disappeared. "The students simply do not submit their work," explained Professor Ellen.

> It's safe to say there are students I never hear from. Or they drop out in the middle of the semester without any notice. I think many of them think that they can work at their own pace, completely, but they end up not submitting the work at all. It's not because they did the work and failed. They just ghosted, you know, for whatever reason they stopped coming.

According to Professor Hillary, unsuccessful students often ghosted or stopped participating in the course. They did not submit their assignments or engage in the assignment dialogue. In contrast, successful students show up by completing their assignments and actively participating in the course. To be successful in an asynchronous course, students must be present and engaged, usually indicated by their assignment completion. Despite faculty efforts to design and facilitate the course, ultimately, students must do the work to succeed.

What Students Like and Do Not Like About Asynchronous Courses

Students were asked to provide me with their feedback on their online, asynchronous courses. Most student participants preferred asynchronous courses, citing their flexibility as the main reason. This allowed them to easily balance school, work, and personal life without the added responsibility of attending classes on campus. Student Naomi shared:

> My favorite method of learning is the whole web courses. But now, like, there's less and less of them since the pandemic is kind of over. It's easier to do school and work and do life when it's online classes, because you don't have, like the extra responsibility of going on campus or like sitting down for that amount of time to attend an online class.

Some students identified themselves as successful independent learners and preferred to work independently. Some students were only interested in completing the course content and did not want to engage with their peers. Student Liana disliked discussion boards, stating they did not add much value to her learning experience. She found it burdensome to comment on and respond to her peers' posts. Although she understood the importance of engaging with others online, she did not feel she gained much from it. For these students, asynchronous courses were preferred as they allowed them to avoid social interaction while still completing their coursework. Student Liana added:

> I love asynchronous classes. I don't want to interact with people, whether it be professors or my fellow students. I just rather just be kind of like an anonymous almost to an extent. Tell me what I have to do, I do it. I'm not really like a lecturer type of a student. So, this this appeals to me a lot better, and it works for me a lot better.

A few students expressed dissatisfaction with asynchronous courses due to their classmates' lack of social interaction. Many students desired more engagement and presence from their instructors. Some instructors designed their courses to be self-directed, resulting in students only receiving feedback from them two or three times throughout the semester. Students often struggled with getting their questions answered by faculty members, leading to frustration. While some students had clear preferences for one type of course over the other, most had mixed feelings based on their experiences. However, the flexibility of asynchronous courses remained an important factor, often outweighing any negative aspects. The few students who reported having excellent course experiences felt a strong connection with their instructors and were generally more positive about online learning.

Asynchronous courses not only provided students with the flexibility to meet their non-academic commitments but also allowed them to schedule their learning independently. "If I'm feeling extra studious one week, I can even get ahead of the work," explained Student Midge. To work at their own pace, students preferred it when faculty opened the entire course on the first day. "It's frustrating," said Student Liana, "when they post week by week. If I planned to do my schoolwork on Monday, and they forgot to post, I'm stuck."

While completing assignments at their own pace worked well with automated assignments from third-party publishers, students like Student Liana still wanted to be able to connect with their classmates. She appreciated when faculty set up "a question board for all the other students, and sometimes we would get the answers right back from the other students because it would be about 'Where do I find this?' or 'How do I access this?' and classmates would be able to help each other." "I'm a social person," stated Student Midge, "so the part I miss is the talking part. I miss connecting with people."

Some students, like Student Susan, appreciated faculty presence through instructional videos or PowerPoints with voiceovers. "Videos are important," she said. "It is as though we are in the room with her while she is teaching us." Other students, like Student Mady, found that communication with their instructors was lacking. "How do you describe a concept in an email?" she asked. "I think that the communication is lacking with online classes." She described her online classes as "terrible" and said that her instructor "was not present, and there was no connection."

For some students, like Student Midge, math classes were particularly challenging due to limited access to the teacher. "Understanding the concepts of math has never been my strong suit," she said. "So, learning math was really hard, and not being able to have access to the

teacher to explain things to me was difficult. I had to get tutors, and I was very much struggling and basically teaching myself." Student Mady expressed similar concerns: "That's my number one worry with these kinds of classes—that I'll just be given the textbook and told to learn on my own."

For Student Midge, time management was the most difficult part of online classes. "The most stressful day of the semester is right in the beginning, where I'm setting up the time management for my weeks," she said. Professor Ellen shared this concern and taught her students to create a weekly calendar to help them manage their own learning time. In addition to time management, Student Mady also noted that there was a "learning curve for learning online." She missed her first two quizzes in math because she did not know how to navigate the software and her teacher had not informed the class about the quizzes. She explained:

> That direct line of contact that you know a normal course would have. You know where the teachers right in front of you, showing you the material, and if you have a question they could, on a on a drop of a dime, answer. Um! So, when in this distant course, you're reading the material and getting questions wrong, and you're like, Wait! How does this So how do I learn this better? What! Send the teacher an email and wait till tomorrow. What is the due date? You are being your own teacher at certain point.

Student Martin missed the structure that he was used to in his military life and found it lacking in online classes. "I'm a schedule-oriented person." He explained:

> ...for twenty years, I had a routine. I knew what had to be done, when it had to be done, and how it needed to be done. And with online classes, I don't feel there is that structure unless you set it for yourself. It took me a little bit of time to find my groove, but now that I've found that groove, I'm almost bored.

Student Susan was the only student who mentioned proctored exams as an issue. Having to take online proctored exams adds a level of difficulty. Students must have their cameras on and work in a quiet place where no one else is around.

> I feel like if you're offering the course online, then you have to take that responsibility. …For you to require a quiet area and have the camera on, it's not always feasible. I have a job, and I have a lunch break, and I want to do my assignments. Now I can't do it in a coffee shop.

Though Student Susan recognized that she had to be responsible for meeting the requirements, finding a time and location to complete a proctored assessment was often difficult.

Student Gila was interested in academically challenging courses and found boring courses unappealing. She and other students preferred more challenging assignments that approximated the problem-posing model. Some students found the flexibility and independence of asynchronous courses to be valuable, as they could work at their own pace with minimal social interaction. Other students expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of faculty and social presence and desired more engagement with their classmates and instructors. Specifically, dissatisfied people often discussed the importance of working with their classmates and connecting with the faculty. Despite this, students appreciated the flexibility of asynchronous courses but desired more social interaction and engagement with their classmates and faculty.

Impact of Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, 2020-2022, brought unprecedented challenges for higher education institutions. With stay-at-home orders in place, colleges were forced to move their courses online, disrupting the traditional learning experience. This shift to virtual learning meant that faculty and students had to adapt quickly to new technologies to deliver and receive

instruction (Gardner, 2021). However, this transition was not without its challenges, and faculty participants discussed their struggles to create engaging and supportive online learning courses for their students. Moreover, student participants were concerned about the quality of their education and the lack of social interaction often associated with online learning. As the pandemic subsided, colleges could return to on-campus, in-person classes. Students now have the option to learn fully asynchronously, live online, or in person, providing a flexible learning experience that accommodates different learning styles and preferences.

Faculty and the Pandemic. During pre-pandemic times, Professor Karen did not take extra measures "to make myself present to my students" asynchronous course students. However, during the pandemic, she began creating videos to counteract the sense of isolation "when everyone felt so disconnected." She was also responsible for making her students feel welcome and comfortable in the online environment. "Students didn't choose to be in an online class, and so I felt like, I have to do more to help them feel welcome, to help them feel comfortable." As a result, she became closer to her online students, an experience that she found enriching. Professor Joanne felt that the pandemic made her a better teacher and communicator. She had always believed in her teaching abilities, but the pandemic made her more aware of her students' struggles. She became better at managing the course, communicating with students, and identifying potential issues through their writing styles. She explained:

> I think I was good before, but I think we can always be better right, so I do think I've become better. I became more aware of the struggles that some of them may be having. I just think I've become better at managing the course communicating with the students, seeing those little idiosyncrasies and their writings that may alert me to an issue.

