Catalysts for Re-examining Pedagogical Assumptions:
A Phenomenological Inquiry into Higher Education Faculty Designing and Teaching Online Courses

DOCTORAL THESIS

Alicia K. Russell
Northeastern University

Submitted to Dr. Alan Stokopf
October, 2011
Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for their guidance, encouragement and friendship as I developed and wrote this thesis. First, I am grateful to my advisor, Dr. Alan Stoskopf, a creative and inspirational teacher who encouraged me, pushed me and challenged me as I investigated theories, developed ideas for my own research, and wrote (and rewrote) this document. His unfaltering, sympathetic support was crucial.

I’m also grateful to the faculty members who participated in my research study. They generously gave their time to meet with me and to talk and write thoughtfully and insightfully about their views of teaching.

I am indebted to my boss, Dr. Susan Powers-Lee, Vice Provost for Undergraduate and Cooperative Education, for her support throughout my studies and research, and to Dr. Judith Boettcher for reading my research and offering valuable suggestions.

I much appreciate the encouragement of my fellow students, Allison Ruda and Laurie Poklop, who helped me untangle conceptual knots and offered many constructive ideas.

I would also like to thank all my friends and family members who understood how limited my time was, and knew how to ask, just often enough, how my research was going, and who will, I trust, welcome me back into their lives.

And finally, I would like to express my gratitude to David, my husband, for his steadfast encouragement and patience; to my daughter Claire, 7, who regularly admonished me to “do your work!” as she was going to bed, and to my son, Quentin, 17, who in his own way is probably proud of me.
Abstract

This research concerns the potential of online teaching to prompt university faculty members to reflect on the essence of good teaching, and as a result enhance their pedagogy in both online and face-to-face courses. Ideas of developmental psychologists melded with related concepts from online-learning theorists were used as a theoretical framework for identifying key cognitive steps in the process of rethinking what it means to teach well. In particular, catalysts that can help motivate faculty to rethink teaching were suggested by the views of developmental psychologists Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner about the social context within which learning takes place, the advantages of learning from and with peers, and the value of cognitive dissonance as an impetus to learning; additional catalysts were suggested by the views of online-learning theorists Dede, Ally, Mayes, Moore and Swann about the ways that innovative technologies and web-based learning affect how people interact. To investigate how, and the degree to which, these potential catalysts actually come into play in online teaching, a phenomenological research study was carried out based on interviews with six experienced university faculty members concerning their experiences designing and teaching online courses, with special emphasis on how their views of good teaching may have changed during that process. The study highlighted catalysts that in most but not all cases helped to bring about the faculty members’ re-examination of pedagogical assumptions as they planned and taught online courses and reflected on the experience. The catalysts included the novel online-learning environment, new roles and relationships the participants encountered during the process of teaching online, the unfamiliar course-design process, and new forms of interaction they encountered. As more students take courses online and more faculty members are called upon to teach such courses, institutions of higher education have an opportunity to improve pedagogy both by tapping into teachers’ passion for teaching and by making the most of the catalysts illuminated in this study.

Keywords: Online teaching, qualitative study, phenomenological study, higher education, transformation, blogs, faculty
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem of practice</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background and significance</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions and goals</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of this document</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental psychologists’ views of the learning process</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning theorists’ views of teaching and learning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for this research</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Literature Review</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental psychologists’ views of learning for faculty development</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning theorists’ research</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions and goals</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving student-centered learning: New concepts, models and technologies</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good teaching</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Net Gen” learners</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New models, technologies, practices and learning environments</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review conclusion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Research Design</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it is not</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological research process</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Chapter Three: Methods

Site and participants .................................................................39
Participant profiles .................................................................40
Data Collection: Procedures and instruments for data collection ........40
Preparing the data ......................................................................44
Transcribing the Interviews .......................................................44
Organizing the data ....................................................................44
Data analysis ..............................................................................45
Validity and credibility ..............................................................55
Protection of human subjects ......................................................57
Conclusion to research design ....................................................59

Chapter Four: Findings .................................................................60
Introduction .................................................................................60
Chapter content and goals ..........................................................60
Qualitative and phenomenological research process .......................60
Background–participants views on good teaching .........................63
Findings .....................................................................................64
New course design process .........................................................64
  Summative points for new course design process .......................66
New learning environment ............................................................66
  Summative points for new learning environment .......................72
New forms of interaction ..............................................................72
  Summative points for new forms of interaction .........................75
New roles and relationships ..........................................................75
  Summative points for new roles and relationships .....................84
Reflection on the catalysts ............................................................84
Blogs .........................................................................................84
Findings Conclusion .................................................................87

Chapter Five: Discussion ..............................................................91
Introduction .................................................................................91
The phenomenological research approach .....................................91
Discussion of findings ...............................................................92
Developmental psychologists’ views of the learning process........................................92
Online learning theorists’ views of the learning process...........................................101
Interaction..................................................................................................................101
Content-to-student interactions .................................................................................102
Peer-to-peer interactions.............................................................................................103
Student-to-teacher interactions; teacher-to-facilitator-to-student interactions ..........105
Interacting via blogs.....................................................................................................110
Conclusion. ...................................................................................................................113
Practitioner and scholarly significance.................................................................113
Implications for practice.........................................................................................114
  New roles and relationships..................................................................................115
  New course design process..................................................................................116
  New learning environment....................................................................................116
  New forms of interaction.....................................................................................117
Further research........................................................................................................118
Concluding statement...............................................................................................120
References..................................................................................................................121
Appendices...............................................................................................................131
  Appendix A – Invitation Letter.............................................................................131
  Appendix B – Informed Consent............................................................................132
  Appendix C – IRB Approval.....................................................................................134
  Appendix D – Interview Protocol..........................................................................136
  Appendix E – Follow-up Email to Participants....................................................138
List of Tables

Table 1. University faculty members who participated in my research, showing their key characteristics.

Table 2. Data collection and analysis process on meaning faculty make of good teaching after designing and teaching an online course.

Table 3. Excerpt showing revised and enlarged version of my interview protocol with handwritten notes.

Table 4. Organization of data sources for the research project.

Table 5. Passages related to changes in views of good teaching.

Table 6. Partial table of one transcript in three-column format.

Table 7. Significant statements and formulated meanings for one participant on “changes in views of good teaching.”

Table 8. Clustered and superordinate themes that emerged from my analysis of one participant’s transcript.

Table 9. Narrative for one of the participants describing her change in view of good teaching after teaching online.

Table 10. Themes with significant statements.

Table 11. Themes from all participants. This table shows combined themes related to the research question for all of the participants.

Table 12. The key findings associated with catalysts for re-examining pedagogical assumptions during the process of designing and teaching online.
Chapter One: Introduction

Problem of Practice

Despite years of research on what characterizes effective teaching and recent media attention given to addressing “Net Gen” learning styles, most university faculty members still teach undergraduate classes primarily through lectures and tests (Hartman, 2007). In contrast, online education, which until recently has been considered an inferior substitute for classroom learning, especially for undergraduate students, is often highly interactive and student-centered, and makes use of many of the new technologies that educators (Dede, 2005) and developmental theorists (Bruner, 1977; P. Miller, 2001) claim help students learn. While the primary model in universities is still classroom-based teaching, recently many institutions have begun asking faculty to develop and teach courses online (Lloyd, 2009; Sloan-C, 2008). Even universities that pride themselves on what they see as their “signature” face-to-face courses are now developing online classes online to fill specific needs (Keller & Parry, 2010; Powers-Lee, personal communication, January 18, 2010).

Thus, the trend toward delivering more online courses offers a great, if inadvertent, opportunity to revitalize teaching: Instructors who are exposed to ideas and technologies during the process of developing online courses are induced to rethink their teaching styles in light of the greater student engagement that they see elicited by novel online offerings (Shea, Pelz, Fredericksen, & Pickett, 2002). Ideas and techniques that they encounter during the process of developing online courses, in turn, can inform what they do in their traditional classrooms (Lowes, 2008). In short, when this faculty learning process is well-designed and carried out, it can effectively become an energizing tutorial on best educational practices (Lowes, 2008).

But this desirable outcome is not a given. To be sure, preliminary research indicates that faculty engage in a certain amount of rethinking about the way they prepare learning materials and activities, interact with students and assess their students’ work as a result of their experiences with online teaching (Lowes, 2008; McQuiggan, 2007; Shea et al., 2002). Still, what is missing is a close examination of the specific activities that best help faculty think deeply about teaching. Indeed, although online educators have written about how teaching online can change the way faculty think about teaching, little has been published about how to encourage faculty to reconsider their views of good pedagogy, and when appropriate, transfer what they
have learned to their classroom teaching. Additionally, it is not clear which new technologies can assist with the rethinking and transfer.

**Background and Significance**

Since 1999, when Don Tapscott first coined the term “Net Gen” and claimed that today’s students learn differently from those of earlier generations, educational technologists (Dede, 2005, 2009a; Mayes, 2006) and online learning theorists have argued that faculty need to teach differently in order to address students’ novel learning styles (Dede, 2005; Hartman, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Mayes, 2006). The latest technologies, such as social-networking software, wikis, blogs, immersive virtual worlds and situated learning environments, offer radically new ways to support interaction and collaboration. Ironically, the changes that are underway offer an opportunity to draw on the insights of a number of seminal educational thinkers of the past century in order to advance the cause of technology-assisted learning. More specifically, while restructuring teaching and learning to take advantage of the new technologies and address new learning styles, educational thinkers are grappling with fundamental questions about the nature of good teaching—the same ones that preoccupied progressive educators and philosophers of the past (Dede, 2008; Mayes, 2006). Indeed, current online-learning theories have their roots in child-centered, constructivist, experiential and problem-based learning activities proposed by educational philosophers from Rousseau to Dewey, as does the often-cited Chickering and Gamson’s “7 Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” (1987). As Lawrence Ragan succinctly observed in 1999, “Good teaching is good teaching” (Ragan, 1999, p. 1).

Still, at major research universities, faculty are typically hired, and later win tenure, for their expertise in their specialties and for their abilities as researchers, not for their teaching prowess (Hartman, 2007). They often teach the way they were taught (Britzman, 1991; Hartman, 2007), relying on lectures and tests while engaging in little interaction with students, and requiring little or none among students. There is scant incentive for faculty at research institutions to change teaching practices that they believe work, especially when they face competing pressures of research and publishing, and are not rewarded for thinking about, or changing their teaching.

In contrast, unlike many university departments, which send new faculty into the classroom with little or no formal instruction in pedagogy, online development programs such as the SUNY Learning Network (SLN) require faculty to complete a multi-stage faculty
development program and multi-step course design process before they teach online (Shea et al., 2002). During SLN’s training for online courses—which can require as much as 120 hours—faculty learn strategies for facilitating discussions and collaborative group projects and how to design assessment into their curriculum through essays, quizzes, tests, projects, and portfolios (Lowes, 2008; Shea et al., 2002). Based on surveys with instructors who teach both online and in the classroom, both Shea and Lowes have shown that, as they first develop, and then teach online classes, instructors rethink their teaching: They analyze what they are teaching, how they teach, and how they can better communicate with their students (Lowes, 2008). Further, based on preliminary research, including surveys of faculty who have taught both online and face-to-face, Shea and Lowes argue that not only does the experience of developing and teaching an online class change the way faculty think about teaching online, it can also change the way they teach in the classroom (Lowes, 2008; Shea et al., 2002).

As more universities begin to offer more courses online, such findings could have significant implications for their faculty who teach both online and face-to-face. Northeastern University, for example, is planning to create online courses for students who are away from the university for six months at a time on co-op (working at jobs related to their majors) so they can complete their program of study within four rather than the current five years. This model of taking a class while on co-op would keep students more closely tied to the university and thus, it is hoped, increase retention (Powers-Lee, personal communication, June 4, 2009). The University is also interested in online courses to address needs of other institutions, such as permitting students to retake classes they have failed so they can remain with their cohort groups; reducing the size of large classes by offering high-demand classes in online formats; relieving classroom shortages; and offering more flexibility to students (Russell & McCarron, 2009).

Universities’ current drive to have faculty develop and teach online courses could produce multiple benefits. These include high quality online courses for undergraduates, and enhanced face-to-face courses when faculty transfer what they have learned from building and teaching online courses to the classroom. Identifying the kinds of experiences that prompt instructors to re-examine and improve their pedagogy could be invaluable for institutions as they
begin the process of accommodating their neomillennial students\(^1\) with new online offerings.

Helping faculty transfer new skills acquired in the designing and teaching of online courses to their classroom teaching would result in multiple benefits.

**Research Question and Goals**

Both practical and intellectual goals have motivated this study. The practical goal is to achieve a detailed understanding of how designing and teaching online courses can transform faculty members’ views of what it means to teach well. This knowledge could help institutions encourage more faculty to teach online courses by, among other things, highlighting the fact that teaching online can lead to enhanced classroom teaching. Additionally, the research could help inform policy decisions related to online course development, as well as those aimed at improving teaching, resulting in the benefits described earlier. The intellectual goals are to understand more about what prompts faculty to think deeply about teaching, to take the risks necessary to change their pedagogical approaches, and then to integrate the new approaches into their face-to-face teaching. The following overarching research question has guided the pursuit of these goals: How and to what extent can designing and teaching an online course prompt faculty members to rethink what it means to teach well?

**Organization of this Document**

This document is organized into five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Design, Report of Research Findings, and Discussion of the Research Findings. The first chapter outlines the purpose of the study, a statement of the problem and its significance, the research questions, and the theoretical framework that informs the investigation of the problem of practice. This framework draws from two perspectives—developmental psychologists’ views of learning and the work of online learning theorists. These perspectives provide a lens for viewing questions identified in the literature review. The second chapter’s literature review focuses on three bodies of work related to the problem of practice and theoretical framework: developmental psychologists’ views of learning, perspectives of online-learning theorists and instructional designers, and new kinds and models of technology for learning. The third chapter details the study’s research design, which was conducted via a phenomenological approach. It describes the research process, as delineated by Moustakas (1994), Creswell (2006), and Smith,

---

\(^1\) Neomillennial refers to students who learn through virtual environments and augmented realities via the Internet.
Flowers & Larkin (2009): engaging in interviews with six individuals; writing about this researcher’s views in an effort to “bracket” her perspectives; transcribing and analyzing the interviews; identifying significant statements; classifying them into themes; and concluding with a written description that captures the commonalities of their experiences. This section also outlines strategies for insuring validity and credibility, specifically for a phenomenological study. Additionally, it covers the investigation’s strategy for protecting human subjects. Because some of the participants kept blogs as supplemental data, specific measures were employed to insure confidentiality and protection of the participants when making use of this technology. Chapter Four presents the findings that emerged from interviews with the study’s six faculty member participants. The findings highlighted a series of catalysts that in most but not all cases helped to bring about the faculty members’ re-examination of pedagogical assumptions as they planned and taught online courses and reflected on the experience. Chapter Five offers an analysis of how these themes might have become catalysts, suggests the study’s scholarly significance and implications for practice, and offers possible avenues for further research.
Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical perspectives have informed the investigation of the problem of practice. The first perspective draws from the theories of developmental psychologists, specifically the socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky, and the cognitive constructivist theories of Bruner and Piaget. In particular, certain aspects of the theories provide valuable insights on the experiences of faculty members when they first construct online courses. The second perspective draws on the work of online learning theorists, including Dede, Ally, and Mayes, who have extended these earlier thinkers’ concepts. These theorists offer new perspectives on the ways novel technologies impact how people connect and interact, and on the selection of activities that could be used as levers to encourage faculty to rethink teaching. Both theoretical perspectives clarify the cognitive process faculty are likely to go through when developing and teaching online courses, as well as how the introduction of novel technologies and strategies can potentially serve as catalysts to help faculty members enhance their teaching practices.