Similarly, Professor Mark acknowledged that the pandemic forced him to change his approach to teaching online. Before the pandemic, he treated his online students as self-paced and self-taught learners. However, the pandemic made him realize that some students were forced into this modality without choosing it, leading him to treat them as in-class learners. He consciously tried to reach out to students and engage with them more to foster a supportive online learning community.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced faculty members to adapt and innovate in their teaching practices. For Professor Ronnie, who managed the personal finance course with multiple sections, the first step was to find online videos for every chapter. He then provided a short introduction and wrote notes that scrolled alongside the video to engage students, particularly those in the web-based sections. According to Professor Ronnie, his academic team provided more external content than ever, as they did not want to rely solely on publisher materials and assignments. As a result of the pandemic, the academic team recorded and engaged a lot more, changing their modalities to accommodate students' needs. The robust materials created for the asynchronous students were accessible to all students in the personal finance course. This approach led to higher student engagement, with many students commenting on various learning opportunities available. Professor Ronnie felt this approach gave students more opportunities to learn in ways that suited their individual learning styles beyond just reading a textbook and answering questions. The changes made by faculty due to the pandemic have improved course quality and engagement, even after returning to in-person classes. Professor Ronnie went above and beyond to ensure his students remembered he was there, even though they were learning online. He manually checked assignments graded by Blackboard and provided engaging content,

such as videos with scrolling notes. The personal finance course became more robust and engaging for all students, not just those in the asynchronous section.

While some faculty have questioned whether they should continue to offer the same accommodations made during the pandemic, Professor Hillary noted that students are less stressed now that they can attend classes in their chosen modality. Students now choose to take web classes because they want to, not because it is their only option. The flexibility offered during the pandemic may not be necessary anymore, but the importance of teaching with compassion remains. Faculty members are discussing how to approach this in a post-pandemic world.

Several faculty members discussed the importance of teaching with compassion, especially in the context of online courses. Before the pandemic, many instructors were unfamiliar with teaching online and struggled with setting and enforcing deadlines. Professor Rochelle emphasized the need for forgiveness and understanding during the first few weeks of a course. COVID-19 taught her to teach compassionately, and she tried to remember this daily.

Since the pandemic, students have become more vocal about their preferences for how courses are delivered. Professor Blake noted that students realized other ways to receive course content that may better suit their individual needs and circumstances. Asynchronous courses have become more familiar to students, and they have become better at managing their own learning. Professor Rochelle also notes that students who took asynchronous courses during the pandemic became more comfortable with online learning. They have become more adept at navigating the technical aspects of online courses and understand that instructors are there to support them in the background.

Several faculty members discussed the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning. Professor Rochelle shared that learning to teach with compassion was an important lesson she learned during COVID-19, and she continues to apply this approach in her classes. She also noted that students who had experienced asynchronous courses during the pandemic became more comfortable with online learning and required less technical support.

In contrast, Professor Ellen expressed frustration that some students seemed less motivated and disciplined than before the pandemic. She wondered if the leniency shown to students during COVID-19 contributed to this issue. She highlighted the challenge of getting students to build a schedule and prioritize their coursework, and she is planning to address this in her introductory video for the course. With deep frustration in her voice, Professor Ellen continued to discuss that fewer of her students are completing than before and even during COVID-19. She believes that students are less disciplined and finds it difficult to motivate them. She noticed that students who fail quickly often forget to make time for their online coursework, believing they can deal with it later.

Faculty participants reflected on the lessons learned during the pandemic and discussed how to approach teaching best and learning in a post-pandemic world. In the context of asynchronous courses, Freire (1968/1996) would likely argue that faculty who show compassion towards their students are helping to make them more fully human. By acknowledging the challenges and difficulties that students may face and working with them to overcome these obstacles, faculty are assisting students in developing the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their education and beyond. Moreover, Freire would argue that showing compassion towards students is essential to creating a more just and equitable society. By recognizing each student's unique needs and circumstances and working with them to overcome any barriers to

their success, faculty are helping to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Students and the Pandemic. Students commented that their faculty became better asynchronous teachers during the pandemic, which helped students become more secure in taking asynchronous courses. According to Student Liana, some professors struggled to transition to online teaching during the pandemic, particularly those not technologically savvy. However, she noted that most professors had improved and could utilize technology to teach online. Student Lorraine shared similar sentiments, stating that while the transition to online teaching was rough initially, most faculty had adapted well and had become proficient in their teaching techniques. She noted:

> The majority of them have been really good. They're well thought out. I think, going through COVID and everything, going online kind of like when it first started. It was a little rough because people had to learn the technology, and they had to learn that. But as we've gotten more, they're more okay with the online stuff, they've really gotten it down.
>
> It was a little rough. It was like learning on the fly how to teach completely online.

Student Rubin mentioned that the pandemic had accelerated the need for online education, leading to professors quickly adapting to the online format. He applauded faculty members for adapting their courses to make them better suited for online learning. He emphasized that students wanted an education that was convenient and online courses provided that convenience.

Students felt the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted their perceptions about asynchronous courses. They reported being better able to identify which courses they could complete online and which required live faculty interaction. The students also noted that faculty had improved their ability to teach asynchronously during the pandemic. Despite some initial

struggles, students felt that the majority of faculty members had adapted well to the online format and had done an excellent job in providing quality education. The key quality they deemed essential in online teachers was organization, as teachers needed to be technologically proficient and organized. Additionally, students emphasized that convenience was a critical factor in online learning.

Chapter Summary

This study explored the faculty-student relationship in online, asynchronous courses, with participants from three colleges located in the eastern United States, all using a Learning Management System (LMS) to manage courses. The LMS encouraged a content-sharing-oriented approach, reinforcing the faculty-student hierarchy and perpetuating the banking model of education (Boyd, 2016; Farag, et al., 2022). To establish a more human connection with their students, faculty used personal anecdotes and pictures of their families and pets, emphasizing availability and trust. However, students were primarily interested in a transactional relationship centered on submitting assignments and receiving prompt email responses.

Some faculty successfully created more meaningful relationships with students by thinking outside the LMS box. Professor Karen negotiated grading with her students via video conferencing to create a more equitable environment. This negotiating helped to flatten the student-faculty hierarchy and create a learning-*with* environment. Her students were the only ones in the study who spoke about having a deeper relationship beyond the school term. Professor Neal used an auto-grading and dashboard system to reach out to students personally, while Professor Rochelle utilized the LMS discussion board to promote a problem-posing approach. Her creative discussion board prompts created a learning-with environment among the students. However, many faculty expressed frustration that most of their students did not reach

out to them, regardless of how they set up the course and how often they sent emails and posted announcements. While many of those students could complete their assignments without faculty contact, others needing help disappeared and ultimately failed the course.

In Chapter Five, I redirect attention to the research foci that guided this study. I return to the initial motivations behind my research and the theoretical framework that informed my analysis. This chapter addresses the limitations and challenges that arose during the study and how they contributed to the development of my work. In conclusion, I present various perspectives on student engagement and academic relationships and suggest potential avenues for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The rise of online learning has been a significant trend since 2012, and the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated its growth, leading to a substantial increase in enrollment in online courses. Since 2012, there has been a significant increase in enrollment in online, asynchronous courses (Allen et al., 2016; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021b). In 2019, approximately 37% of all students were enrolled in at least one online course (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021b). However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on education, leading to a substantial rise in online learning. In the Fall of 2020, nearly 75% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one online course (NCES, 2022). Although this percentage decreased to 59% as colleges began to open up (NCES, n.d. b), experts predict that online learning will continue to exceed pre-pandemic rates and maintain its upward trajectory that began in 2012 (Hill, 2023).

Although asynchronous, online courses offer advantages such as flexibility and the ability to learn at one's own pace, there are concerns about disadvantages, such as the loss of visual or aural cues, limited interaction with faculty and peers, and a greater dependency on reading and writing skills (Said et al., 2015). Scholars have proposed that online, asynchronous courses differ from face-to-face courses in terms of the remote relationship between faculty and student learning (Moore, 1997, 2019; Xi & Smith, 2014).To mitigate potential learning deficits, scholars such as Moore (1997, 2019), Garrison and Arbaugh (2007), and Hilton (2013) encouraged faculty to create robust academic relationships with their students.