Developmental psychologists’ views of the learning process.

This investigation’s first theoretical perspective is derived from Lev Vygotsky’s idea that a child moves through what he terms a “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD) with the support of a guide, or more knowledgeable others (MKO), while learning a new concept (P. Miller, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is the area in which learning can occur only with the assistance of an MKO who leads the learner to a higher level of understanding. Vygotsky’s use of this notion of the ZPD and the extension of it by others (Borthick, Jones, & Wakai, 2003; Welk, 2006) suggests how faculty can be seen as moving through their own ZPDs with the support of MKOs (in this case, instructional designers) while working through the problem of constructing online courses. Ideally, an instructional designer and faculty member engage in “intersubjectivity” (Vygotsky, 1978), or shared understanding, based on the common goal of doing what is necessary to create a course. According to this model, both learn from each other as the instructional designer adjusts the level of support to the needs of the faculty member.

In the Vygotskian view, learning takes place in a social context (Kozulin, Gendis, Ageyev, & S. Miller, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, according to Eun (2008) and Huang (2002), as they create online courses, faculty members may benefit from working with peers (other faculty members). They may also record their experiences, making journal entries about
their peer interactions and evolving thoughts about online teaching as aids to reflection on their own learning processes (Sheahan, 2009; Willingham, 2009). This idea of “co-constructing” in conjunction with reflection via “inner speech” (Vygotsky, 1978) offer a valuable template for identifying the kind of mental retooling that may be required for teaching online classes, and that may also facilitate the transfer of what is gained in that process to other educational settings—in particular, traditional, face-to-face teaching.

Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner emphasized the importance of various forms of cognitive dissonance as an impetus for learning. Piaget proposed that peer interactions engendering cognitive conflict can assist the learning progress (P. Miller, 2001), and Vygotsky suggested that cognitive development can occur via the resolution of conflicts. For faculty, inner conflicts can arise as a result of differences between their longstanding views on effective teaching strategies and new ideas they encounter while developing online courses. These theoreticians’ provocative ideas about cognitive dissonance and learning informed my notion that faculty members’ efforts to synthesize disparate ideas about the learning process is likely to assist them in developing more versatile pedagogical strategies, which would then encourage them to integrate what they learn to different teaching contexts (Borthick et al., 2003).

Piaget’s theory of disequilibrium, too, illuminated the cognitive transformation that accompanies learning and, in the context of this study, suggested how to foster it in a way that benefits both teachers and their students. Piaget posited that the exposure to new concepts can be unsettling, leading to a sense of disequilibrium that is necessary for learning (P. Miller, 2001). This insight is critical: Optimal learning often cannot take place without an element of inner turmoil, and efforts to eliminate this aspect of an educational experience, though well-intentioned, can backfire. Piaget’s views highlighted the stress faculty might experience when they are introduced to new concepts, techniques and technologies as they develop online courses, and it suggested that this disequilibrium may ultimately help create the emotional energy that is needed to assist them in overcoming the challenges that arise when they attempt to integrate new ideas and methods into their teaching practice.

Piaget’s theory of adaptation, and the harmonizing processes of assimilation and accommodation, too, has also been relevant to this investigation of faculty learning. Piaget suggested that cognitive growth occurs at that point between assimilation and accommodation, a point at which there is a conflict between what one knows and what is new. It is in the act of
mentally stretching to assimilate the new ideas that learning, and then adaptation, occurs (P. Miller, 2001). Both the opportunities and constraints presented by a new online teaching environment may lead faculty to experience the kind of cognitive dissonance Piaget envisioned. In Drago-Severson’s (2004) view, in order to make the most of such cognitive dissonance as a learning opportunity, facilitators should try to strike a balance between comfort and anxiety as they work with teachers on course design and teaching. Exploring ways to achieve this delicate balance became an important element in this study’s problem of practice.

Vygotsky’s ideas also shed light on the inner conflict that is necessary for the kind of deep learning faculty must undergo when expanding their educational repertoires to include online teaching. In addition, Bruner’s emphasis on the importance of relating teaching to what learners bring to problems, and his ideas on scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), were highly pertinent to this study’s problem of practice. When working with faculty, an instructional designer may build on what an instructor knows, then provide conceptual scaffolding that allows participants (in this case faculty members) to learn things outside their usual knowledge realms (Bruner, 1977), gradually moving from novices to experts (Bruner, 1966; Mayes, 2006). This is similar to Vygotsky’s conception of learning, in which MKOs help move learners to higher levels of competence (Kozulin et al., 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). These ideas suggest that while developing and teaching online courses, faculty may rethink teaching, acquire new skills related to teaching strategies and technology, transform them to fit their purposes, and evaluate whether they can be transferred to new contexts (Bruner, 1966; P. Miller, 2001; Pennington, 2005).

Bruner’s conception of the spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1977; Stoskopf, 2010), in which subject matter is revisited repeatedly and introduced at increasingly difficult levels, was also pertinent to the problem of practice. Gradually reintroducing concepts and skills that may at first seem overwhelming, such as mediating online discussions or assigning groups using wikis, could allow faculty to gradually become adept with different tools and methods. Bruner’s idea suggests strategies that might help foster the delicate balance between comfort and anxiety mentioned earlier.

A final point relevant to the problem of practice is Piaget’s conviction that emotions provide the energy necessary for engaging in challenging thought processes (P. Miller, 2001). His position on this is reminiscent of Kilpatrick’s (1918) and Bruner’s (1977) belief in the importance of passion for learning. Kilpatrick proposed that successful learning begins with the
“heartfelt purposeful act.” Bruner noted the importance of providing learners with engaging problems that tempt them to undertake the next phase of cognitive development Bruner (1977). Weimer (1993) and Willingham (2009) emphasized the importance of enthusiasm and “the zest for teaching” (Weimer, 1993, p. 18).

In sum, the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner helped frame the first aspect of the problem of practice: the process that faculty may need to undergo as they rethink teaching when developing online courses. The following section describes how online theorists’ views helped frame the second aspect of the problem of practice: the power of novel technologies to serve as a catalyst for enhancing faculty members’ teaching practices.

**Online learning theorists’ views of teaching and learning.**

Constructivist and problem-based learning strategies that had their origins in the work of Dewey and other progressive educators have been updated and translated into online learning theorists’ strategies. These theorists’ works also informed this investigation of what might lead faculty to rethink their teaching, and how technology might serve as a catalyst to that.

Siemens (2005b), Mejias (2005a) and Dede (2005) contend that the world of the 21st century is so radically changed from the previous century’s that we must completely rethink our approach to teaching and learning. Siemens (2006) suggests that we frame online learning within a new theory, which he calls “connectivism.” He cites the following trends: Learning occurs in communities rather than individually; knowledge is growing far more rapidly than it did in the past; technology is “mobile, embedded, transparent and ubiquitous”; and students increasingly have the expectation that their education will be “mobile, social, and connected” (Siemens, 2006, sec. Siemens also contends that technology enables forms of learning that are simply impossible without the aid of technology. Many of his points about social learning and tools reflect sociocultural, cognitivist and constructivist theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner. Siemens’ arguments that we derive our competence from forming connections, and that it is critical to know where and from what source to learn (Siemens, 2006; Stoskopf, 2010), echo the value of collaboration, and the importance of MKOs, as outlined by the earlier theorists. Siemens also observes that the new technology-infused world extends and amplifies the role of the teacher. He suggests that in today’s fragmented learning environments, where the central voice of the teacher is augmented by external digital content and expertise via countless websites, as well as YouTube, Twitter, Skype, blogs and wikis, teachers should assume the role of “curators”
(Siemens, n.d.) in addition to their more traditional roles as models, encouragers, supporters, guides and synthesizers. Siemens asserts that today’s teachers are only one “node” of information among many that students tune into, and thus should seek to influence rather than to control the learning context.

Dede presents a similarly provocative concept: that faculty may need to make a fundamental shift in the way they teach to accommodate “neomillennial” learning styles (Dede, 2005, 2008). According to Dede, faculty will need to learn skills in co-design to meet the needs of these new students (whose learning modes are addressed in the literature review), as well as to become familiar with co-instruction, guided learning-by-doing, and forms of assessment other than tests and papers (Dede, 2005). Dede recommends that faculty make use of software that fosters collaboration, such as Googledocs and Wikispaces, and media-sharing sites such as Flickr for photos, and YouTube for videos, to increase teamwork in learning and to cultivate students’ sense of ownership of their work (Dede, 2005). Like Siemens, Dede notes that the definition of expertise and knowledge has shifted with the advent of Web 2.0 tools. Instead of the “classical” view of knowledge as authenticated by experts and embodied in sources such as the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Web 2.0 version of knowledge is “collective agreement about a description that may combine facts with other dimensions of human experiences, such as opinions, values and spiritual beliefs” (Dede, 2008). These thinkers’ views helped refine this study’s premises about the significance of new technologies as potential catalysts for changing the way faculty teach and students learn.

Mejias, in his Pedagogy of Nearness, (2005b) makes the case that we should reconsider what we mean by “nearness” and “distance” in online learning. Rather than assuming that distance inevitably has a negative impact on learning, he contends that, in some realms, distance may be necessary before nearness can be achieved. He suggests that we make use of technology to find new ways of achieving “ontological nearness” when we are physically distant. For example, a shy student who is afraid to speak up in a face-to-face class may be able to post comments in an online environment, bringing her “nearer” to her classmates and teacher in the online realm than she is in the physical classroom. Additionally, distance (both physical and temporal) often allows us to see familiar situations or people more clearly.

Mejias further argues that online and or face-to-face experiences have the potential to enhance one another. Learning how to integrate them effectively not only offers new
opportunities for learning, but can also result in “a desire to reconnect to the world as a whole, not just the social parts that exist online” (Mejias, 2005c, Abstract; Stoskopf, 2010).

Dede’s, Mejia’s and Siemens’ perspectives draw attention to the need to create a more learner-centered environment in our complex, technology-steeped, and fast-paced world. These views also echo those of classical developmental psychologists. Thus, they have had important implications for the problem of practice here. According to these and other online learning theorists, one of the ways that faculty can become authors of learner-centered environments is by facilitating interaction (Ally, 2004; Lomas, 2008; Mayes, 2006; Swann, 2004). This emphasis on the importance of interaction brings home the idea that learning to facilitate interactions may be a key skill that faculty can learn while developing online courses—one that they can easily integrate into their face-to-face teaching practices. Strategies for enhancing interaction include Ally’s (2004) thoughts on how best to inform the selection and sequence of the learning strategies, Mayes’ (2006) work on how to design and facilitate the interactions among students and instructors, and Swann’s (2004) research on effective interactions in online courses.

Mayes specifies interactions of three kinds—interactions with concepts, with tasks, and with people—and suggests how students might interact with each at different levels (Ally, 2004). To facilitate learning, Mayes suggests that instructors consider the goals for the interactions, how they will be structured (how often and with whom they should connect), and how students will receive feedback to allow them to progress from novice to expert researchers (Mayes, 2006). Ally emphasizes that interaction “between the learner and other learners, between the learner and the instructor, and between the learner and experts” helps foster “shared cognition, form social networks and establish social presence” (Ally, 2004, p. 24). Both Mayes and Ally stress that students should be told what learning outcomes are expected of them, and they should be provided with models and feedback. This, they assert, is critical to insure that the interaction builds new understanding (Ally, 2004; Mayes, 2006). These theorists’ views helped crystallize a key point for this study’s problem of practice—the importance of purposefully shaping interactions to achieve desired learning outcomes.

Like Ally and Mayes, Swann (2004) focuses on the value of interaction for student learning. She compiled and categorized research on different kinds of interactions faculty may facilitate for their students—interactions with content, with instructors, with classmates, and with course interfaces—and suggested teaching activities for fostering each kind of interaction.
Additionally, Swan raised another important point related to the problem of practice: It is critical to provide ongoing support for faculty as they try out these new teaching strategies.

Another underlying premise for the problem of practice, suggested by some of these theorists, is that faculty will be lured by the affordances and the insights that new tools foster, rather than viewing them as imposing, insurmountable challenges. For example, Watts (2003) notes that technology puts teachers in the role of learners as they struggle to become skilled, and that has the effect of reminding them what it feels like to be a student. Ziegenfuss (2005) points out the value of the instructional design process for getting faculty to focus on what they want students to do before selecting technology appropriate to the task at hand. Others (Alexander, 2006; Dede, 2005; Greenhow, Roblia, & Hughes, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Lomas, 2008; Velestianos, 2010) offer engaging examples of how Web 2.0 tools specifically enhance teaching and learning.

**Implications for this research.**

This theoretical framework, therefore, has provided two key perspectives to guide thinking about the problem of practice. To briefly recapitulate, they are first, what developmental psychologists have to say about the ways faculty learn as they design and teach online courses, and second, how the contributions of online learning theorists have added to their predecessors’ concepts to extend the implications of their theories into new learning environments. Online theorists’ ideas on how new technologies affect the ways people connect and interact, as well as their views on the selection of activities that could promote change and transfer, were especially critical for the study’s problem of practice.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following questions, informed by the theoretical framework, are investigated in this literature review:

1. In general, how and to what extent can developing and teaching online courses change the way faculty teach face-to-face?
2. More specifically, what particular aspects of constructing online courses with new technologies, concepts, models, and practices inspire faculty to rethink their basic teaching strategies?
3. What types of support can best help faculty transfer skills they gain while developing and teaching online classes to their classroom teaching?

Three bodies of literature are related to the problem of practice and theoretical framework: developmental psychologists’ views of learning, perspectives of online-learning theorists and instructional designers, and new kinds and models of technology for learning. As noted earlier, two theoretical perspectives are used here as analytical lenses through which to examine the literature: developmental theorists’ views of the learning process, which illuminate the similar process faculty members undergo as they rethink teaching while developing online courses; and online theorists’ ideas about how novel technologies can be optimally paired with new educational strategies, which, among other things, suggest ways to encourage faculty to create more student-centered learning environments in both online and face-to-face classes.

**Developmental psychologists’ views of learning for faculty development.**

My first question prompted a review of the literature pertaining to the work of influential developmental psychologists, most prominently Vygotsky, Bruner and Piaget. This review also encompassed related work by later practitioners who built on these psychologists’ theories. Importantly, one of the later thinkers’ key concepts was central to the problem of practice: When faced with novel, difficult challenges, such as conceptualizing and creating a course in a wholly new environment, faculty may benefit from strategies delineated by developmental psychologists for enhancing children’s cognitive development.

Borthick, Jones & Wakai (2003), for example, suggest that Vygotsky’s notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant to faculty as they develop and teach courses. According to Vygotsky’s model, learners can be seen as moving through their ZPDs with the support of guides, or more knowledgeable others, who help foster cognitive
advancement (Vygotsky, 1978). This dynamic can be mapped to faculty (Eun, 2008), who can become learners when working with instructional designers to construct courses (Kozulin et al., 2003; P. Miller, 2001; Welk, 2006). Faculty can keep journals (Willingham, 2009) or blogs (Sheahan, 2009) in which they reflect on the learning process, in this way capturing “inner speech,” a process Vygotsky would likely see as conducive to transforming teaching practice. Borthick et al. (2003) note that a ZPD design approach encourages faculty to try out new ideas gradually, beginning with familiar approaches and adding new strategies as they gain confidence.

Vygotsky emphasized the importance of learning in a social context with peers and people with more expertise, or “co-constructing” (P. Miller, 2001, p. 393), in conjunction with reflection. A number of researchers and practitioners have identified a closely related point bearing on the problem of practice: Faculty, too, can learn via social interaction (Bransford, 2000; Eun, 2008), particularly within a defined collaborative group. In fact, Bransford (2000) emphasizes that the most successful teacher development opportunities are those that take place over an extended period and encourage the support of learning communities. Models for such groups include “Communities of Practice” (CoP), which Wenger (2006) defines as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2006, para. 2). Faculty Learning Communities (FLC), which aim to enhance teaching and learning (Cox & Richlin, 2004); and Faculty Inquiry Groups (FIG), which invite teachers to “identify and investigate questions about their students’ learning” (Bass, 2008, para. 1) represent two other notable models for collaboration. Vaughan (2004) has also applied D. Garrison’s and Archer’s (2000) “Community of Inquiry” (CoI) model to faculty learning communities. In this model, “learning occurs within the community through the interaction of three core elements: social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence” (Vaughan, 2004, p. 102). In the context of an FLC, the cognitive presence that Garrison & Archer refer to is a focus on teaching practice (Vaughn, 2004).

Within these groups, teachers can meet to share teaching practices and strategies, observe one another’s teaching, and offer feedback. All of these activities serve to make the classroom a lab in which “to try out new ideas, fail, and rethink practices” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006, p. 124). While participating in an FLC, faculty can be encouraged to explore different perspectives through trying out multiple roles as team member, leader, peer engaging in collegial inquiry (Vaughan & R. Garrison, 2006) and mentoring (Drago-Severson, 2004). The assumption is that
taking on unfamiliar responsibilities can challenge teachers to reflect on their practice (Drago-Severson, 2004) and transform their teaching.

Peer coaching (Gottesman, 2000; Skinner & Welch, 1996; Wlodkowski, 2003) also offers opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own and colleagues’ teaching practices in safe, non-threatening environments (Valencia & Killion, 1988). Peer coaching typically calls for a veteran teacher to act as a mentor, offering feedback and guidance to a novice educator (Huston & Weaver, 2007). However, even when senior teachers are paired with novices, both can learn. While senior teachers have more experience with students, newer teachers may have more experience with new technologies, and thus both will have perspectives that merit sharing (Huston & Weaver, 2007).

My exploration of the literature on CoP’s, FLC’s, FIG’s, CoI’s and peer coaching brought home to me the importance of collaboration to encourage reciprocal meta-reflection on teaching practice and to induce participating educators to enhance one another’s understanding of their learning processes and those of their students. These insights, in turn, helped shape my view that group participation while developing and teaching online courses may significantly help faculty integrate effective practices into face-to-face teaching.

Somewhat counterintuitively, both Piaget and Vygotsky highlight the importance of conflict as an impetus for learning—a point noted in my theoretical framework. Postman and Weingartner (1969, p. 136) emphasize this provocative idea in their seminal book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, when describing how difficult it is to get some teachers to change their perspectives on teaching: “In order for a perception to change,” they wrote, “one must be frustrated in one’s actions or change one’s purpose” (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 136). As noted earlier, Drago-Severson (2004) recommends that, as they work with teachers on course design and teaching, facilitators should try to strike a balance between reassuring faculty and encouraging them to take risks to make the most of cognitive dissonance as a learning opportunity.

Activity theory, which is rooted in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, also focuses on contradictions and conflicts, in this case, those that may occur when two or more “activity systems” come into contact. It is particularly useful for understanding the cognitive dissonance that arises as teachers change their practices when faced with new technology (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008). In their 2004 case study, Peruski & Mishra (2004) employed
activity theory as a framework to discover what contradictions and disturbances might emerge as faculty developed and taught online classes. They discovered that participating in online class development and teaching altered faculty’s views on course design, teaching, educational technology, and face-to-face teaching.

It is important to note that while developmental psychology sheds light on adult learning processes, not all aspects of the way children learn are relevant to adult learning. For instance, Vygotsky and Piaget posit that young children often simply replace earlier incorrect or incomplete concepts with new knowledge. This phenomenon may rarely apply to adult learners whose knowledge is more firmly entrenched (Saarelainen, 1997). Thus, it is typically much more difficult to get faculty to correct their faulty mental models, a process that Dede (2005) calls “unlearning,” than it is to help young children get their nascent mental models right.

To briefly summarize, the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, as well as the ideas of later thinkers and practitioners who drew on these theories, helped inform my understanding of the cognitive process many faculty undergo as they rethink teaching. Those who work with faculty might employ strategies aimed at inspiring students to construct new knowledge, solve problems and take responsibility for their own learning (Eun, 2008). Participating in a learning community (Cox & Richlin, 2004; Gottesman, 2000; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Valencia & Killion, 1988; Vaughan & R. Garrison, 2006) or learning to use their frustration as an opportunity to make a cognitive leap (Peruski & Mishra, 2004) while developing an teaching online courses may assist faculty in retooling their pedagogical concepts and practices.

**Online learning theorists’ research.**

This section explores the work of researchers who have examined the attitudes of faculty as they have developed and taught online courses. These studies were pertinent to all of my research questions—they provided insights about measures to encourage faculty to rethink teaching while developing online courses, about the kinds of novel teaching techniques they might integrate into their face-to-face practice, and about ways to assist them in such integration.

My review covered quantitative (Fredericksen, Pickett, Swan, Pelz, & Shea, 2000; Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2000; Shea, 2001, 2007), qualitative (Campbell, Schwier, & Kenny, 2007; De Gagne & Walters, 2010; Peruski & Mishra, 2004; Scagnoli, Buki, & Johnson, 2009) and mixed-method (Bishop & White, 2007; Hiltz, Shea, & Eunhee, 2007; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008) studies that addressed faculty attitudes toward online teaching. Researchers
investigated what faculty perceived as advantages and disadvantages of teaching online, what assisted faculty to teach online; satisfaction with teaching online; and how teaching online changes the way faculty teach face-to-face. Most of the relevant studies were carried out in higher-education institutions, but one was conducted with high school teachers to investigate what teachers who developed online classes transferred to their face-to-face practice (Lowes, 2008).

A number of the institutions require instructors to complete an online training program before teaching online (Hiltz et al., 2007; Lowes, 2008; Shea, 2001). Such training forces instructors to become online students as they seek to master new tools and techniques (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). The training programs include overviews of policies and administrative issues (Shea, 2001); technical training, including instruction on the use of learning-management systems; and pedagogical support, sometimes specifically aimed at getting faculty to rethink teaching for the online environment (Lowes, 2008; Shea et al., 2002; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008).

The pedagogical support often consists of a combination of instructional design, training in the use of new technologies, discussions about best teaching practices, and collaboration with peers (UCF, Penn State, RIT, Sloan-C, Northeastern). Course designers use instructional design models to help faculty understand their students, identify learning goals and performance objectives, organize and sequence content, develop instructional activities, facilitate interaction, and assess learning (Russell & McCarron, 2009; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008). Models include ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation), which is employed at UCF (“UCF Learning Online,” n.d.); Outcomes, Resources, Practice, and Assessment (OPRA) used at RIT (“RIT - Online Study,” n.d.); and consultation with a design team, used at Penn State World Campus, SUNY Network, University of Calgary, and Northeastern University.

Additionally, some course designers encourage faculty to review good teaching practices, such as the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” as they consider how to improve student learning (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009; Russell & McCarron, 2009). They point faculty toward best practices for technology, such as Blackboard LMS, that they already use to deliver their courses (“Penn State | About Penn State World Campus | About Us,” n.d.; “RIT - Online Study,” n.d.; “UCF Learning Online,” n.d.).
Research indicates that while creating courses or adapting existing ones for online delivery, teachers tend to re-examine the courses and rethink curriculum in order to decide what to keep, change or discard (Lowes, 2008). While designing the courses, instructors add interactive elements, including online resources, discussions, group projects, and debates (Lowes, 2008; Taylor & McQuiggan, 2008), and their comfort with technology increases (Peruski & Mishra, 2004). Understanding how this process maps to the way faculty learn, as described in the theoretical framework, is important for this investigation.

Lowes (2008) notes that as they taught online, teachers compensated for lack of face-to-face contact in various ways, such as finding novel methods to facilitate communication between themselves and their students (as well as among the students), to encourage students to reflect on their learning, and to motivate students to be accountable for their learning. Moreover, teachers found that they could detect when students in online classes were confused, and whether they were learning (Lowes, 2008; Pennington, 2005; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009).

In work bearing directly on my problem of practice, some researchers have discovered that faculty instigate changes in their classroom teaching that are inspired by online teaching. Such changes include redesigning courses by laying out new course goals and expectations; redesigning learning activities and assessment strategies; adding materials; incorporating peer reviews; developing online learning tools and new strategies for fostering communication, such as timely feedback; including more instructions; and using class time more efficiently (Lowes, 2008; Pennington, 2005; Peruski & Mishra, 2004; Shea et al., 2002). While Pennington (2005) argues that training programs are responsible for encouraging some faculty to rethink teaching, he and other researchers maintain that instructors also make changes in their classroom teaching in a less analytic way simply as a result of the experience of designing and teaching an online class, and then teaching face-to-face (Pennington, 2005; Peruski & Mishra, 2004; Scagnoli et al., 2009). Pennington (2005) discovered that faculty reworked content and made methodology and delivery adjustments. Peruski & Mishra (2004) found that because they had gotten to know their online students better through the students’ writing, they showed a greater interest in requiring their face-to-face students to write.

Studies that have explored faculty satisfaction with online teaching (including barriers that interfered with satisfaction) also point to teaching enhancements that instructors are likely to transfer to face-to-face courses, and what might assist them with that transfer. Hartman and
Catalysts for Re-Examining Pedagogical Assumptions

colleagues (2000) found that satisfaction in online teaching was related to adequate infrastructure, and support, mentoring and networking with colleagues, and rewards for innovative activities and student success. Shea, Pickett, & Li (2005) noted that faculty satisfaction was related to technical support, and to their having a positive experience developing and teaching online courses.

Of particular interest for this study, a number of researchers found that more satisfied online instructors reported a higher degree of student-to-instructor interaction than less-satisfied ones, despite heavier workloads (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001; Hiltz et al., 2007; Shea et al., 2002; Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009). This research raises an important question: Does more student-teacher interaction increase satisfaction? Or is it the reverse: Are satisfied instructors more likely to make themselves available to students? If the latter is the case, it is critical to understand whether faculty sometimes get discouraged while developing and teaching online courses, or while they attempt to integrate their newfound skills into face-to-face practice.

Addressing this issue, researchers have identified what faculty perceived as barriers. These include the greater amount of time perceived as necessary to develop online courses, inadequate compensation, questions of intellectual ownership, the need to assume new technical support roles, inadequate infrastructure, and inadequate faculty development and support (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hartman et al., 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001; Shea et al., 2002). These researchers and others have focused on making recommendations aimed at addressing the barriers and creating environments that encourage and support online teaching and learning. Such researchers and practitioners describe factors to consider in planning online programs (Levy, 2003); explain how putting appropriate policies in place may facilitate the development of online learning programs (Berge, 1998); list questions to ask when implementing the programs (Coulter & Matthews-Denatale, 2004); and explore what motivates faculty to teach online (Petherbridge, Covington, & Warren, 2005). Petherbridge et al. (2005) suggest that it is valuable to provide “a triangulated approach,” including administrative support, professional development and peer support.

Several of these studies suggested ideas for my research design. Like the authors of these studies, I was interested in conducting qualitative research to explore the meanings that a specific group of people (in this case, faculty members who are teaching online) ascribe to a problem
(Creswell, 2009). Scagnoli, Buki & Johnson (2009) used a “collective,” or multiple participant, case study to look at how college instructors’ teaching experiences influenced their face-to-face teaching. The researchers identified five instructors with experience teaching both online and face-to-face, then carried out a series of six data collection stages, including interviews, inspection of documents, and observations.

Also employing a case study approach, Perushki & Mishra (2004) followed three seasoned faculty members as they designed and taught their first online courses. Data included multiple interviews with the faculty members and those who worked with them, artifacts created by the course-design groups with whom they worked, and direct observations of the classes. Both studies provided perspectives on interviewing faculty participants and working with data that had bearing on my own research design.

Both De Gagne & Walters (2010) and Conceição (2006) conducted studies using a phenomenological approach. De Gagne & Walters (2010) study was aimed at exploring “experiences of educators who teach online at institutions of higher education in the United States” (p. 358). They identified research questions, located participants at a number of different institutions, and conducted interviews via phone and email. Following Lichtman’s (2006) six-step process, they organized and analyzed data until they reached what they deemed “a logical saturation point,” and were able to identify common themes related to faculty members’ views of online teaching.

Conceição (2006) identified participants, conducted interviews, analyzed the resulting data into clusters, then performed “imaginative” variation on the themes that emerged. Finally, she developed a “synthesis of meanings and essences” that showed that online experience affected the length and depth of engagement, and that the experience is rewarding in new ways.