At the start of my doctoral journey, I planned to identify specific best practices for faculty tasks that could improve student success as defined by grades, persistence, and retention. I began to question whether measuring student success solely through grades, persistence, and retention

fully captured the meaning of student success. Through informal conversations with faculty over the past five years and my teaching experience in asynchronous courses, I became interested in understanding the faculty-student online, asynchronous relationship. Like my faculty participants, I have missed the immediacy of feedback and interaction from the on-ground classroom, which further motivated me to investigate this topic.

Summary of Study

The faculty-student dialogical-academic relationship plays a vital role in the online learning environment, encompassing the positive interaction and communication that fosters learning between faculty members and their students in an online course (Moore, 1997). Additionally, Moore's (2019) theory of transactional distance emphasized the significance of social and communication factors in bridging the psychological and physical gap between faculty and students within the online learning environment.

Garrison et al.'s (2010) Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework is widely utilized for investigating teaching and learning in asynchronous online courses, grounded in the interrelated concepts of social, cognitive, and teaching presences. This framework provides a structured and formalized perspective on the interactions between teachers and students, examining the development of cognitive skills and knowledge acquisition (Garrison & Akyol, 2013). Notably, the term "teaching presence" was frequently employed by faculty participants to express their efforts in establishing a more authentic connection with their students. Moreover, Freire's problem-posing model of education, which highlights reflection and action to transform the world, facilitated learning among faculty members through open dialogue (Freire, 1969/1996). While both CoI and problem-posing education emphasize student engagement, collaboration,

and the significance of dialogue, they differ in their student goals. CoI prioritizes knowledge acquisition, while Freire's model centers on transforming the world through reflection and action.

I used Freire's models of education as a lens to analyze the faculty-student relationship in online courses. In Freire's (1996/1968) problem-posing educational model, education is not about transmitting knowledge, but about empowering students to critically engage with their world and take action to effect change. In analyzing the faculty-student relationship through the lens of Freire's problem-posing model, it is essential to focus on the nature of the interaction and communication between the two parties. The dialogical-academic relationship is a key component of this analysis, emphasizing the importance of positive communication and interaction to promote learning.

Purpose Statement and Research Foci

This post-intentional phenomenological study explored academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. Freire's work informs the thinking behind this study. Freire's (1996/1968) two education models heavily influenced the view of education. The banking of education model is identified by the faculty's hierarchical superiority over students and focus on feeding content to the students. The second model is problem-posing education, a learning process *with* students which includes naming the problem, finding the cause, and doing action. Theory must lead to action for learning to be transformative. However, transformative learning, above all, depends upon dialogue between faculty and student, and student and student. "Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no education" (Freire, 1996/1968, pp. 73-74.) Using Freire's two models of education as my analytic lens, I was able to tease apart how academic

relationships are successfully created or not, from the point of view of both the faculty and the student. The following research foci guided my study:

- How do dialogical relationships between faculty and students manifest in an asynchronous online course?

- What are the lived experiences of faculty and students as they form dialogical relationships in an asynchronous online course?

Review of Methodology

Post-intentional phenomenology is a research approach that seeks to explore the entanglements and connections between the phenomenon being studied, the lived experiences of the subjects involved, and the researcher themselves (Kuntz, 2015; Vagle, 2018). It was created by Vagle (2018) as a tool to examine how these factors are interconnected and highlight things that have become so "normal" that we are oblivious to potential forces at play and potential assumptions. This method highlights the researcher's subjectivity and the need of taking their viewpoints and experiences into account when conducting research.

It is important to note that post-intentional phenomenology is a complex and iterative process that involves ongoing reflection and analysis of the phenomenon under investigation and the researcher's subjectivity. The methodology emphasizes the phenomenon's interconnectedness, the subjects' lived experiences, and the researcher's own positionality. Using a post-intentional phenomenological approach, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon's complexity and nuances, while also considering their own biases and assumptions. This methodology can be particularly useful in exploring subjective experiences such as academic relationships in asynchronous online courses.

The five-component post-intentional phenomenology methodology process used in my research was intended by Vagle to be iterative rather than linear; thus, I had "to revisit all five components throughout the research process" (Vagle, 2018, p. 139). I began by identifying the phenomena I wanted to study: the dialogical relationship between faculty and student in asynchronous, online classes. When I began to write my IRB application and work with faculty and students, I changed the wording from dialogical relationship to academic relationship to remove the jargon and make it more easily understandable for others. Vagle recommended that the researcher identify the theory that will be used to think with throughout the research process.

The next step was to plan a process for gathering appropriate materials by which I could begin to investigate my phenomenon of academic relationships. I developed a plan to speak with faculty, ask the faculty to keep a journal and provide me with a course tour, and interview students. My journaling constituted the post-reflexion plan in step three. Because of my experience framing and supporting teaching and learning with technology and my years as an adjunct professor in an asynchronous online environment, I needed to create space to write out and check my beliefs, values, and experiences. My journaling proved to be invaluable for me. I could ask myself questions and state my observations so that I could review and share them with colleagues.

Thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) is entangled with Vagle's (2018) whole-part-whole analysis of the phenomenological data gathered. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) described a method of "thinking about both theory and data" (p. 5). The approach is to read and reread Freire during both my holistic read-through of the data and the line-by-line read-through. Writing and reading my post-reflexion journal was woven into this process. The fifth step is actual text writing. Post-intentional phenomenology writing "might look a bit more irregular, and

a bit less neat and clean" (Vagle, 2018, p. 160). The use of vignettes in Chapter Four exemplified post-intentional phenomenology's irregular and reflexive nature.

Data Gathering

Given my professional position within my home community college system, I decided to engage participants from colleges located east of the Mississippi, outside of my state. For the purpose of this study, I exclusively included full-time faculty, as adjuncts often receive pre-developed courses and may not have the same level of responsibility in cultivating the faculty-student relationship. To collect data, participating faculty reached out to students who were not currently enrolled in their classes on my behalf. To ensure confidentiality, all identities of the faculty and student participants were kept anonymous. During the analysis phase, the study included 11 faculty members who met with me twice, as well as 12 students from two out of the three colleges. Out of the 11 faculty members, eight provided me with their journals for further examination.

My initial plan had been to be a lurker in one course at each college. Even though I had received IRB approval to do this, the computer information security officers ultimately denied me access to courses at each of the colleges. I pivoted away from being a lurker and instead asked the faculty members to give me a course tour. The first interviews with faculty were conducted in late Summer 2022, just as their semesters began. Second interviews were conducted in Fall 2022 and included the course tours. Faculty sent me their journals prior to the second interview. All student interviews were held in Fall 2022, often overlapping with faculty second interviews. In addition to the interviews, journals, and course tours, I had my interview field notes and my post-reflexion journal.

Data Analysis

In a previous discussion, I described Vagle's (2018) five-component approach for post-intentional phenomenology. According to Vagle, it is crucial to adopt a cyclical process wherein each step is continually addressed. I conducted several steps in my research simultaneously. I gathered data through interviews, wrote in my post-reflection journal, and began formal writing while continuing to read. For thinking with theory, I primarily focused on Freire's (1996/1968) two models of education.

This approach benefited me since it helped me catch presuppositions that shaped my experience with the learning management system. Doing so allowed me to listen to Freire, faculty, and students openly. During my analysis, Vagle's (2018) whole-part-whole approach was useful. Initially, I was overwhelmed by the substantial amount of data collected, which encompassed 34 interviews, eight faculty journal entries, 11 course tours, and my own field notes and post-reflection journal. Doing a line-by-line reading helped me to see micro stories that the participants were sharing with me. Throughout the process, I stayed in dialogue with Freire (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

I reminded myself that I was not looking for the universal essence of engaged pedagogy (Creswell, 2013) but rather the messy and unique relationships (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of engaged pedagogy within a community college asynchronous class. I explored the entanglement of subjects, objects, and researcher in the phenomenon (Vagle, 2018). Through this cyclical and simultaneous activity, the learning management system began to appear as a defining player in the academic relationship.

Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory approach is an essential part of Vagle's (2018) fourth step. By conducting a line-by-line reading of data with theory, one can

avoid "an interpretivist stance and <sic> embraces the mutually constitutive nature" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 12). Reviewing course tours, faculty and student interviews, and reading Freire helped me realize the mutually constitutive nature and complex role of the learning management system in shaping the academic relationship.

Discussion of Literature

King stated that faculty should be the "guide on the side" rather than the "sage on the stage" (1993). The guide on the side is the instructor in Freire's dialogical relationship (2018). Together the instructor and the students construct knowledge and learn with one another. Collaborative construction of knowledge can occur in an asynchronous online learning environment if there is interaction among the students (Garrison et al., 2000; Mello, 2012). Students, as a group, take shared responsibility for learning. The teacher becomes more than just the guide on the side, the teacher becomes the responsible facilitator for encouraging dialogue and allowing all the students and the teacher to teach and learn.

The Community of Inquiry paradigm attempts to codify faculty and student perceptions of faculty-student engagement through instructor presence and social presence (Richardson et al., 2016; Shea & Bidjerano, 2012). However, it does not describe the actual dialogical-academic relationship. Best practices guidelines and recommendations are essentially a checklist for faculty. A post-intentional phenomenological exploration of the faculty-student dialogical-academic relationship resulted in a richer, contextualized story that is more meaningful than a series of best practices.

"Social dialogue is important to trigger knowledge construction. The importance of dialogue is in turn founded on principles of the social constructivist theory" (De Wever et al., 2010, p. 517). Dialogue within a course, regardless of the teaching and learning modality, is a

critical element. Transformative learning, according to Freire (1968/1996) does not occur without questions and discussion. Knowledge is not transferred but is co-constructed (De Wever et al., 2010). Faculty and instructional designers must incorporate dialogue into the structure of all courses.

The experience in asynchronous courses allowed for reflection and for all voices to be heard (Burgess, 2015; Warr & Sampson, 2020). Whereas synchronous courses allowed for immediacy and a human touch (Glenn, 2018; Warr & Sampson, 2020). Most studies found well-designed online courses led to higher engagement and student success. However, Lambropoulos et al. (2012) found that asynchronous tools did not support true constructivist learning. This concern leads to the hints that both asynchronous and synchronous tools in the same course may create stronger academic relationships. Hybrid courses have the advantage because face-to-face is spontaneous but limits voices, and asynchronous communications allow all voices to be heard (Burgess, 2015). Many of the studies spoke about the success of hybrid courses. Students preferred the modalities in the following order: synchronous video, asynchronous video, asynchronous text-based discussion. Students noted that asynchronous text-based discussion allowed for more thoughtful discussions (Warr & Sampson, 2020).

Upon multiple deep readings of the empirical studies for this literature review, it has become apparent that a new understanding of asynchronous and synchronous courses is needed. Synchronous courses traditionally were defined as instructors and students sharing the same physical space in real-time. There are also real-time remote courses via video conferencing where faculty and students participate in real-time, separated by distance. These real-time classroom courses were considered the quintessential ideal type of course. This is in part due to years of higher education tradition. It is also due to the sense of immediacy, spontaneity, and

embodied presence of faculty in the room. However, simply because faculty and students share a physical classroom in real-time is not a measure of the quality of a course. A three-hour lecture is not the same as dialogue, engagement, and social construction of knowledge leading to transformative learning. A three-hour lecture is a return to Freire's (1968/1996) concept of the banking of education, a transfer of content. While an asynchronous course, identified by the separation of instructor and student, both in time and space, is not, in and of itself, bad. An asynchronous class allows for reflection and allows all voices to be heard, and students are unable to hide in the back row and not participate, as every action in an asynchronous course is recorded and time stamped. What determines a class that leads to transformative learning is not whether it is synchronous or asynchronous, nor what tool is used for dialogue and communication, but rather that the course is well designed and appropriately facilitated. The implication for this is that teams of faculty, instructional designers, and student consultants, as described by Cook-Sather (2014), need to develop courses, work through the facilitation, and evaluate continual improvement of classes. The team must examine the learning objectives and outcomes and determine what learning and teaching methodologies will lead to student success in meeting these objectives. Only then should they decide what tools will help those methodologies work.

Asynchronous and synchronous courses should not be viewed as a dichotomy, rather, they should be considered on a continuum that is neither good nor bad. It should include asynchronous, classroom synchronous, synchronous remote courses (in real time, though separated by physical distance), hybrid, and HyFlex (multimodal) courses. There are few true asynchronous and synchronous courses. Most courses borrow tools from other modalities. Asynchronous courses may have real-time student discussions (Warr & Sampson, 2020). A

faculty member may have real-time one-on-one sessions with asynchronous students (Glenn, 2018). Faculty include asynchronous tools such as discussion boards and social media communication to their real-time classes (Lambropoulos et al., 2012). Courses are more likely to employ both synchronous and asynchronous modalities throughout the semester.

As the restrictions surrounding social distancing for COVID-19 lessened, colleges and universities began moving towards HyFlex environments where students choose to participate in one of three modalities, classroom F2F, remote F2F, or asynchronously, for each learning session. Such a course needs to be designed to simultaneously allow for dialogue and communication inclusive of all students across three modalities. The faculty need to learn to simultaneously facilitate the learning and teaching in such a course across all three modalities. While a course should not be limited to the transfer of content, there is a role for LMS. The LMS is a repository of content for students to learn and evaluate, as a communications hub, and as an assessment hub. Courses may also contain opportunities to maximize existing social media (Northey et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2020; Ross, 2019). These tools create an immediacy for students who nearly always have their mobile devices in their hands.

The theoretical framework guiding this study was developed by Freire (1968/1996). He developed two opposing models of education. The traditional model, banking of education, critiques the teaching and learning style where the faculty is the all-knowing source of information and treats students like empty vessels to be filled. While the problem-posing education model is student-centered and designed to help students develop critical thinking skills. In this model, the teacher acts as the facilitator and guides and learns *with* students rather than teaching *to* them. The problem-posing model includes faculty treating students with compassion and creating community. At the heart of transformative learning is the move away

from the banking of education model to the problem-posing education model, where teacher and student learn with one another in dialogue.

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the-students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Freire, 1968/1996, p. 61)

Boyd (2016) expressed concerns that learning management systems are largely text-based. In this environment, the nature of online learning is disembodied. The focus is cognitively oriented learning rather than holistic and excludes action. Freire argued for a holistic, praxis-oriented learning environment with reflection and action.

Findings

The findings suggested that faculty often assume that setting an inviting table is enough to encourage student engagement, but this is not entirely true. Both faculty and students are responsible for the relationship. Without active participation from students, it cannot be considered a true conversation or relationship. Bringing in Freire's learning *with*, both parties must be involved for successful learning to occur. The learning management system played a significant role in shaping how faculty set the table for student engagement. Students, whose main goal was to submit work and complete the course, often responded transactionally to faculty.

Praxis in Education

Freire (1968/1996) introduced the term praxis to describe a process of reflection and action that empowers students to become active agents of transformation in their lives and the

world. Praxis combines theory and practice to create meaningful change and highlights the transformative power of education. In this study, while many faculty participants incorporated reflection into their courses, few included action within the confines of the course. It may be that student action is not immediate, but instead occurs over time and may not be directly attributed to a single course.

Nonetheless, three faculty members were found to have successfully integrated praxis into their courses. Professor Allyna sent her students out into the world to visit local museums, while Professor Ronnie had his students work through real-world examples and regularly received feedback from students about the transformational impact of the course. One student reported that she became the first family member to save for retirement, and her urging encouraged her family members to save for their retirement. Professor Karen met with each student individually four times a semester. She reported that she was able to instill in them a love of learning beyond her English composition course. These faculty members created a learning environment in which students learned *with* one another and were most likely to develop lasting relationships with their instructors beyond the course. Praxis is a powerful tool for educators to create a transformative learning experience for their students.