Although my questions were different, these phenomenological studies outlined processes that were, in some ways, similar to the one I followed. These researchers’ recommendations and methodologies helped shape my view that creating a supportive environment for online teaching is likely to be quite important for encouraging faculty to reconsider their teaching, and in some cases, integrate what they have learned from teaching online into their face-to-face practice, particularly when their new skills require support that is not typically available in the traditional teaching environment. Thus, I included questions in my interview protocol aimed at investigating in detail the kinds of support that are most crucial for
inducing faculty to think deeply about the skills they have gained through their online experiences and perhaps integrate them into their classroom practices.

**Achieving student-centered learning: New concepts, models and technologies.**

This section addresses my second question; it also suggests some possible avenues to approach my third. I have organized this material into a series of subsections to address topics related to the overarching goal of achieving a student-centered learning environment. I begin with evolving views on what constitutes good teaching, specifically for undergraduate students. I next turn to interaction models. I then briefly summarize researchers’ and practitioners’ views on how best to address special issues surrounding today’s “Net Gen.” I conclude with online-learning theorists’ views of the power of new technologies and models to facilitate faculty members’ development of sound teaching practices.

**Good teaching.**

Educators have long advocated learner-centered instruction (Dewey, 1938) and outlined various principles and strategies aimed at persuading faculty, who often teach the way they were taught (Hartman, 2007), to rethink teaching practices (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Weimer, 2002) in ways that would foster such instruction. In 1987, Chickering and Gamson, citing 50 years of research as a basis for their work, published the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” as a call to improve teaching and learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Eight years later, Barr and Tagg identified current college-teaching practices as “The Instruction Paradigm” and advocated a shift to “The Learning Paradigm,” in which students “discover and construct knowledge” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 4). This was followed by Weimer’s work on learner-centered teaching, in which she advocated changes in, among other things, teachers’ roles and students’ responsibility for their own learning (Weimer, 2002). Bransford et al. (2000) posited that an effective learning environment is learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered and centered within a community. According to Bransford and colleagues, teachers who are student-centered “pay close attention to what students bring to the classroom”; those who are knowledge-centered focus on “what is taught, why it is taught and what mastery looks like” (p. 21); and “assessment-centered” teaching is built on “ongoing assessment to make learning visible to teachers and students” (p. 21).

Researchers Hartman, Moskal & Dzuiban (2005) also demonstrated that students favor learner-centered instruction. Based on more than 50,000 student responses at the University of
Central Florida, the investigators concluded that students’ views on what constitutes good teaching appear to be remarkably consistent across generations (Hartman et al., 2005). The six characteristics they identified can be readily mapped to cognate ideas in both the “Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” and the National Study of Student Engagement (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2004).

In his book *What the best college teachers do*, Ken Bain reiterated many of the themes of the works cited above and noted that the best teachers’ practices often naturally incorporate what various researchers have delineated about how people learn (Bain, 2004). (It does matter, however, whether or not teachers are familiar with research that underlies this knowledge—those conversant with the literature on learning are obviously better equipped to make use of it. Bain’s research echoes cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham’s view that much of what we know about learning is commonsense—“a fancy label for what your grandmother could have told you” (Willingham, 2009, p. 159).

There are clearly a number of parallel concepts about optimal teaching practices in the Seven Principles, Barr and Tagg’s recommendations, Weimer’s suggestions and the findings of Bain and Bradsford, et al. But one common thread running through their works stands out most in the context of my research: Their focus on faculty as authors of a learning-centered environment that facilitates interaction, a topic I address in the following subsection.

*Interaction.*

As noted earlier, designing and teaching online courses may prompt faculty to think more deliberately about their teaching (Lowes, 2008). Understanding how different kinds of interaction impact student learning may help faculty determine how to structure interactive activities to meet their instructional goals (Cottrill, personal communication, June 10, 2010; Lowes, 2008; O’Kelly, personal communication, June 10, 2010; Pennington, 2005; Shea et al., 2002). In 1989, Moore defined interaction for online learning as “learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction” (M. Moore, 1989, para. 3). A year later, Anderson & Garrison (1998) added two additional interactions to Moore’s definition: teacher-content and content-content. In 2003, they proposed the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, which “represents a process of creating a deep and meaningful (collaborative-constructivist) learning experience through the development of three interdependent elements - social, cognitive and teaching presence” (Anderson & D. Garrison, n.d., para. 2). Shea, Pickett,
& Pelz (2003) combined this model with Bransford’s model of learning (learning-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment centered and centered within the community) and the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” and called it “A conceptual framework for high quality, higher education, online learning environments” (Shea et al., 2003).

In 2003, Anderson posited his “equivocality theorem,” in which he argued that even if only one of the modes of interaction (student-teacher, student-student, student-content) is “high quality,” effective learning can take place, but that if “high levels” of either of the additional modes is achieved, a significantly more satisfying learning experience will result (Anderson, 2003, p. 4). Later, he too built on earlier models, including Moore’s (student-student, student-teacher and student-content), Bransford’s (student-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered and centered within a community), while creating a model with “two major human actors—teacher and student” (Anderson, 2003). By detailing the kinds of interactions that take place between students, teachers and content, Anderson shed light on what makes such interactions most effective. His model helped usher in a greater focus on the role of new technologies and models, including Siemens’ (2006) views on connecting within communities via “mobile, embedded, transparent and ubiquitous” technologies (Siemens, 2006, p. 32).

As presaged by Anderson, the role of novel technologies, and how they impact teaching and learning, has become a subject of increasingly urgent attention among educators as their classrooms fill up with “Net Gen” learners. The next section briefly explores this subject. Of special interest for my research is how these learners use new technology to connect and interact outside traditional learning environments.

“Net Gen” learners.

If, as researchers and online theorists urge, teachers should strive to create learning-centered environments, it is critical to understand learners. This need focused my attention on a topic that has inspired much research and debate in recent years: how today’s students differ from earlier generations of learners, and what teachers should know about their students’ evolving cognitive styles, preferences and needs.

Over the last decade, articles, a number of websites and books have been devoted to describing how young people, sometimes called the “Net Gen”— also called millennials (Jennings, 1997), or “digital natives” (Prinsky, 2001)—learn, and how their needs should be addressed (D. Oblinger & J. Oblinger, 2005; Tapscott, 1999). According to Tapscott (1999),
young people born after 1981 are fundamentally different from previous generations because they were the first to grow up surrounded by digital media.

Not only is the “Net Gen” immersed in and cognitively shaped by digital media, but also, according to the Pew “Internet and American Life” project of 2005, many of its members contribute to it. More than half of all American teens have produced videos, images, text and music, and many share what they create (Lenhardt & Madden, 2005). These youngsters are part of what Jenkins (2006) calls “the participatory culture.” Through collaborating with peers they develop social and technical skills that are valued in the modern workplace (Jenkins, 2006). Use of the web encourages students to compare multiple sources of information—to seek, sieve and synthesize rather than to memorize material from a single “validated” source (Dede, 2005).

Additionally, students remix and tailor information (and music, video and images) to suit their needs (Lenhart & Madden, 2007), a trend Dede (2005) refers to as “Napsterism.” We see examples of such recycling and customization of digital content in music on iPods, images and text on blogs and websites, and in videos on YouTube. Further, according to some observers, as students begin to use virtual worlds, a “neomillennial learning style” has emerged (Dede, 2005, p. 8). Unlike the “world-to-the-desktop” interface, which is “not psychologically immersive, virtual environments and augmented realities induce a strong sense of virtual ‘presence’ (Dede, 2005). Such “immersion in virtual environments and augmented realities” is thought to be integral to the “neomillennial learning style,” which Dede, argues includes “fluency in multiple media” including virtual settings, “communal learning,” and “co-design of learning experiences” that are “personalized to individual needs and preferences” (Dede, 2005, p. 7). Addressing this new style, says Dede, will require corresponding changes in pedagogy, including “developing learning experiences students can personalize,” encouraging collaborative learning, and utilizing new methods of assessment (Dede, 2005).

A widely-viewed YouTube video produced by Kansas State anthropology professor Michael Wesch and his 200 students, A Vision of Students Today, summarizes “some of the most important characteristics of students today—how they learn, what they need to learn, their goals, hopes, dreams, what their lives will be like, and what kinds of changes they will experience in their lifetime” (Wesch, 2007). Many educators believe that not just the “Net Gen” but also people of different ages and occupations are increasingly joining the “participatory culture” as they use Internet-based applications and smart phones in their daily lives (Jenkins, 2006). How to
help teachers gain facility with these tools themselves—a necessary prelude to their helping students make sound educational use of fast-expanding sources of digitized knowledge—was an important element in my problem of practice.

**New models, technologies, practices and learning environments.**

In this subsection, which addresses all three of my primary questions, I briefly outline online-learning theorists’ views of the power of new technologies to facilitate faculty’s use of sound teaching practices (Naismith, Lonsdale, Vavoula, & Sharples, 2004) and to assist them in creating flexible learning environments (Alexander, 2006; Dede, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Jenkins, 2006). These theorists and researchers describe new models for technology-enhanced learning and make linkages between the technologies and the opportunities they hold for participatory learning, peer review, and interaction (“7 Things You Should Know About…,” n.d.; Ally, 2004; Dede, 2009a; Greenhow et al., 2009; Mayes, 2006). Their practice is grounded in the theories of cognitive development I discussed in my theoretical framework, which can be extended to illuminate how people come to learn new concepts and strategies and then transfer them to new situations, as well as how new technologies can be used as levers to help promote changes in faculty practice.

A number of researchers and technologists are experimenting with a variety of applications that are collectively known as “Web 2.0.” These tools enable users both to “read” content, and to contribute or “write” it. Dede (2005), Jenkins (2006), and Lomas (2008) describe new modes of interaction made possible by these technologies, which they assert enable faculty to more effectively address today’s students. Lomas notes that “Web 2.0” tools put learning in the hands of students, helping to create learner-centered environments. Rather than having their students listen passively to lectures, instructors can make use of social-networking software, wikis, blogs, immersive virtual worlds and situated learning environments that offer radically new ways to support interaction and collaboration.

These tools encourage a shift away from one-way delivery by “expert” sources toward collaboratively produced content, and, similarly, from the delivery of “pages” to the delivery of “content chunks” (Alexander, 2006). In the Web 2.0 world, as demonstrated by wikis, such as Wikipedia and an array of blogs on every topic, facts are combined with “opinions, values, and spiritual beliefs” resulting in “knowledge that is decentralized, accessible, and co-constructed” by participants (Dede, 2008, p.80). Greenhow et al. (2009), Naismith et al. (2004), and
Puzziferro & Shelton (2009) identify ways that Web 2.0 can encourage learning: Users can connect with content and one another through social networking sites such as Facebook and Linkedin, and even create their own online communities with Ning; recommend favorite websites through social bookmarking sites (Diigo); post and share music, graphics, text and videos they have created through sites such as YouTube and TeacherTube; and remix and share sound, photos and videos with easy-to-use tools such as Apple’s iLife tools. They can also combine data streams from various sites to create “mashups,” such as Chicagocrime.org, which overlays Googlemaps with Chicago crime statistics (users can search by location or type of crime) and enables viewers to “compile, recommend, annotate and share links to articles, websites, or other linkable media” (Greenhow et al., 2009, p. 253), as well as to collaborate in real time through online collaboration tools such as Googledocs.

Naismith et al. (2004) describe how mobile technology can be used to support a variety of learning modes. For example, behaviorist (stimulus/response) learning can be facilitated through using cell phones as personal response systems (also called “clickers”) to provide immediate feedback to instructors (Young, 2008) in the classroom. Instructors can encourage students to “construct” their learning through role-playing in games such as the Virus Game (Collella, 2000). “Context aware” personal digital assistants can be used in situated learning environments such as “Ambient Wood” (Rogers et al. 2002). Students investigate real habitats using “digitally enhanced probe tools” to collect information that has been placed in the habitat. Students then pool their findings with others, reflect on their discoveries, and discuss hypotheses.

Web 2.0 can also be a lever for changes in teaching. For example, Chickering and Ehrman (1996) note the importance of using such technology to support and advance good teaching practices (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009), and they recommend use of a repository of best practices, strategies, ideas and facilitation for “just in time” learning for faculty. Faculty members who have developed online courses note that being exposed to new technologies can help them find new ways to teach that solve longstanding pedagogical problems (Cottrill, 2010; O’Kelly, 2010), and learning to use technology gave them a welcome intellectual challenge (Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2002).

Other “levers” are offered by organizations such as Educause, the Educause Learning (ELI), Classroom 2.0 and the New Media Centers Consortium (NMC). These organizations list strategies, research and information about effective teaching tools including “7 Things You
Should Know” series (“7 Things You Should Know About....,” n.d.) and the annual Horizon Report (Metros, 2009). The Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and online teaching (MERLOT) offers a searchable database of peer-reviewed learning materials and lessons as well as the ability to search for colleagues with specific disciplines interests (“Multimedia educational resource for leaning and online teaching (MERLOT),” n.d.). Teacher Tube is a YouTube-like video sharing site that focuses on pedagogical videos and learning materials by and for teachers (http://www.teachertube.com/). Content appears in different “channels,” or categories such as “College and University,” and includes videos such as Abraham Lincoln (portrayed by an actor) reading the Gettysburg address and a Powerpoint presentation, “Starwars geometry.”

An innovative poetry project focusing on Walt Whitman (Harris, 2009), in which faculty and students collaborate via social networking tools, integrates the use of many of these tools. Using it, students post photos and videos via Flickr and YouTube, maintain blogs about their experiences through WordPress, and jointly create web pages with MediaWiki. As part of the Whitman project, students also use Googlemaps to identify locations where materials related to Whitman’s poems can be found, and Twitter to add short comments to wikis and blogs. These tools enable authentic learning by helping students increase their fluency in the multiple media that underlie the “neomillennial learning style” (Dede, 2005; 2007). Projects like this allow faculty and students to learn together, with faculty serving as “curators” (Siemens, n.d.) or “co-learners” (Dede, 2005). Offering examples of such integrated learning environments may well be one of the most fertile strategies those working with faculty can employ to help motivate the integration of new tools into teaching practices.