Changes in Practice

Throughout our conversations and journaling sessions, faculty participants and I discussed the changes in their teaching practices resulting from their conversations with me and their subsequent reflections. Some faculty became mindful of their approach to student relationships and changed their practices. They realized how much time they spent trying to connect with their students and how many ways they did so. Some faculty also became aware of how little they connected with their asynchronous students despite their methods to engage them.

Others realized that they prioritized their on-campus students over their asynchronous students and made changes to schedule more frequent check-ins with them. These changes included adding videos and more one-on-one sessions with students. Professor Joanne was inspired to introduce videos into her asynchronous classes.

During this research, I reflected on my teaching practice and made tactical changes to my courses based on student feedback. Instead of relying on announcements, I emailed students and created two weekly videos. I realized the importance of being responsive and adaptable in contacting and responding to students. Furthermore, my dialogues with faculty, staff, Freire, and myself led me to question the purpose of a community college education. Is the purpose of community college education singular, or does it encompass skills training for the workforce and liberal education to help transform students into productive citizens? I wondered if despite efforts to create teaching and social presence, if the ability to be more fully human, to have relationships is lost in community college asynchronous courses.

Technology and Pedagogy: A Freirean Perspective on Presence

Kahn and Kellner (2007) wrote, "Freire's intention was to adopt technology pedagogically to demonstrate people's inherent productive and communicative abilities, as well as the possibility of their utilizing modern technologies critically and as part of a means to rehumanized ends" (p. 436). So, despite Freire's concerns that increasingly advanced technologies would serve the cultural and economic interests of those in power, he viewed technologies as tools that, if used critically and carefully, could benefit the oppressed.

In their work, Farag et al. (2022) adopted a Freirean perspective to explore the role of technology in teaching and learning. Following Freire's philosophy, the researchers examined whether technology commodifies or humanizes students. Consistent with my own research,

Farag et al. found that Learning Management Systems (LMS) tended to encourage the 'banking'

of education, particularly in asynchronous courses.

Viewed through the Community of Inquiry (CoI) lens, the faculty's emphasis on their

relationship with their students can be analyzed in terms of presence. Specifically, the faculty

wanted to establish a deeper and more meaningful connection with their students, reflecting the

social presence dimension of CoI. To achieve this, they leveraged their teacher presence by

incorporating images, videos, and "I" statements that conveyed a sense of care and

trustworthiness to their students. This approach can be interpreted as an effort to increase their

social presence and foster a sense of community in the course. The faculty participants' focus on

cultivating a strong teacher-student relationship through presence aligns with the CoI Framework

priority to create a supportive and engaging learning environment. By prioritizing their presence

and conveying a message of care and trustworthiness, the faculty enhance the learning

experience for their students and promote a more positive and productive classroom community.

Examined through a Freirean lens, the faculty's desire for deep and meaningful

relationships with their students was not fully realized in the asynchronous courses. In fact,

faculty reported that at least half of the students were able to perform well without interacting

with the faculty, while others disappeared without any communication. Students appeared to

prefer a traditional banking model of education, where they received content, submitted

assignments, and had faculty available to answer transactional questions to complete the course.

Professor Karen's students were an exception to this trend. Through her teaching

approach, she fostered a transformative and engaged pedagogy that encouraged students to

engage with the material, reflect on their learning, and develop an authentic relationship with the

instructor. This approach aligns with Freire's emphasis on problem-posing education, which

seeks to empower students as active agents of their own learning and critical thinkers capable of transforming their world.

I employed Vagle's post-intentional phenomenology methodology to elucidate the obvious about faculty-student relationships in asynchronous courses and illuminate the role of LMS in education. Freire viewed the growing integration of technology into educational settings as an area of concern and pedagogical possibility (Kahn & Kellner, 2007). However, Farag et al. (2022) and Boyd's (2016) unexpected findings showed that the LMS plays a much deeper role than anticipated, particularly in the relationship between faculty and students. Asynchronous courses have a long history of utilizing various technologies, but today's courses are predominantly played out in the LMS environment, which limits rather than enhances the individual interaction between faculty and students. This constraint defined the parameters of the relationship, telling instructors how to teach and offering college templates that are inflexible and hard to change on the fly. This constraint made it challenging for faculty to design courses and made the LMS the relationship's first mover. As a result, students saw all courses as the same, which raised concerns about the relationship's nature. The CoI Framework purported to address this issue, emphasizing teacher presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in online courses. Despite this, asynchronous dialogue is often thwarted due to the structure of the LMS, and announcements and discussion boards do not provide an adequate solution. Freire's emphasis on dialogue and the transformative nature of learning offers a way forward, but asynchronous courses may struggle to implement this approach.

Learning Management Systems

Asynchronous learning is typically delivered through a Learning Management System (LMS), which is why these terms are often used interchangeably. However, the LMS has a

structured format that all courses adhere to, regardless of which LMS is used. This structure can limit how faculty approach course creation, as they may focus more on working within the confines of the LMS rather than taking a problem-posing educational model approach. Consequently, many courses look the same, and discussion groups become dull, leading to disengagement from students. The LMS was initially designed for the academic administration of grades and homework and a content repository. It may not provide sophisticated communication and engagement tools, which could be why students find it unengaging.

During the research process, unexpected insights arose regarding the influence of the LMS on the relationship between faculty and students. Despite the faculty's recognition of the significance of the relationship, the LMS tended to create a transactional one. The faculty-student hierarchy, criticized in Freire's (1968/1996) banking model of education, is perpetuated in current LMS courses, rather than being flattened. Communication between faculty and students mainly revolves around administrative matters, such as due dates and assignments, with the course content confined to a separate section. As a result, students approach the faculty in a transactional manner, mostly seeking practical assistance to complete the course. Successful students were those who submitted their work and regularly logged in to the LMS, but they did not necessarily develop a relationship with the instructor. In contrast, unsuccessful students stopped logging in, did not submit assignments, and did not respond to the faculty's attempts to reengage them.

The most successful instructors were those who engaged with students beyond the LMS through regular synchronous meetings. These findings underscore how profoundly the LMS structure influences the faculty-student relationship and the importance of finding alternative

ways to engage students for improved outcomes. The LMS structure produces (or does not produce) the faculty-student relationship.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study findings revealed that Learning Management Systems (LMSs) play a significant role in shaping faculty-student relationships in asynchronous online courses. However, since learning is inherently social, it is crucial to further investigate the impact of student-student relationships. Thus, a recommended avenue for future research is to conduct a similar study focusing on student-to-student interactions. It is important to recognize that community college relationships extend beyond those between faculty and students and among students (Felten & Lambert, 2020). Therefore, future investigations should explore interactions between students and other individuals within the college, including tutors, librarians, advisors, and support staff.

During the interviews, faculty members expressed concerns about first-generation students who often faced challenges understanding college procedures and terminology. Notably, some students had misconceptions about office hours, mistakenly believing it to be a time when faculty members should not be disturbed. Further exploration of the unique issues faced by first-generation students in asynchronous online courses would provide valuable insights.

Community colleges have started offering shorter semester courses, spanning seven to ten weeks, as opposed to the traditional 12-16 week format. However, the impact of these shorter courses on faculty-student relationships and the feasibility of establishing meaningful connections within such compressed timeframes remain uncertain. College leaders and faculty are eager to identify strategies for fostering relationships between faculty and students, as well as among students themselves, in shorter courses. Additionally, expanding the study to include

multimodal courses, such as HyFlex and hybrid classes, is recommended. Hybrid courses involve a combination of live face-to-face or videoconferencing sessions and asynchronous classes, with faculty determining the mode of participation. Conversely, HyFlex courses allow students to choose their preferred modality, while faculty facilitate all modalities concurrently. Examining relationship cultivation and nurturing across diverse course formats can offer valuable insights.

The current study focused on full-time faculty who designed and facilitated their own courses, while adjunct faculty often teach pre-designed master courses without having control over course design. This raises questions about how relationships can develop and be maintained in asynchronous courses when the course facilitator lacks control over course design. Further research is necessary to investigate relationship dynamics in asynchronous courses taught by adjuncts, where course design and facilitation are separated. This would provide valuable insights into how relationships are established and maintained in such scenarios.

Lastly, with the advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), it is crucial for college leaders and faculty to comprehend how AI technology impacts course relationships. Examining how AI either fosters or interferes with relationship building between faculty and students, as well as among students, would be beneficial for understanding the implications of AI integration.

Conclusion

While Learning Management Systems (LMS) offer advantages in terms of consistency and reduced cognitive load, there are concerns regarding the individualized and isolating nature of learning within an LMS. Farag et al. (2022) have raised important concerns about the impact of LMS on student reflection, community-building, and social cues. While reflection can compensate for the loss of immediacy, students may miss out on crucial social cues and the

ability to gauge their peers' tone and emotional reactions. Additionally, direct communication between students is often limited, as questions and comments are typically directed to faculty through emails. This restricts opportunities for students to gain diverse perspectives and insights from classmates with varied experiences and backgrounds.

Freire's perspective would likely view LMS as transactional rather than transformative. LMSs often prioritize the transmission of information from faculty to students, lacking the collaborative and transformative learning environment that Freire advocated. According to Freire (1968/1996), transformative education involves critical reflection and dialogue among students and faculty, allowing learners to challenge assumptions and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world. However, LMSs tend to emphasize individualized learning, limiting opportunities for critical dialogue and reflection. Thus, Freire would argue that LMSs align more with a transactional model of education, focused on knowledge transfer, rather than a transformative model based on dialogue and reflection.

The misalignment between faculty and students' perspectives on relationships, connections, and communication extends beyond online courses and affects other modalities as well. The influence of LMSs extends to face-to-face classes, as they create a standardized structure for every course. This transactional approach hinders problem-posing opportunities and limits dialogue and reflection, as noted by Farquhar (2013). The affordances of the LMS often restrict certain activities, shaping our thinking and making it easier to conform to a particular way of doing things.

It is crucial for community college leaders, faculty, and students to engage in strategic conversations that reevaluate the purpose of online learning, foster transformative pedagogical approaches, and empower individuals to regain agency in the educational process. By actively

questioning and reshaping the role of LMSs and embracing more inclusive and collaborative

learning environments, we can strive for a future where technology enhances, rather than

hinders, the richness of teaching, learning, and meaningful connections among all stakeholders.

This analysis serves to raise awareness among educators regarding how LMSs shape pedagogy

and empowers college leaders, faculty, and students to reclaim their agency in the learning

process.

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Appendix A

Faculty Participants

College	Pseudonym	Discipline	Age	Race	Gender	Interview 1	Journal	Interview 2	Course Tour
Northeast Community College	Allyna	Anthro-pology	40s	Latine	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northeast Community College	Ellen	Computer Science	60s	White	Female	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Northeast Community College	Neal	Computer Science	30s	Black	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Ronnie	Finance	60s	White	Male	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Mark	Web Design	40s	White	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Karen	English Comp	40s	White	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Helen	English Lit	30s	White	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Blake	Computer Science	40s	White	Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Community College	Rochelle	Nursing	30s	Disabled	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Community College	Joanne	Art	30s	White	Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Northern Community College	Craig	Literature	50s	Jewish	Male	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Appendix B

Faculty Recruitment eMail

Dear Faculty Member,

Greetings! I am contacting you with permission from the Institutional Review Board at ___ Community College and Old Dominion University.

I am a Ph.D. candidate in Community College Leadership at Old Dominion University (ODU) and the Director of Teaching and Learning Technologies for Virginia's community colleges. I would like you to participate in my study of asynchronous online courses at community colleges.

This study explores the academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges through semi-structured interviews, faculty journaling, and passive course observation.

As a faculty member, you may benefit from this study through the opportunity to reflect on academic/dialogical relationships in asynchronous courses, including ways to improve them. This research will help community college faculty and leaders best support asynchronous students. I am happy to share my findings with you.

To participate, you must be a full-time faculty member who has taught at least one online, asynchronous course per semester over the last three years. If you qualify and consent, you will participate in two 45-60 minute interviews. After the first interview, you will be asked to keep a journal for four weeks with a total of one hour of effort. I will provide you with a specific prompt for journal entries and the opportunity to write freely.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in my study, and thank you for considering my request,

Sheri
SPrup001@ODU.edu
Voice: 812-757-4374

Appendix C

Faculty Interview Protocols

*The interview will be recorded with your permission, viewed by researcher ONLY. Your identity and personal information will be kept private. All transcriptions and analyses will be anonymized. *Ask permission to record and remind participant that they may drop out at any time or refuse to answer any question.*

(Set record on within Zoom / Set iPhone Audio Memo on for backup).

Explain purpose of study. I want to explore the faculty-student relationship in an asynchronous course.

Tell a little bit about myself as PhD candidate, full time administrator, and adjunct faculty.

Semi Structured Interview Protocol #1.

Demographic information

1. What is your preferred name?
2. Tell me about yourself.
3. What is your academic background? What discipline?
4. How long have you been teaching?
    a. At what type of institutions (CC, 4-year college, university?)
    b. What delivery modes are you using for teaching?
        i. Face-to-face, online synchronous (video conferencing), online asynchronous
5. How long have you been teaching online?
6. Tell me a little bit about your teaching experience asynchronously?
    a. How did you learn to teach in an asynchronous environment?

Probing areas

1. Why did you become a teacher?
2. Please share with me what a successful relationship with your student means for you.
3. Please share an unsuccessful relationship with your students (for example: when you haven't been able to reach student or help them improve their work).
4. How do you create relationships/connections with students in an asynchronous class?
5. What strategies do you use to develop the relationship/connection with your students?
6. What technologies do you use to develop the relationship/connection with your students?

Conclude interview: Thank you for time and for your insightful responses. They will be helpful to me with my study. Via email, I sent you a few questions to use when journaling over the next few weeks while you are teaching your asynchronous course. At the end of the semester, I will reach out to schedule you for a short second interview. I will send you the transcript of this interview.

You may check it for accuracy and clarifications. You have my email if you would like to reach out to me with additional insights or any questions. Thank you.

Semi Structured Interview Protocol #2.

(Set record on within Zoom / Set iPhone Audio Memo on for backup).

Remind interviewee to provide oral consent and that they can refuse to answer any question or drop out at any time.

Now that you have an opportunity to reflect upon our previous meeting and what you wrote in the journal as you taught your course and provided feedback for student work, I would like to speak with you about your new insights.

1. Have you changed how you communicate with your students?
2. Do you have a sense of what strategies are successful/unsuccessful in creating relationships/connections with your students? (If appropriate, for example, I'll share how I've begun to create 2-4 minute videos that I sprinkle throughout my weekly announcements to help students get to know me.)
3. How does specific technology help/hinder the faculty/student relationship?
4. What non-academic issues come into play for faculty and student when trying to create this relationship?
5. What is the benefit of a faculty-student relationship in an asynchronous course?
6. How has thinking about and reflecting upon faculty-student relationship changed your view about asynchronous courses (strategies/technologies)?

Thank you for your participation. I appreciate the time you have given me for both interviews and for keeping the journal. I will send you the transcript of this interview. You may check it for accuracy and clarifications. You have my email if you would like to reach out to me with additional insights or any questions. Thank you.

Appendix D

Faculty Journal Prompt

Dear Faculty Member,

I want to express my sincere gratitude for your valuable time and insights that you shared with me during our recent interview regarding faculty-student academic relationships in asynchronous courses. Your inputs have been incredibly helpful in shaping my perspective towards the crucial role played by faculty in establishing and sustaining academic relationships with students.
As we discussed during the interview, I am eager to learn more about your teaching process and how you engage with your students in an asynchronous setting. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in a journaling activity that will help us gain further insights into your teaching practices.

For the next three to four weeks, I would like you to keep a journal documenting your teaching experiences, including the process of providing feedback to your students and creating meaningful relationships with them. The journal can take any format that you are comfortable with, such as a file on your computer, pen and paper, graphs and flowcharts, or any other format that suits your style.