These tools, learning environments and strategies help facilitate the kinds of learning that have been continually cited since Dewey: construction of learning, interactivity with concepts, tools and people (Mayes, 2006), as well as with content, instructors and classmates (Swann, 2004). As noted above, adapting to this new model of teaching—changing from a teacher-centered to more student-centered one involving novel technology—may be one of the more challenging transformations faculty have to face (Lomas, 2008) However, making this change promises to help faculty harness the emerging participatory culture that Jenkins (2006) describes to effectively address the learning needs of their 21st-century students.
Literature Review Conclusion

My review of the literature contributed to my understanding of my problem of practice: how and to what extent faculty become learners as they embark upon the process of designing and teaching an online course, and what might assist them with integrating effective practices into their face-to-face teaching. Exploring developmental psychologists’ view of learning strengthened my understanding about the process faculty undergo while developing and teaching online courses. My review of studies conducted by online learning theorists gave me an overview of what contributes to faculty satisfaction in teaching online and what they might transfer to their face-to-face teaching. Additionally, research on what faculty perceive as barriers clarified for me what institutional support may be necessary to create an environment that fosters effective classroom teaching. Finally, my exploration of tools, strategies and models that could serve as levers for encouraging faculty to rethink teaching informed my thinking about how practitioners have sought to create an environment that fosters learning. While strategies have been identified to prepare and support faculty teaching online, research is lacking, particularly through a phenomenological approach, on how to make the process of developing online courses an opportunity to allow faculty to reflect on their own learning, and then integrate what they learn into their teaching practices. My research has been aimed at filling that gap.
Chapter Three: Research Design

Research Question

As outlined in my literature review, preliminary research shows that the process of creating an online class exposes faculty to new ways of teaching (Shea, 2007; Shea et al., 2002) and may change the way faculty teach in the classroom (Lowes, 2008). To that end I identified the following research question to investigate this process: How and to what extent can designing and teaching online courses prompt faculty members to rethink what it means to teach well?

I investigated this question through a specific qualitative method, phenomenological research. Through deep interviews and supplementary data, I explored the lived experience of six members who have taught online and face-to-face courses, and attempted to extract the essence, or commonality of their experiences, pertinent to rethinking what it means to teach well.

Methodology

My research question calls for qualitative research, which Creswell (2009) defines as a method “for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). My investigation focuses on the meaning—and possible revisions of that meaning—of what it means to teach well, including what the participants consider to be good teaching practices. To investigate this question, I begin with the qualitative researcher’s premise that research entails gathering multiple perspectives and seeking to understand the meaning that participants construct from their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers spend time with participants, becoming “insiders,” but also acknowledge that their biases and their own experiences influence their understanding of participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) notes that while qualitative researchers may view their inquiries through theoretical lenses, their interpretations of subjects’ experiences are iterative and emergent, rather than based solely on theory or the researchers’ beliefs.

The particular form of qualitative investigation I used, phenomenological research, focuses on examining “the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon,” determining what the experiences have in common, and then reducing them to their “essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57; Moustakas, 1994); According to Smith et al. (2009), Flowers & Larkin (2009), interpretive phenomenological research is concerned with “how people make sense of major life experiences” and involves “situating participants in their particular contexts [and] exploring their personal perspectives” (Smith et al., 2009, p.32).
Phenomenological research has its roots in writings of Husserl and those he influenced, including Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. According to Creswell (2007), the philosophical assumptions underlying phenomenological research include the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones (Van Manen, 1990 in Creswell, 2007), and the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994 in Creswell, 2007).

My choice of phenomenological research as an investigative strategy is based on my assumption that my problem of practice—how teaching online can prompt faculty to rethink what it means to teach well—can best be addressed by understanding the collective experiences of a number of faculty members. Through the process of interviewing them and reading follow-up emails or blog entries, I attempted to extract the essence of faculty members’ experiences as they re-examined their assumptions about teaching well when they were designing and teaching online courses. Missing from prior research on instructors’ views of online teaching is a phenomenological approach, with its special focus on listening deeply to what people say about important life experiences. This approach could provide unique and valuable information about the challenges and opportunities faculty face when entering this new environment. Themes gleaned from this investigation could help inform policy decisions related to enhancing teaching excellence in tandem with increasing the number of online courses and the multiple benefits described earlier.

**What it is not.**

It should be noted that this study was not intended to determine whether faculty actually teach more effectively face-to-face after teaching online. Answering that question would require a lengthy examination of learning outcomes both before and after faculty design and teach online courses, which is beyond the scope of my research. Instead, my study was aimed at eliciting valuable insights to abet improved educational practices by focusing on how faculty members’ concepts about good teaching evolve in conjunction with their experience of learning to teach online.

Another issue peripheral to my research is determining what institutional support is necessary to help assist faculty in teaching effectively (A. Moore, Fowler, & Watson, 2007). While it was not my primary focus, this research and its findings could provide valuable insights on what should be considered when providing faculty support.
Phenomenological research process.

The phenomenological research process typically begins with a researcher’s identification of a “phenomenon” of interest (such as how teachers think about good teaching), followed by reflection on essential themes that constitute the “nature of the lived experience.” Next the researcher conducts a literature review, develops a set of questions to guide the interview process, identifies likely participants and conducts interviews. The researcher then analyses the transcripts of the interviews to find “significant statements,” which are reduced to themes. The researcher repeats this process with each participant, then looks for commonalities among themes. These commonalities constitute the “essence” of participants’ lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The notion of “bracketing” is critical to the process of phenomenological research. For bracketing, a researcher writes a description of his or her own experience with the phenomenon of interest in order to help prevent his or her assumptions from unduly coloring the study. Husserl calls this “freedom from suppositions” the “Epoche,” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85), and describes it as an attempt to set aside prejudices or preconceptions and see the phenomenon we want to study with fresh eyes “as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). This process is aimed at leaving the researcher with “purified consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85), prepared to receive new knowledge about the phenomenon. Creswell notes that true Epoche is difficult to achieve, and suggests as a possible replacement the definition proposed by LeVasseur (2003) in Creswell, 2007: “suspending our understanding in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). After specifying the phenomenon, the researcher identifies participants who will undergo, or have undergone, the experience, and then conducts a series of in-depth interviews with them. In addition to interview transcripts, data can include journals, art, music, poetry, diaries and observations (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009).

Moustakas recommends that researchers initiate interviews by engaging in friendly social conversation to create a “relaxed and trusting atmosphere” Moustakas (1994, p. 114). Researchers may then ask informal, open-ended questions. Creswell identifies two of Moustakas’ broad questions as open-ended questions: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?” and “What contexts or situations have typically affected your experience with the phenomenon?” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Researchers may also develop a semi-structured interview protocol to familiarize themselves with what they hope to ask (Creswell, 2007; Smith
et al., 2009), but these may be used more as a guide to thinking rather than questions they would actually ask during the interview.

After completing interviews and collecting additional data, researchers begin the process of data analysis. In phenomenological research, data analysis consists of examining all of the data and then highlighting the specific statements or quotes that demonstrate a participant’s experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

**Site and participants.**

My reading of phenomenological research indicated that a sample size of five to seven participants was adequate for a detailed understanding of the shared experience of individuals exposed to a social phenomenon of interest. For an individual researcher, interviewing and analyzing data generated by five to seven individuals at the depth required for phenomenological research is an achievable, realistic goal. I chose a large university in the northeast as the site for my research. For the purposes of confidentiality, the university will henceforth be called Any University Northeast (AUN).

After obtaining approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board, I contacted the director of AUN’s distance learning program to request her help in locating faculty who met my criteria. She offered to write a note to accompany my letter of invitation, and then email it to faculty with whom her unit had worked. My invitation asked experienced faculty members who had taught both online and face-to-face (F2F) to participate in a research study (see letter, Appendix A). As the letter indicated, I was asking that faculty member participants be willing to take part in one or two interviews of no more than 60 minutes each, and to provide follow-up reflections and responses to clarifying questions via Skype, phone or blogs. In the invitation, I also noted that there would be no direct benefit to faculty for taking part in the study. However, the creation of detailed accounts of their experiences related to development of online courses might help them develop useful insights on teaching, and could also to enhance their technical facility related to online offerings.

Initially, five individuals responded, contacting me directly. Of those five, four were able to participate. When I initially contacted the faculty members who responded, I asked for their help in identifying other colleagues who might be interested in participating. One participant recommended a faculty member, who in turn suggested two others. I invited them to participate, and both agreed.
The six participants who took part in this research study are full-time faculty with many years of experience teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. All have online teaching experience—one has taught a single online course, and the other five have taught multiple online courses for several years. Although it was not a requirement for my research, all of the participants had some level of support from the university’s distance learning unit and its instructional designers and course developers. All agreed to take part in an interview, which I indicated would take no more than 60 minutes, and to provide follow-up reflections and responses to clarifying questions via phone, or blogs. I have listed their profiles below in the order that I interviewed them. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect their identity.

**Participant profiles.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>F/M</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>OL teaching level</th>
<th>F2F Teaching Level</th>
<th>Blog/Follow-up questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>CGS</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Undergrad fresh comp</td>
<td>Email questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19+</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>CGS</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Undergrad fresh comp</td>
<td>blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>CGS</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>Undergrad Freshman history</td>
<td>Email questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28+</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Grad OT</td>
<td>Grad, MA, PhD. OT</td>
<td>blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5 FT; 20PT</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>MA Business</td>
<td>Email questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6 FT; 10PT</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Professional Studies</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>MA CJ</td>
<td>blog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Table listing university faculty members who participated in the research, with their key characteristics.*

**Data Collection: Procedures and instruments for data collection.**

Data for conducting phenomenological research is typically collected via interviews, but can also include journals, diaries, photographs and music, as noted above (Creswell, 2007). For this study, data included an interview of up to one hour in length, and follow-up discussions via email, and for some participants, blog entries.

As noted above, Flowers, Smith et al. (2009) and Larkin (2009) emphasize the importance of “the participants’ attempts to make sense of their experiences” (p. 79). For Interpretive Phenomenological Research, researchers must be flexible in their analysis of
participants’ accounts of this cognitive process. The table below summarizes my research process, highlighting my preparation for conducting the research, my subsequent decision to utilize the phenomenological-research approach, the fact that this approach requires researchers to be vigilantly cognizant of their own thought processes while conducting research (reflexivity), and my data-collection process via interviews and related interactions with the participating research subjects. The table also outlines my data-analysis process, including close reading and commenting on interview transcripts, and the subsequent iterative nature of analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparations</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write reflexive memos throughout the process.</td>
<td>Interview participants who have taught both OL and F2F using interview protocol; ask them to keep blogs.</td>
<td>1. Write “epoch” or memo describing my own views of the research question in an effort to bracket my experiences.</td>
<td>- Write the findings, participants’ experiences, or what the experiences have in common. - Consult theoretical framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide whether the research problem is best addressed via a phenomenological approach.</td>
<td>Follow up with email, responses to blogs.</td>
<td>2. Read and re-read transcripts of the data, highlighting significant statements or sentences, and writing interpretations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose a phenomenon to study.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Initial noting, making comments on “descriptive,” “linguistic,” and “conceptual” language in the transcript.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Search for connections across emergent themes to develop “superordinate” or broader themes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Repeat steps 1-4 with each transcript.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. Look for patterns across cases and develop “superordinate themes that link all of the participants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Check with members for accuracy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Data collection and analysis process on meaning faculty make of good teaching after designing and teaching online courses.*
Smith et al. (2009) emphasize that it is necessary to collect “rich, detailed, first person” accounts, and that there is a benefit to collecting data from more than one perspective and more than one point in time (pp. 56-57). For example, occasionally I thought of a follow-up question after I had completed an interview. In one case, I realized that asking participants to describe a teacher who had been particularly influential would potentially elicit valuable insights about their views on teaching and their teaching personas. I then added the question to the interview protocol, and sent it via email to the participants who had already completed the interview. One responded via email. The two participants who kept blogs posted thoughtful responses to the additional question that they tied to their earlier interview responses. Adding questions after interviews enabled information gleaned in each interview to inform the next, which helped make my research process iterative, and thus an increasingly rich source of insights.

At the end of each interview, I asked participants whether they would be willing to keep a blog, or to respond to follow-up questions via email or phone. All of the participants agreed to respond to follow-up questions. Three agreed to keep blogs, adding that they felt it would be interesting for them to do so. Three declined for different reasons: Two said they did not have time, and one commented that he does not “believe in blogs.” In the end, only one participant generated a sustained blog, making multiple posts and responding to my comments. A second participant briefly maintained a blog, producing three entries. I was able to use these blog posts, as well as follow-up email, to inquire more deeply into the participants’ views, and, in the case of those who kept blogs, watch their perspectives evolve over time.

The unique features of blogs make them particularly useful as supplemental data-collection sources. While primarily intended as informal forums for quick observations and off-the-cuff opinions, they also often elicit more thoughtful, clearly articulated comments than do accounts not written for audiences, such as personal journals. Yet like personal journals, they offer the phenomenological richness of regularly updated recordings of lived experience. Thus, using blogs for data collection had the potential to provide me with especially illuminating material for analysis.

Immediately following each interview, I wrote a brief summary of my impressions and initial thoughts about the interview. I also considered things I could do differently in subsequent interviews to more effectively elicit insightful responses. For example, in my initial interviews I avoided explicitly stating my research question because I was concerned that my doing so might
influence participants to presume that their views on good teaching had indeed changed as a result of designing and teaching an online course. But after reviewing my early interviews, I realized that the participants retained vivid memories of, and opinions about, their teaching experiences, and that stating my research question was unlikely to skew their settled views of those experiences. An excerpt from a memo of April 25, 2011, memo shows how my views evolved.

I felt that these two interviews went better than before. This time I began the interview by explaining in more detail what I wanted to find out with the research. Explaining this helped me focus more tightly on what I wanted to know about. I followed the interview more closely, and in the process decided that the questions really did take me where I wanted to go. My first subjects were much more loquacious—just kept talking. The rhetoric/composition participants seemed “easier to interview.”

Table 3. Excerpt showing revised and enlarged version of my interview protocol with handwritten notes.
Preparing the data.

Transcribing the interviews.

I transcribed each interview soon after completing it with the help of Dragon Naturally Speaking voice recognition software. I used the following process: As I listened to an interview through headphones attached to a digital voice recorder, I repeated a participant’s words, as well as my own words during the interview, into a microphone connected to the Dragon speech recognition program. Dragon produced a written text of my spoken words. After speaking the entire interview, I examined the text file produced by Dragon while listening to the interview again, verifying the transcription’s accuracy and correcting errors.

This rather unusual transcription process had a number of advantages. It required me to listen very closely to participants’ words in order to speak them myself, which gave me a better sense of their ongoing thought processes and logic flow than I could have gotten from the typical transcription process, which necessitates repeatedly stopping an interview tape to type words. In addition, repeated participants’ words allowed me to enter more fully into their worlds, much as an actor might “get in character” when speaking lines for a play. I also found it far less tedious than the typical salutatory transcription process. When I listened to each interview a second time to make corrections, I was able to focus again on listening rather than simply typing, deepening my understanding of what had been said and helping to fix it in my memory. I found that I actually enjoyed the process and looked forward to my transcription sessions.

Organizing the data.

Creswell (2007) emphasizes the importance of creating a system for organizing and storing data associated with a study. I used the data management system detailed in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Initial Collection</th>
<th>Storage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recordings of interviews</td>
<td>Olympus Digital Recorder</td>
<td>Folder entitled “Interview recordings” until research is complete. Then recordings will be deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts of interviews</td>
<td>Blogger.com</td>
<td>MAXQDA and “Interviews” folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>3-colum table</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Outlook email</td>
<td>“Participants” folder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Screenshots in “websites” folder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My documents:</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Folders on my personal computer, backed up daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Memos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tables, Emerging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis documents, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Organization of data sources for the research project.
After transcribing each interview, I imported the text into MAXQDA, the data analysis software I used for qualitative research analysis. I also imported into the program the text of my email exchanges with participants, their blog posts and my own responses, as well as my reflective memos.

**III. Data Analysis**

As noted earlier, Creswell (2007) and Smith et al., (2009) stress the importance of researchers immersing themselves in their data. The phenomenological research approach requires that a researcher attempt to “bracket,” or set aside, his or her own experiences as much as possible in order to facilitate entering into each participant’s lived world. Authorities on phenomenological research acknowledge that it is impossible for researchers to completely free themselves from their own subjectivity. But just as looking at the world through a camera lens helps a photographer frame and juxtapose what he sees in new ways, I found that immersing myself in my data via different perspectives helped me remain open to new ways of seeing, and enter more fully into the participants’ lived worlds. I outlined my strategies in Table 2 above, and describe them in detail below.

1. **Write epoch.**

   Before analyzing the data, I wrote a memo describing my own views of the research question in an effort to bracket my experiences. I identified what I considered to be good teaching, and how I thought teaching online had affected my own views of good pedagogy. The following is an excerpt from the memo, dated March 14, 2011:

   "What do I think of as good teaching? When I teach, I try to give projects that build to a final product that integrates everything I am trying to teach. I do lots of group work. So what I think of as good teaching is similar to what I have since read is good teaching. A good teacher knows her subject deeply and is passionate, not only about the subject, but about sharing it with others, and having them understand it. How she does that varies from teacher to teacher. Lets students know she cares about them. Gets them to think. How does teaching online cause me to think differently about what constitutes good teaching? It made me think more about being very, very clear about expectations and assignments. And think about how to organize groups and teams effectively. I was able to use materials I developed for my online classes in the classroom and vice versa. Each informed the other.

   Not surprisingly, the research participants voiced several views quite similar to mine when addressing the question that I took up in this memo. It seems likely that their views and mine have been shaped by similar teaching experiences and by our similar educational
backgrounds. This makes the effort to bracket my views particularly important for my research.

2. Read and reread transcripts of the data.

I printed out the text of each interview after transcribing it. I then read through printout several times and made margin notes, identified some key words, and color-coded some paragraphs or phrases that stood out or seemed particularly relevant.

I also imported the transcripts into the MAXQDA data analysis program along with memos, blog posts and email exchanges. MAXQDA permits researchers to import the text of transcribed interviews into the program and then identify codes, or categories, identify and search for key words or passages, and write brief memos about the selected passages.

After opening a transcript, I began identifying words or phrases that seemed important to my research topic. I highlighted passages, phrases and words and began assigning simple categories. For example, I assigned everything participants said that was related to “what I see differently about good teaching” after designing and teaching an online class, to a category I called “changes in views of good teaching,” as shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5. Passages related to changes in views of good teaching.

3. Initial noting; identifying significant statements.

After my initial inspection of the data and some cursory efforts to code, or categorize, phrases, I moved to working with a three-column table, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009). In
this format, the original transcript text is placed in the center column, with exploratory comments in the right column, and emerging themes in the left column. Smith et al. (2009) recommend that researchers engage with interview transcripts in a variety of ways. For example, they may write “descriptive comments” that note “key words, phrases or explanations” participants use, taking their words at face value; linguistic comments, which focus on particular word choices that participants employ; and conceptual comments, which attempt to interpret the “overarching understanding” participants have of the topic at hand (p. 88). According to Smith et al. (2009), using such diverse strategies to examine interview transcripts can help create “the development of a dialogue between the researchers, their coded data, and their concerns in this context leading, in turn, to a more interpretive account” (p. 79).

Table 6 shows an excerpt from the table I created for one of the participants. In this segment of the transcript (shown in the center column), the faculty member is discussing how working with an instructional designer helped change his views of good teaching. This excerpt shows the way I worked with the transcript as my views about the participant’s experience evolved. I began by highlighting significant statements in the transcript (in purple) and important context surrounding the significant statement in yellow. I also boldfaced words I felt warranted further consideration. In the right column, I recorded descriptive comments in black text and linguistic comments in red. Finally, I attempted to tease out themes, which I noted in the left column. Making all of these comments in one table enabled me to keep track of my ideas as they developed, and I was able to readily revisit the original transcript—the participant’s words—whenever I wanted to check one of my assumptions or interpretations. MS Word’s search function facilitated finding quotes when I later recalled a pertinent fragment of an interview and wanted to check the context and exact wording.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging Themes</th>
<th>Interview Text</th>
<th>Initial Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Online course development can foster de facto pre-testing of course content via interactions between teachers and instructional designers—such vetting is less likely to occur routinely in developing F2F courses.</strong></td>
<td>Interaction with/learning from course developer. The teacher’s good collaborative relationship with the course developer was based in part on the latter’s overt engagement with the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What did he do?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>An instructional designer whom the teacher respects can help expand teachers’ view of what aids learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Context I guess.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>In F2F teaching, a professor can get away with being less explicit about expectations than in online teaching. There was some discomfort with the level of clarity and consistency needed for online courses—but the teacher found it was healthy and helpful.</strong> Needed an instructional designer who earned respect early on to make this happen.</td>
<td>Coming to respect/value course developer’s insistence on being consistent and explicit about expectations to a degree that was initially uncomfortable, but he came to understand the need for. Needed good, collaborative, trusting relationship with instructional designer; teacher not initially comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>So you said being forced to do this. If you’re designing your own course obviously nobody’s forcing you to do something in a specific way. Why were you willing to do that?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conflicting, ambivalent emotions generated by dealing with novel teaching mode:</strong> Somewhat daunted, the teacher recognized his own lack of knowledge, and was grateful for expert help. Professor felt forced to alter an aspect of his teaching style, but he came to understand why it was necessary as the development process unfolded.</td>
<td>Understanding that I was “a fish out of water” and needed help. Frustrating at times. Coming to understand the need to make things explicit and clear. Viewing the course designers as experts. A whole new medium. Fish out of water in the online environment. Grateful for help, but also frustrated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6. Significant statements excerpted from one participant’s interview transcript.*
4. Developing emergent themes.

As noted above, after reading and rereading the interviews, I singled out “significant statements” by highlighting them in the transcripts within the table I kept for each participant. I also copied these particularly meaningful statements into separate text documents and wrote brief interpretations of them. My formulations of these significant statements became the basis for the emergent themes.

*Table 7* shows significant statements excerpted from an interview transcript in the order that they appeared (and before I organized them into themes), and my “formulated meaning,” or interpretation. In these excerpts, the participant discusses how his views of good teaching have changed after designing and teaching online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Statement</th>
<th>Formulated Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would say that I have more faith now in very specific articulated learning objectives [after designing and teaching online] Which I think, before, partly because of the culture of the teaching of writing, which tends to shy away from various specified, articulated learning objectives and see it rather as something rather holistic and nurturing... having students read and write and rewrite, that seems to allow students to kind of internalize more sophisticated writing habits more effectively... So that was the culture that I entered and I adopted and I’ve worked that way and for the most part been pretty happy with it. In an online course you have to say okay, You’re going to learn this week X. And here’s how you’re going to learn it. And here’s exactly what X is and duplapla. I’ve become a little bit more focused on having a clear kind of learning outcome in mind and making sure for myself that we were actually getting there.</td>
<td>Context: Why did this change occur? The instructional designer explains the necessity for clear learning objectives and requires it. Professor sees when he teaches online that students respond favorably. Exposure to a culture of specificity (online) makes a teacher articulate to himself how he has customarily expected students to learn without being explicitly told what they will accomplish and how they will accomplish it. The process has resulted in his developing a facility for formulating clear learning outcomes for students and insuring that they achieve them. This can be helpful for teachers who face a growing emphasis on assessments of students’ mastery of course content after taking classes, regardless of whether the classes are F2F or online. Valuable to think more specifically about goals; this can potentially improve F2F teaching without radically altering it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7*. Significant statements and formulated meanings for one participant on “changes in views of good teaching.”
5. Searching for connections across themes; development of “superordinate” themes.

I next began to cluster the themes that had emerged from my comments into what Smith et al., (2009) term “superordinate,” or much broader, themes for each participant. Table 8 shows the clustered and superordinate themes that emerged from my analysis of one participant’s transcript. They include the following:

- Good teaching
- What the participant likes about teaching
- The process of developing the online course as an opportunity to rethink teaching
- Support as important for freedom to try new things
- Working with instructional designer (faculty as learner)
- Seeing the constraints of online teaching as opportunities or problems to solve helps to foster the rethinking of teaching
- Working with colleagues: importance of mentoring and being mentored
- How online and F2F teaching positively impact each other
- Changes in teaching practice after teaching online
- Different students in online courses have different skills and attitudes
### Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords, phrases</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>facilitation, guiding, coaching, modeling, availability, challenge, high expectations; no dumb questions.</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High expectations; no dumb questions.</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenge students, have students challenge everything.</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have students do a variety of assignments—some requiring them to support what they say with research, and others that build on their own experiences.</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immediate response</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching students to learn by performing a process</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsibilities of the teacher to insure that he is teaching effectively</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compliment good students in addition to addressing complaints. Thinking about what they are doing well “changes the way you think about courses.”</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students appreciate a teacher’s sense of humor, which they are able to perceive even in online courses</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It's a performance, I enjoy performing”; “I like to be liked” “Challenge Chapter One.” This new way of teaching online “was in perfect synchronization with what I believe in.”</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We get tremendous support.”</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Different animal.” Can do “cool bit” of teaching. Relentless, more work.</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I thought this is a real problem, so how might I do this online?” “We've started discussing best practices for that reason. So that we say, well what do you do...so we can try and learn from each other, which we never did in the classroom.” “So these things are interacting in my mind. Because this is the same class.”</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online and F2F positively impact each other</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the same concepts in different environments leads to new ways of thinking about teaching them</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the same class online and F2F causes you to think about each differently</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Practice</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some things easier online (videos made for online made available for F2F students)</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different students have different skills, attitudes</td>
<td>Good teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8. Clustered and superordinate themes that emerged from my analysis of one participant’s transcript.
Since my research question focuses on the experience of designing and teaching online courses, my textural descriptions for participants detail their observations on this process. I began to look for patterns in the themes. I saw a flow to the process of rethinking teaching that teachers undergo when developing and teaching online courses that had a number of components. Identifying this process informed the next phase in my analysis: writing the textural description. The process for one participant is outlined in Table 9.

### Textural Description Nancy

**“I love [teaching]. It’s what I do.”**

What Nancy says she loves about teaching is helping students progress, grow and morph into different beings as writers. This includes helping them to find their voices as writers, to do solid academic work, and to grow as thinkers, as writers, as people. She believes that good teaching includes being upfront about the goals of her courses. But the goals should include not only what the teacher is trying to give to a class, but also what students want to get out of it—a meshing of what teachers and students want. In writing, good teaching includes guiding students to read critically and encouraging them to model their work on an expert as they write and revise. This practice clarifies their thinking and provides evidence of their thinking process. Teachers need to be available to students to help facilitate this process and their progress.

Learning is the result of a collaboration between the students and teacher. “[Students] bring knowledge to the classroom and ...together [teachers and students] make something new. [But] the teacher has to have a good solid base.”

#### Designing the online course

Nancy had a positive experience designing an online course. After being invited to develop the course, she began by meeting with a colleague, who was also an experienced online teacher. He showed her an online course in her subject area. After meeting with instructional developers from Metropolitan College who told her about the course structure and environment, she talked with another colleague who had already taught the online course that she would teach. She began to create the course, occasionally checking in with a colleague for feedback “because I wanted guidance.”

She enjoyed the process of working with instructional developers and found it “really rewarding” to learn new things, and to create interactive course elements. The instructional developers gave her advice on adding interactivity, and videotaped Nancy giving introductions to each week’s lesson. The course developer also offered ancillary multimedia elements intended to help deepened the students’ experiences. Working with the instructional developer helped Nancy think differently about the sequence of material, amount or depth of material, and how ancillary material could augment a lecture. “I think I thought a different way about the ancillary material too. And that was helpful for me.”...Because you have to think it all out before hand, you have to make sure everything's there, whereas in the classroom you might improvise.”

#### Teaching the online course

Through teaching the online class, Nancy had an opportunity to work with different kinds of students who “made me think about things in a different way.” Because she read the students’ comments, she could learn more about students’ experiences, and their experiences added depth to the class for the other students. These mature students would think about things [and make] the perfect kinds of connections that you're trying to make with students. Nancy also learned from a colleague how to translate specific practices (in one case, how to model close reading or analysis of a text) from the classroom to the online environment.

Nancy intentionally set up the course so she would be involved with the facilitators, essentially becoming a facilitator of facilitators, “because I feel like we’re all teaching the course in some way. And also I wanted the students to have continuity. You know everybody should be sort of on the same page of what we’re expecting.” She held a weekly conference call with the facilitators and discussed what she was looking for in student writing. She was “very available” to both facilitators and students throughout the semester. During online discussions, again Nancy chose to be available because “that’s how I teach. She read all of the
discussion posts and responded to each student at least once. She also recommended additional materials to students when they seemed particularly interested in a topic. Through having to develop the entire course before it was offered, Nancy became more aware of students’ desire to “know what the plan is” and not just trust that instructor will get them there. “I wasn't always as transparent as sometimes students want you to be about the plan, about what the plan is for the course, where you are going, what you're thinking about.
“[I think designing and teaching an online course] forces you, as I said, I think it forces you to think very clearly about the goals of your course.”

Because Nancy knows what she loves about teaching, she knew that for online teaching to be a good experience for her, she would need interaction (through online discussion or in classroom) “to feel that I am teaching...and to feel that [she and the students] are getting to shared knowledge.” She found ways to do this by facilitating the facilitators and participating in the students’ discussions.

Table 9. A narrative for one of the participants describing her change in view of good teaching after teaching online.