We will review the journal entries together and analyze your teaching process, identifying areas where you excel and areas that need improvement. The journaling activity will provide us with a better understanding of your teaching practices and enable us to develop strategies to enhance your performance further.

I would like you to spend around 10 minutes writing in your journal 3-4 times a week for the next four weeks, immediately after working on your course. Your commitment to this activity is highly appreciated, and I am confident that the insights gained from this exercise will be immensely beneficial for us.

Prompt:
What strategies and technologies do you use to create and sustain academic relationships with your students? Strategies include communicating with your students, providing feedback, or any other activity you use when teaching in your asynchronous class. Technologies consist of specific LMS tools, external tools, meeting live, by Zoom, phone, or any method you use. Think about your goals and what strategies and technologies you are using. What works - do you know why? What didn't work - did you know why? What surprised you? How did students respond?

Thank you again for your time and willingness to participate in this activity. I look forward to reviewing your journal entries and discussing your teaching practices in more detail.

Thank you,

Sheri
SPrup001@ODU.edu

Appendix E

Student Interview Protocol

*The interview will be recorded with your permission, viewed by researcher ONLY. Your identity and personal information will be kept private. All transcriptions and analyses will use aliases, not your real name. Recordings will be deleted after six months. *Ask permission to record and remind participant that they may drop out at any time or refuse to answer any question.*

(Set record on within Zoom / Set iPhone Audio Memo on for backup). Ask again: Do you agree to participate in this interview today?

Explain purpose of study. I want to explore the faculty-student relationship in an asynchronous (define for student) course. The student perspective is vital to this exploration.

Tell a little bit about myself as PhD candidate, full time administrator, and adjunct faculty.

Semi Structured Interview Protocol

Demographic information

1. What is your preferred name?
2. Tell me about yourself.
    a. How long ago did you go to high school?
    b. Did you use technology in high school?
    c. Did you ever take a course online while in high school?
        i. If yes, video conferencing, or just using the learning management system?
    d. What is your college experience?
        i. How many different colleges?
        ii. How long have you been attending
        iii. What is your major?
    e. Have you completed any asynchronous college courses?
        i. How many?
        ii. Before Covid / During Covid?

Probing areas (All questions relate to their experiences within asynchronous courses)

1. Did you choose to take asynchronous courses (*define it for student*) or was it forced because of Covid?
2. What do you think about asynchronous courses? Do you like them (why or why not)?
3. You know I want to explore faculty-student relationships. Do you think the relationship is important? Does the relationship make a difference to your experience, to how you learn?
4. How do faculty communicate with you? How do you get to know your faculty? Do you communicate back with the faculty?
5. What was your favorite asynchronous course and why?
6. What is the most difficult part of asynchronous courses?

7. What strategies do faculty use that you like?
8. What technologies do faculty use that you like / don't like?
9. What do you wish faculty would do differently in these courses?
10. What technologies do you wish they would use?

Conclude interview: Thank you for time and for your insightful responses. They will be helpful to me with my study. I will send you the transcript of this interview. You may check it for accuracy and clarifications. You have my email if you would like to reach out to me with additional insights or any questions. Thank you.

Appendix F

Informed Consent Document (Faculty)

OLD DOMINION
U N I V E R S I T Y

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT *(faculty)*
_____ **Community College**

PROJECT TITLE: A Phenomenological Study of Dialogical Relationships in Asynchronous Online Courses

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The title of this research project is A Phenomenological Study of Dialogical Relationships in Asynchronous Online Courses. Faculty will be asked to participate in two one-on-one interviews conducted through Zoom video-conferencing. Video and/or voice recordings will be used to ensure that the conversation are appropriately and accurately captured. In addition, participating faculty will be asked to keep a journal during one month of teaching a current online asynchronous class.

RESEARCHERS
Responsible Principal Investigator: Dr. Shana Pribesh, Professor and Chair, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership
Investigator: Sheri L. Prupis, PhD Candidate, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership, Community College Leadership

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
The purpose of this phenomenological study will be to explore the dialogical relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. In an asynchronous online course, faculty and students are separated temporally and geographically. The dialogical relationship will be defined as the purposeful, positive interaction between faculty and student. As the classroom environment increasing moves online, it is important to examine how community colleges are transforming the life of students in asynchronous courses. For this study, dialogical relationships will be explored using semi-structured interviews and journaling focusing on practices in asynchronous courses.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research about dialogical relationships are formed within asynchronous courses between faculty and students. Your responses will allow researchers to better understand practices explored in asynchronous courses. If you say YES, then your participation will last for no more than two 30-to-45 minute interview

sessions through video-conferencing (Zoom) and your journal responses to three prompts over a 4-week period of your teaching. You will be provided with a transcript of your interviews for accuracy. Approximately 10 faculty with at least 3 years of asynchronous teaching experience will participate.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: If you decide to participate in this study, then you may face a risk of being linked to your interview responses. Negative responses could be damaging to your professional status. To reduce these risks, the researcher will not identify participants, their respective job titles, or the community colleges. The researcher will use pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and protect all identities. The names of the community colleges will be changed, and the geographic location will only be described as being located within a region of the United States.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is the opportunity to share teaching practices and perspectives on how to best create dialogical relationships in asynchronous courses. In addition, you may benefit from thinking about new ways to create and improve these relationships with your students, a valuable skill for future educational and professional endeavor.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will take reasonable steps to keep private information confidential. We will remove identifiers from all identifiable private information collected. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. The recorded video-conferencing interviews will be destroyed after they are transcribed. All documentation pertaining to the study will be stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's office.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study – at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Mitchell Williams, the principal investigator for this study,

at (757) 683-4344 or mrwillia@odu.edu, Dr. John Baaki, the current chair of the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee at 757-683-7055 or jbaaki@odu.edu, and current IRB chair at Old Dominion University, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Shana Pribesh, (757) 683-6684
Sheri L. Prupis, (812) 757-4374

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. John Baaki , the current IRB chair, at 757-683-7055, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**

Appendix G

Informed Consent Students

ODU
OLD DOMINION
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INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
_____ **Community College**

PROJECT TITLE: **A Study of Academic Relationships between Faculty & Students in Asynchronous Courses**

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The title of this research project is **A Study of Academic Relationships between Faculty & Students in Asynchronous Courses**. Students will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview conducted through Zoom video-conferencing. Video and/or voice recordings will be used to ensure that the conversations are appropriately and accurately captured.

RESEARCHERS
Responsible Principal Investigator: Dr. Shana Pribesh, Professor and Chair, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership
Investigator: Sheri L. Prupis, PhD Candidate, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership, Community College Leadership

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
The purpose of this study will be to explore the academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses at community colleges. In an asynchronous online course, faculty and students are separated temporally and geographically. The academic relationship will be defined as the purposeful, positive interaction between faculty and student. As the classroom environment increasing moves online, it is important to examine how community colleges are transforming the life of students in asynchronous courses. For this study, academic relationships will be explored using a semi-structured interview focusing on practices in asynchronous courses.

TYPE OF RESEARCH INTERACTION
If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research about how academic relationships are formed within asynchronous courses between faculty and students. Your responses will allow researchers to better understand practices explored in asynchronous courses. If you say YES, then your participation will last for no more than one 20-40 minute interview

session through video-conferencing (Zoom). You will be provided with a transcript of your interviews for accuracy.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION
You have been asked to volunteer to participate in this study because we feel your experience as a student who has completed at least 2 asynchronous (online) courses can contribute to our understanding of the academic relationships between faculty and students in online courses. Approximately 10-15 students who have completed at least 2 asynchronous courses at the community college level will participate from several different community colleges across the United States.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You may choose to not answer any question and you may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study – at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University nor with _____ Community College, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your course grade, academic career, job or on any work/educational evaluations or reports.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
RISKS: If you decide to participate in this study, then you may face a risk of encountering unpleasant memories of an asynchronous course. The researchers will try to reduce these risks by listening with unconditional positive regard. Additionally, the researcher will not identify participants, their respective course details, or the community colleges. The researcher will use pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and protect all identities. The names of the community colleges will be changed, and the geographic location will only be described as being located within a region of the United States. In addition, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. You may refrain from answering any question and may withdraw from the study at any time.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is the opportunity to share perspectives on how faculty-student relationships were created in your asynchronous courses. The data collected from this research will help community college leaders and faculty to better understand your experiences in asynchronous courses so that they can best support you and other students, in the future.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS
At the completion of the interview, students will receive a $10 Gift Card.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We will take reasonable steps to keep private information confidential. We will remove identifiers from all identifiable private information collected. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. The recorded video-conferencing interviews will be destroyed after they are transcribed. All documentation pertaining to the study will be stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's office.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury.