6. Check to insure interpretations are accurate (member checking).

After reading and rereading an interview, as well as related email exchanges and blog entries if available, I wrote a brief profile of the participant, describing how he or she came to teach online, the experience of planning and designing an online course, and of working with course designers and facilitators, and how that experience might have changed views of what it means to teach well. For each section, I included what I had identified as significant quotes, with my formulations of their meanings. To help insure that my early interpretations were faithful to the participant’s intensions, I emailed the profiles and significant quotes along with the original transcript to the participants and asked them for comments, corrections, additional thoughts, and whether they would like me to delete anything from the transcript.

7. Repeat this process for each of the interviews as they are completed.

I repeated the process and created a table for each participant with highlighted significant statements and my comments. This excerpt shows the significant statements and formulated meanings related to: (1) the context in which the participant was asked to teach online, and (2) whether what participants consider to be good teaching can be achieved online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context for being asked to teach online affects attitude toward feeling of control/power in online teaching experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did start out, very much so, teaching face-to-face, and then had the opportunity, well more than an opportunity, the mandate was that we teach online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I started here they said, “Would you like to teach an online course?” And being the new guy the answer was “Sure coach, send me in.” Fortunately I had a really good tutor, somebody who agreed to help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those of us who had to come up with a course went before the faculty committee, the curriculum committee of college of continuing education...I was essentially just taking the path of least resistance, using the course that I had essentially already established, and then as soon as I proposed it they said, “Great. Done.”

Being invited to propose a course to teach online, and then having a proposal accepted, may positively impact faculty attitude toward online teaching.

Faculty views about teaching online are affected by whether what they see as good teaching can be done online

Much of the passion, patience, humor, and intellect come from a face-to-face interaction in a classroom...Online teaching lacks spontaneity, and in the world of spontaneity is where some of this good stuff lives.

I was essentially just taking the path of least resistance, using the course that I had essentially already established, and then as soon as I proposed it they said, “Great. Done.”

Being invited to propose a course to teach online, and then having a proposal accepted, may positively impact faculty attitude toward online teaching.

I would really advise for the instructional designer to observe the on-campus teaching just to get a sense of how that person feels comfortable.

[Teaching is] a performance. I enjoy performing, and I mean, you know, bottom line is if I do a good job the students like me, I like to be liked, there’s a real feedback loop here that we should probably admit more than we do...I don't know how it works, it's not conscious on my part but, you know, we all get reviewed, every class and, you know, if you read the reviews they say things like, we appreciate your sense of humor, we appreciate this, we appreciate that. I don't know how that happens but I would say yes, there is definitely a persona there [in online teaching]. Whatever it is seems to work.

Students appreciate his sense of humor, which they are able to perceive even in his online courses. He can get what he needs teaching online.

Don't expect the same kind of rewards that classroom teaching has.

It may well have a lot of rewards but they won't be of the same kind. Personally I haven't found much of the kind of reward that comes from human interaction from it. But I've learned a lot and I think it probably has helped me become a better teacher.

Different rewards teaching F2F and online.

Aspects of developing an OL course

Opportunities to rethink teaching. The other thing was when I was saying what should I type? The first question you have to ask yourself is what do I want the students to learn? And I had never asked myself that question in all the years—I've been teaching for a long time...You make the lecture the night before you go in, you draw all over the board you come out, you say, "It wasn't so bad or it was great or it was horrible or whatever it was, it was. You say, well next time maybe I'll do something differently. I never actually asked myself what do I want the students to learn. It was online, when you’re sitting there saying, Oh dear, what do I want them actually to learn and how am I going to get there? So then I went back into the classroom, I had to answer that question in the classroom or for certain sections. And the result of it was, I threw out whole chunks of lectures. Much more interactive now.

When preparing an online course and thinking, for the first time, “What do I actually want students to learn?” prompted T to ask himself the same question for his F2F course.

Writing an online course was a lot of fun. I teach two online courses -- research methods, which is what I inherited. Somebody else was teaching it and I took it over, and over time I’ve put my mark on it... It allows me to tap into my creativity.

Online teaching affords new ways for faculty to be creative and stand out as teachers.

Table 10. Themes with significant statements.
8. Group themes that emerge from all of the participants’ experience.

After reading and rereading each transcript, identifying significant statements and themes, and then organizing them into superordinate themes, I created a table that lists the themes common to all of the participants as they related to my research question. Table 11 presents themes related to the opportunity to rethink teaching during and after designing and teaching an online course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalysts for Re-examining Pedagogical Assumptions while Designing and Teaching Online Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges to Identity as a Good Teacher as a Catalyst for Rethinking Teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges to replicating good teaching online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges to finding rewards when teaching online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges to maintaining one’s teaching persona in an online environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges to preserving a discipline-specific teaching culture in an online environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context for Designing and Teaching an Online Course as a Catalyst for Rethinking Teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invitation or mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Designing the online course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Roles and Relationships As Catalysts for Rethinking Teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentoring and being mentored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with instructional designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning from teaching different kinds of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Designing and Teaching as an Iterative, Evolving and Disruptive Process as a Catalyst for Rethinking Teaching</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constraints as catalysts to re-thinking good teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching both online and F2F as a catalyst for rethinking good teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflection on designing and teaching an online course as a catalyst for rethinking teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Themes from all participants. This table shows combined themes related to the research question for all of the participants.

Validity and Credibility

After conducting qualitative studies, researchers must ask themselves, “Did we get it right?” (Stake in Creswell, 2007, p. 201). Of course, an investigation’s validity and credibility must be considered before the end of the study, when it would be far too late to take up such crucial overarching issues. These issues must be addressed at each stage of the process.

Smith et al. (2009) recommend Yardley’s principles for insuring quality in qualitative research: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigor in carrying out the research and analysis; transparency about research methods, and finally, careful consideration of the impact and
importance of the research (Smith et al., 2009, pp. 180-183). Lincoln and Guba (1985) summarize others: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

These same concepts apply to phenomenological research. Creswell (2007) cites Polkinghorne’s discussion of validity, which asks if the idea is “well grounded and well supported.” Creswell lists Polkinghorne’s five questions, which I translate below into practices I followed:

1. “Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participant’s descriptions?” As director of the Northeastern’s Educational Technology Center, I focus on creating scaleable, sustainable forms of improved teaching that can have a large and positive impact on the university, and on individual students and teachers. I also have an interest in and significant experience with both online and face-to-face teaching and learning. While conducting interviews and analyzing data, I had to be aware of the advantages my role and experiences offered, but also mindful of the potential for bias in my interactions with participants, and I had to attempt to guard against my own preconceived notions. I endeavored to do this in a number of ways: As noted above, I wrote write reflective memos throughout the process. While interviewing, I asked open-ended questions, and as noted in my protocol, avoided leading questions and took care not to influence participants’ descriptions. When writing descriptions, I attempted to insure that the descriptions matched the participants’ actual experiences. In follow-up questions, I dug more deeply into what participants said to understand their interpretations of their experiences.

2. “Is the transcription accurate?” I insured that the written transcription matched the meaning of the actual interview by noting non-verbal signals.

3. “In the analysis, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified those?” I attempted to identify several possible conclusions.

4. “Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?” Quotations from the transcripts are included to support the statements.

5. “Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?” (Polkinghorne, 1998 in Creswell, 2007, p. 57). In phenomenological research, transferability may not be possible. However, understanding the
essence of faculty members' experiences with what it means to teach well may provide clues for policymakers at other institutions.

Creswell (2007) concludes by asking if the author was “reflexive” throughout the process. This was accomplished by writing thoughtful memos throughout the study to insure my reflexivity and to facilitate my articulation of themes and concepts as they unfolded. Additionally, I did extensive member checking to verify the accuracy of my transcription and emerging interpretations. My audit trail is available via field notes, transcriptions of interviews and memos in this document and in the appendices. This will permit external reviewers to examine the evolution of my thinking and how I arrived at my conclusions.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

I did not anticipate any risks to those participating in this study. The research involved interviews and follow-up conversations rather than treatments that would put the participants at risk. As noted earlier, I began by obtaining informed consent from participants, letting them know that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time (Moustakas, 1984).

Additionally, I did not anticipate advantages to faculty for taking part in the study. However, several seem to have benefited from creating detailed accounts of their experiences related to development of online courses. This process may have helped them to gain useful insights on teaching, and also to enhance their technical facility related to online offerings.

The subject at hand did not seem to make participants uncomfortable, perhaps because it offered an opportunity to describe their own experiences concerning how they teach. But there may have been some inconvenience, that is, the time requested for their participation. Although the identities of participants are known only to me, if research is published, it is possible that, because of my small sample size, certain people at a participant’s institution may be able to guess the identify of that participant. I took special care to protect participants’ identities, as well as to insure that if they said things critical of the programs in which they teach, their words would not be associated with them. I removed or disguised private or potentially damaging information. Finally, as noted earlier, I asked participants to examine the transcripts of their interviews and my analysis, and offer suggestions or corrections.

Creswell (2007) summarizes how to insure that ethical safeguards are in place for phenomenological research, including the following: obtaining informed consent, avoiding
deceptive practices, maintaining confidentiality of participants and outlining the benefits to the participants versus the risks. Following university Institutional Review Board procedures helps to protect participants in such research. Because blogs were used by two of the participants, I needed to address a number of issues specific to the iterative use of blogs for phenomenological research as the study progressed. For example, I talked with those who kept blogs about the issues surrounding the blog’s ownership. Typically a blogger owns his or her blog, which means that I, as researcher, spelled out mutually-agreed-upon rules under which I had access to teachers’ blogs in order to make use of their contents for research. I was also clear about what would happen to blogs after the research was completed. Although the teacher-bloggers have not chosen to disallow my access for follow-up research or subsequent analysis on an ongoing blog, they are free to do so.

As noted earlier, most bloggers also allow other people who share an interest in the topic to view the blog, and to comment. In fact, this is one of the most valuable features of blogs, according to teacher-bloggers Shareski (2010), Rettberg, Hole & Larsen (2009), Meyer (2009) and others. However, because phenomenological research is concerned with understanding the voices of individual participants, the participants agreed to restrict access to the blogs to teacher-bloggers themselves and the researcher, at least for the initial research.

Another issue was how much a participant and the researcher should interact via the blog. Blogs, more than many other data collection methods, have the potential to facilitate a research participant’s taking part in the research process itself. In the case of this study, the researcher commented on the participants’ blog posts. This is not unprecedented in phenomenological research. In fact, Smith et al. (2009) note that participants may even become co-analysts. As noted above, this was, in fact what happened.

I found that I felt constrained about responding to Will’s and Barbara’s posts in a way I would have if I had not been a researcher. As a person who works with faculty and someone interested in their fields, had I not been a researcher, I would have been tempted to offer suggestions to Barbara about her online teaching, and suggest resources to Will. But in my role as a phenomenological researcher, I needed to remain apart, focusing on their lived experiences rather than on any assistance I might be able to offer (at least until after my research was complete).
Conclusion to Research Design

As more students take courses online and more faculty members are called upon to teach such courses, institutions of higher education have an opportunity to improve both. My goal was to discover whether the opportunity to develop and teach online courses could re-energize faculty, reawakening the kind of zest for teaching that is sometimes difficult to maintain during a long career. Phenomenological research offers a way to examine faculty members’ lived experience as they re-examine what it means to teach well as a result of designing and teaching online. A presentation of the “essence” of their experiences could offer university policy makers information that could prompt them to encourage faculty members to take the opportunity of teaching online to think about teaching.

To arrive at this essence, I conducted a phenomenological study of the experiences of faculty members at Any University Northeast who have taught online and face-to-face college classes, including at least some undergraduate face-to-face courses. With the help of colleagues at this institution, I identified six participants who met my inclusion criteria. I conducted interviews with each participant, transcribed the interviews and analyzed them through the process outlined by Moustakas (1984), Creswell (2007), and Smith, et al. (2009). Via this process I attempted to enter into each participant’s lived world, carefully read each interview transcript for significant statements, clustered the statements into themes, synthesized the themes into a description composed of commonalities across all of the experiences—the “essence.” In the next chapter I discuss the findings that explain this essence and are most salient to my research.
Chapter Four: Report of Research Findings

Introduction

Chapter content and goals.

This chapter presents the most striking findings that emerged from interviews with the study’s six faculty member participants. The findings, which were drawn from the participants’ experiences as they developed online courses, were selected to illuminate how, in some cases, the participants’ views of good teaching changed as a result of the experiences. The chapter opens with a brief description of the aptness of qualitative research for investigating the research question. It then describes the “essence” of participants’ experiences related to the phenomenon of interest. Section two lays out details about the participants that are necessary for understanding their individual experiences related to the phenomenon. Section three details the findings that emerged from the research, including the characteristics of the catalysts for change. The chapter ends with a conclusion summarizing the findings, and offers a brief preface to Chapter Five.

Qualitative and phenomenological research process.

As noted earlier, the research question identified for this study—How and to what extent can designing and teaching an online course prompt faculty members to rethink what it means to teach well?—is best addressed by qualitative research. Qualitative research is appropriate for analyzing subjective issues; it entails gathering multiple perspectives and seeking to understand the meaning that research participants construct from their experiences (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach to qualitative research, which was selected for this research, focuses on understanding the lived experiences of people and the meaning they make of them (Smith, et al., 2009). The process is iterative and cyclical as a researcher delves deeper into the data. For this research study, as detailed in Chapter Three, it included interviewing participants, transcribing the interviews, reading the transcripts and identifying themes. This process led to an interpretation of the data’s “invariant structure,” or “essence,” which for this study might be characterized as a statement of the participants’ consensus wisdom on the research question. This essence, employed as the title of this paper, is captured in brief by the phrase catalysts for re-examining pedagogical assumptions. A somewhat more detailed version follows: “Certain aspects of the process of designing and teaching online courses can serve as catalysts that prompt re-examination of deeply held views of good teaching, sometimes changing them.”
The themes that emerged as a result of the researcher’s “reflective engagement” with participants’ accounts (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 80) delineate elements of the process of designing and teaching online courses that are salient to the phenomenon of interest. These elements sometimes became catalysts for the participants, prompting them to reflect about both the disharmonies and harmonies between the requirements of online course delivery and their views on good teaching, and, in some cases, to think differently about effective pedagogy. Interpreting how this happened is the subject of the next chapter.

Phenomenological research is concerned with understanding the lived experience of individuals related to a phenomenon of interest. To fully understand their accounts of such experiences, one must be acquainted with the individuals’ backgrounds, particularly aspects of their personal histories that bear on the phenomenon under investigation. The participants in this study are seasoned teachers with nine to twenty-five years of classroom experience. Four are long-time college professors who have taught undergraduate courses for years, primarily at Any University Northeast. One now teaches mostly graduate courses. For two of the professors, college teaching was a second career initiated after many years of professional work related to their teaching disciplines. Five faculty members have designed and taught multiple online classes; the other has recently designed and taught her first course. Salient details about the participants’ experience with online teaching are given below.