In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Shana Pribesh, the principal investigator for this study, at (757) 683-6684 or spribesh@odu.edu, Dr. John Baaki, the current chair of the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee, Old Dominion University at 757-683-5491 or jbaaki@odu.edu, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

(Please go to the next page for signatures.)

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Shana Pribesh, (757) 683-6684
Sheri L. Prupis, (812) 757-4374

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. John Baaki , the current IRB chair, at 757-683-5491, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I have been invited to participate in research about academic relationships between faculty and students in asynchronous online courses.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant_____ **Signature of Participant**_____ **eMAIL Address for your eGift Card**_____	**Date**_____

RESEARCHER'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher_____ **Signature of Researcher**_____	**Date**_____

Appendix H

Student Participants

College	Pseudonym	Discipline	Age	Race	Gender	Notes
Central Community College	Rubin	Fire Science	45	White	Male	Fire Fighter – Career Advancement
Central Community College	Miriam	Health Care Management	Late 20s	White	Female	Hair Stylist
Central Community College	Lorraine	Health Care	Late 50s	White	Female	Hospital – Career Advancement
Central Community College	Naomi	Computer Science	20s	Middle Eastern	Female	*Camera Not Working
Northern Community College	Martin	Accounting	Late 20s	White	Male	
Northern Community College	Susan	Therapy	20s	White	Female	Athletic Training for Football
Northern Community College	Charlie	Business	44	White	Male	GI Bill
Northern Community College	Mady	Neuroscience	32	Black	Female	Prep Courses for PhD Has BA Single Mom
Northern Community College	Midge	Engineering	20s	White	Female	Transfer Program
Northern Community College	Evelyn	Science	30s	Indian	Female	
Northern Community College	Liana	Nursing	20s	White	Female	Prepping for Exams
Northern Community College	Gila	Criminal Justice	30s	Black	Female	Single Mom

Appendix I

ODU IRB Approval

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Physical Address
4111 Monarch Way, Suite 203
Norfolk, Virginia 23508
Mailing Address
Office of Research
1 Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
Phone(757) 683-3460
Fax(757) 683-5902

DATE:	September 14, 2022
TO:	Shana Pribesh
FROM:	Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee
PROJECT TITLE:	[1881515-2] A Study of Academic Relationships between Faculty & Students in Asynchronous Courses
REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact John Baaki at (757) 683-5491 or jbaaki@odu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Old Dominion University Education Human Subjects Review Committee's records.

Appendix J

Northeast Community College IRB Approval

Re: EXT: Re: IRB Amendment Request

4 messages

Thu, Sep 15, 2022 at 4:31 PM

To: Sheri PRUPIS <sprup001@odu.edu>,

Dear Sheri,

Many thanks for this. The amended proposal still meets exemption criteria, and so I am pleased to report that it is (re-)approved. Per usual, I am copying Franklyn to verify site permission of the amended version.

Warmest,
--K

Appendix K

Northern Community College IRB Approval

IRB Exempt Research Application - Amendment

Sat, Sep 17, 2022 at 10:28 AM

To: Sheri PRUPIS <sprup001@odu.edu>
Cc: Shana Pribesh <spribesh@odu.edu>

Hi Sheri,

Thanks for sending these modifications. As outlined in your e-mail, the $10 gift card as a payment to students upon completing as a research participant seems to be the modification here with all other major items staying the same. Given that, take this e-mail as official approval of your modification and you can continue this research as outlined.

I wish you continued success in your research.

Institutional Review Board Committee Chair

Appendix L

Central Community College IRB Approval

COLUMBUS STATE
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 8, 2022

Primary Investigator: Sheri L Prupis
Protocol: A Study of Academic Relationships between Faculty & Students in Asynchronous Courses
IRB Log Number: ☐

As the Chair of the Institutional Review Board of ☐ Community College ☐, I have reviewed the proposal, and have concluded that the project is exempt from full board review under §46.104(d) of the Revised Common Rule.

Your project is approved and your data collection may begin on 08/15/2022, per the start date of research as stated on your protocol submission.

Should a modification to your project or methodology become necessary, you must submit a request for modification to the IRB for review prior to implementation of the modified research project.

I wish you success in your discoveries.

Sincerely,

Appendix M

eMail to Faculty Requesting Assistance to Recruit Students

Sheri PRUPIS <sprup001@odu.edu>   .Wed, Sep 21, 2022,
                                                    8:16 AM.

Good morning,

Yes, you've given of your time to speak with me. And, you are now reflecting in writing about what you do to create/maintain/strengthen the faculty-student connections.

Therefore, I have another ask.

Do you have students from past asynchronous courses (cannot be your current student) that you would be willing to send a short email asking if they would speak with me for about 30 minutes? Upon completion, I will give them a $10 eGift card.

I've attached a flyer for students and included some verbiage below.
They just need to shoot me a quick email that they are willing to speak (SPrup001@ODU.edu), and I'll do the rest.

--
STUDENTS WANTED (30 minute Zoom Interview. $10 eGift Card upon completion)

Sheri Prupis, a graduate student, is conducting a study of community college students who have completed two online courses. The study aims to explore the academic relationship between faculty and students in fully remote, online courses.

Students who agree to participate in the study will meet with the researcher via Zoom. The interview will last about 20-40 minutes. All interviews will take place remotely using Zoom and will be scheduled at the student's convenience. *After the interview, students will receive a $10 Gift Card.* All participant information will be confidential, and aliases will be used in any publications about the study.

If you are interested in participating, please email Sheri Prupis at SPrup001@odu.edu.

Thank you
SHERI

Sheri L. Prupis
Director, Teaching & Learning Technologies, Virginia Community College System
Faculty, Southern New Hampshire University, College of Online and Continuing Education

Leadership Appendix N

Student Recruitment Flyer

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

A STUDY OF ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS & FACULTY IN ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES

The purpose of this study is to explore students' experiences in online courses with their faculty.

STUDENTS WANTED $10 GIFT CARD TO ALL PARTICIPANTS

While this study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers, it will help shed insight into the development and facilitation of online courses that will improve student success.

REQUIREMENTS CURRENT COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT / COMPLETED 2 ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES

WHAT ONE ZOOM INTERVIEW (20-40MINUTES)

CONTACT SHERI L PRUPIS SPRUP001@ODU.EDU DOCTORAL CANDIDATE OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

VITA

Sheri Lynn Prupis
Old Dominion University
Darden College of Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Virginia Community College System, Richmond, Virginia
Director, Teaching & Learning with Technologies   2018 – Current

NJEDge.Net, Newark, New Jersey
Vice President, Academic Technology & Community Engagement   2013 – 2017
Director, Educational Technology Initiatives   2010 – 2012
Assistant Director, Educational Technologies & Administration 2007 – 2012
Educational Technologist   2000 – 2007

University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey
Manager of Instructional Technology   1997 – 2000

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, New Hampshire
Adjunct Professor, Applied Social Sciences   2018 – Current

Kean University, Union, New Jersey
Adjunct Professor, Sociology   2004 – 2010

Bloomfield College, Bloomfield, New Jersey
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Statistics   2004

Berkeley College, West Paterson, New Jersey
Adjunct Instructor, Social Sciences   2001 - 2003

EDUCATION

Old Dominion University   Norfolk, VA
Doctor of Philosophy, Community College Leadership

New York University   New York, NY
Master of Arts, Sociology

Douglass College, Rutgers University   New Brunswick, NJ
Bachelor of Arts, Sociology