• Participant #1: Barbara is a white woman in her 50s who began teaching in college as a second career after finishing her Ph.D. at age 51. Now an assistant professor, she notes that her earlier profession did not allow her to be creative, which is one of the things she values about teaching. She has been teaching for seven years, both undergraduate and graduate courses in sociology in both face-to-face and online environments. Online teaching was not a choice for her—it was mandated by her department. She teaches very large online courses, each containing of over 100 students. Her role is lead teacher or teacher of record.

• Participant #2: Thomas is a white man in his early 60s who served as an adjunct faculty member for over 20 years while working in his first profession. He then moved to full-time teaching as a second career and is now an associate professor. He teaches project management in both undergraduate and graduate courses in the university’s continuing education college. He observes that online teaching is “a completely different animal” from classroom teaching. He
was asked to teach online, and agreed. He, too, teaches large classes. Thomas seems to teach, in part, by telling stories. He sees teaching as a performance.

• Participant #3: Olivia is a sixty-year-old white woman, a clinical professor in the university’s college of health sciences. She has over 28 years of experience teaching undergraduate and graduate students. She has taught online for over ten years, and as a result easily moves between the two formats. Olivia has a doctorate in Educational Theory and Practice and Technology, and she attempts to integrate what she knows about adult learning theories into her teaching. She teaches mostly small (under 50 students) doctorate-level or master’s-level leadership courses in both online and face-to-face formats. She welcomed the opportunity to teach online.

• Participant #4: Linda is white woman in her 50s, a specialist in Asian Studies who has taught for over 25 years, and an associate professor in the College of General Studies. She prepares lectures that are attended by over 500 students each semester, and each year she oversees more than 100 of these students, grading their three required papers and final multiple-choice tests each semester. She organizes the course so that students can choose among five different topics, which means that different students may turn in papers at different times. She gets to know the students well because she works with a team of four other faculty who discuss both academic and personal issues of the students they oversee. When the members of her college were invited to propose an online course, she proposed one, and it was accepted.

• Participant #5: Nancy is a white woman in her 40s with over 20 years of experience teaching undergraduate students. She is an associate professor in the university’s College of General Studies, where she has taught rhetoric (the university’s version of composition) for 14 years. In addition to rhetoric, she has taught a variety of courses that include Irish literature, “The Essay,” and nonfiction writing for graduate students. Like other faculty members in the College of General Studies, she gets to know freshman students well because she sees them in classes four times a week, and meets with teams of four other faculty members who jointly oversee the students. She was invited to teach an online writing course as part of a degree completion program for the college of professional studies. She has taught online only once, but characterizes it as a very positive experience, and would like to teach online again.

• Participant #6: Will is a 50-year-old white man who has over 20 years experience teaching undergraduate students; he has taught rhetoric in the College of General Studies for 18
years. He is an associate professor who has served as chair of the department for five years. He, like other faculty in the College of General Studies, gets to know students well through meetings with a team of other faculty members overseeing the students. When the members of his college were invited to propose an online course for the College of Continuing Education’s degree completion program, he suggested a course he had not previously taught, and the proposal was accepted. Designing an online course has been a positive experience for him, and he notes that he has learned a great deal from working collaboratively with a course developer. He has taught the online course four times.

The questions asked of the participants during the semi-structured interviews were intended to reveal lived experiences related to the research question, specifically, how their views of good teaching might have been changed by their online teaching experiences, and to expose the context in which such changes took place. The interviews began with questions about the participants’ teaching careers and views of good teaching. The participants were then asked about their thoughts on designing, and then teaching, online courses, and their relationships with people with whom they worked. The interviews ended with questions about changes in their views of good teaching and in their teaching practices. As noted earlier, in some cases instructors kept blogs or responded to additional questions via email.

The findings, which emerged from the four themes identified in Chapter Three’s Table 12, are detailed below. They include new course design process, new learning environment, new forms of interaction, and new roles and relationships. Liberal use is made of excerpts from the interviews in order to convey a faithful account of the participants’ experiences.

**Background—participants’ views on good teaching.**

The participants’ longstanding views on good teaching represent touchstones they drew on when reconsidering educational practices as a result of their online teaching experiences. Thus, it was important to investigate these views before exploring how their educational strategies, and their images of themselves as teachers, might have been altered by online teaching.

The six faculty members all expressed strong, clear perspectives on what it means to teach well. They described their teaching practices with alacrity, enthusiastically voiced their opinions on the distinguishing characteristics of good teachers, and readily cited examples of good teaching. Some described how they had evolved as teachers and in some cases recounted
that they had modeled themselves on teachers they found inspiring. Others said they enhanced their teaching skills through discussions with colleagues about teaching practices. They gave examples of the ways they guided and facilitated student learning and student interaction, organized learning materials, and employed a variety of assessments. They also described the ways they interacted with students and what they saw as qualities of a good teacher. The learner-centered style of instruction and the qualities of good teachers they articulated were strikingly similar to those outlined by Chickering and Gamson (1987), Barr and Tagg (1995), Bransford et al. (2000) and Weimer (2002). For most, maintaining close contact and ongoing interchanges with students were deemed critical aspects of successful teaching. As one faculty member said, “[I like to] feel like I'm getting to know [students], feel like I’m interacting with them, feel like I'm making a difference” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b). Detailed below is how these thoughtful and experienced teachers’ views on what it means to teach well were, in some cases, challenged by specific elements in the process of designing and teaching online courses. These included the new course design process, the new online learning environment, the new roles and relationships they encounter and new forms of interaction they must design. Their responses to these challenges were, in some cases to change their views of good teaching; in others to confirm their current views and practices.

Findings

**New course design process.**

Designing and then teaching an online course with Any University Northeast’s distance learning program was a process that unfolded over many months. During the process, faculty encountered new people with whom they interacted in different roles, a new learning environment and new forms of interaction. All of these novel elements had the potential to affect what the professors regarded as good teaching, and they all offered different opportunities to reconsider good pedagogy. They could be viewed as constraints or opportunities, as problems to solve, as invitations to think in fruitful new ways about teaching, or as barriers to optimal teaching. The resulting tension could lead to frustration or to new ways of thinking, sometimes both.

The way faculty members were approached to teach online potentially affected their attitudes toward online teaching. For one it was a mandate, for another it was a request, and for the others it was invitation to propose a course. The faculty member for whom it was a mandate
cynically characterized online teaching as part of a departmental drive to make more courses available to more students because the online program was a “cash cow” for the unit. Another professor who was asked to teach online described his experience in more positive terms, describing himself as the “new guy” who wanted to look good to his department chair, something he succeeded in doing by developing the online course. He playfully described his response to the request as “sure coach, send me in,” reflecting a “can do” attitude he maintained throughout the design and teaching process. The three who were invited to propose online courses were members of the College of General Studies (CGS), a college whose faculty had a reputation as excellent teachers. When designing its new Online Degree Completion Program, which was aimed at working professionals who needed to finish undergraduate degrees, the distance education department was interested in hiring faculty who were able to build a special rapport with students, and who might be able to bring this ability to online courses. When invited to design and teach online courses, these three CGS faculty members approached the task with enthusiasm.

For the most part, the faculty members seemed pleased with context within which they designed and taught the online courses and the support they received. A number of them warmly praised the instructional designers and course developers. This is detailed below in the section on “Working with instructional designers.”

Designing online courses became an opportunity to rethink teaching for these faculty members. It encouraged them to reconsider their pedagogy in part because they were forced to grapple with accomplishing in a new context what they had succeeded in doing effectively face-to-face. Simply being given paid time to focus on the online course and how it would be set up also helped foster this thinking, or rethinking, process. One put special emphasis on this point: “Don't underestimate the fact that we get paid over the summer to develop the course, OK, so we are not ad hoc developing it as we go along, right” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

For this faculty member, redesigning a course he had previously taught face-to-face clearly provided the impetus to think differently about teaching. When he first set out to rewrite the course he was preparing to teach online, he recalled, he sat down and thought about what to type. At that point, he realized he would have to consider his goals for his students, something he had never done before.
The first question you have to ask yourself is “What do I want the students to learn?” And I had never asked myself that question in all the years I’ve been teaching...I never actually asked myself, “What do I want them actually to learn, and how am I going to get there?” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Another faculty member noted that because she had to develop an entire online course before it was offered, she became more aware of students’ desire to “know what the plan is” and not simply trust that instructor will get them where they are supposed to go in a course.

I wasn't always as transparent as sometimes students want you to be about the plan, about what the plan is for the course, where you are going, what you're thinking about...I think [designing an online course] forces you, as I said, I think it forces you to think very clearly about the goals of your course” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

For some faculty members, designing the course was an opportunity to be creative, to learn something new and to put their mark on a course, to have fun. “Writing an online course was a lot of fun...It allows me to tap into my creativity” (personal communication, March 7, 2011). Another faculty member commented that developing an online course was an opportunity to spend time learning something new. “So I spent at least the whole of one summer, just kind of doing research and setting up the content of the lectures” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

**Summative points for new course design process.**

How faculty approached the difficulties of designing online courses, as well as the way they responded to the context in which they began designing the courses, are central to the problem of practice identified for this study. Designing and teaching online courses was an iterative, evolving process for the participants that included multiple disruptions to their usual ways of teaching. In some cases, problems or constraints became catalysts for rethinking teaching. Additionally, as indicated above, the context in which faculty members began designing and teaching online courses correlated with their subsequent view of the process as positive or negative.

**New learning environment.**

Teaching online thrust these faculty members into a milieu that was completely different from what they were accustomed to as classroom teachers. They had to translate what they did as classroom teachers into the online environment, consider how to convey a sense of who they were as teachers to their students, and learn how to preserve what was special to their discipline.
in an online format. In some cases these and other constraints became catalysts to rethinking effective pedagogy; in others they were seen as frustrating barriers.

The participants generally observed that the constraints of the online format motivated them to work out new solutions to longstanding teaching issues. For example, one instructor noted that his students have long found it difficult to master certain math-related topics, such as the “net present value calculations” that are required in business courses. His customary approach was to deliver a lecture on these topics. However, when he first designed an online course covering the topics some years ago, he discovered that students with slow Internet connections couldn’t upload recordings of his long lectures. Thus, he opted instead to make a series of short videos explaining the topics broken down into what he soon realized were more readily grasped conceptual chunks. “Well that turned out to be great,” he said, “because instead of recording a one-hour lecture where you are all over the place, you do it in sections where each one is crisp, clean” (personal communication, March 24, 2011). Later when he discovered that some online students were watching the videos repeatedly, he realized that offering students the ability to view the short videos on demand, and thus review them multiple times if desired, was a more effective way for them to learn the material than listening to one-hour classroom lectures.

Another faculty member realized that in the short seven-week timeframe of an online course, facilitators would be unable to read students’ papers, give feedback and return them in a timely manner. So he set up a classroom peer review system in which students read one another’s papers and gave feedback. Although he initially saw the strategy as a stopgap measure to deal with time constraints, he quickly came to regard it as an effective learning technique: “I think it’s also a valuable pedagogical tool to have more sets of eyes than just your facilitator read your paper, comment on it, give suggestions” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

The participants viewed many aspects of what they have long regarded as good teaching as capable of being reproduced in online settings. For example, in online courses they could set high expectations; challenge students, push them out of their comfort zone, and teach them to apply novel concepts; offer a variety of assignments; present instructional models, and even organize peer interaction.

But not everything could be easily reproduced online. Not surprisingly, one their most frequently voiced reservations about online teaching was what they saw as its tendency to limit their interactions with students. Their comments made it clear, however, that this reservation had
more to do with the constraints that teaching large classes placed on student interactions than with the nature of online teaching. This issue is addressed in more detail the section below subtitled “New forms of interaction.”

A number of the faculty members noted that you “need to be yourself” as a teacher rather than seek to conform to preconceived images of the ideal educator. As one pointed out, it is possible to be an effective teacher in a variety of ways.

If you saw us all teach, everyone is so different. And I admire people like my colleague who would sit and wait for a response and still get good evaluations. Or someone who could go in there and charm people. I can do neither one. But if it works out fine the way I am, that's fine (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

Another took special note of how attuned students are to teachers’ temperaments and classroom styles.

I don't know how it works, it's not conscious on my part but, you know, we all get reviewed, every class and, you know, if you read the reviews they say things like, we appreciate your sense of humor, we appreciate this, we appreciate that. I don't know how that happens, but I would say yes, there is definitely a persona there. Whatever it is seems to work (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Some saw a disparity between who they were as face-to-face teachers and who they were able to be as online teachers. One teacher, in a blog post, gave a definition of good teaching as an “interactive loop...a synergistic connection” that gives satisfaction to both students and teachers. But she noted in another post, “My online teaching bears little resemblance to my model of teaching... Much of the passion, patience, humor, and intellect come from a face-to-face interaction in a classroom...Online teaching lacks spontaneity, and in the world of spontaneity is where some of this good stuff lives” (personal communication March 12, 2011).

In a memorable blog post she titled “Loss of Academic Freedom, Privacy and Control,” she described having her teaching prescribed and controlled online in ways it had never been in her classroom teaching.

My academic Dean has never reviewed my on-campus lectures, nor has she sat in on my classes to observe me teaching. She has never directed me to update my courses, nor has she told me to teach two on campus courses during the summer term. Yet, I have experienced each of these intrusions in my on line teaching. I've named them "intrusions" because they stand in stark contrast to the relative freedom, privacy, and control I feel I have in my campus classrooms. Not only is there a sense of "Big Brother is watching" in online teaching, but also a lessening of instructor's power (personal communication, March 12, 2011).
The particular disciplines and colleges in which the research participants taught influenced their views on good teaching, as well as how those views were modified by their online teaching experiences. For one faculty member who primarily taught history via classroom lectures, teaching in an online environment seemed to be relatively similar to her usual teaching practices, and thus her process of designing and teaching an online course required few modifications to her pedagogical style. In fact, she observed that she could be more flexible and creative when teaching online because she faced fewer restrictions. That is, in the classroom, the program was “more or less set” and she was required to prepare students for multiple-choice quizzes and tests. In the online format, there were no such exams, and so she found herself easily able to add topics related to current events to the course.

She also found that discussions worked better online than they did in her large face-to-face classes. Students had an opportunity to carefully consider their online posts, she said, and also were motivated to respond thoughtfully to their peers’ posts.

I actually find that online it's much more successful than even trying to draw that out from the students in the discussions here. I think it's because they have the time to think about what they have to write...And then, also, on the discussion boards you have people responding to them in a way that gets them to respond back (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

For other instructors, however, online courses required a completely different way of teaching, and they had to make many adjustments to accomplish what they felt was important to good teaching. In some cases, the necessity of coming to grips with the unfamiliar world of online teaching served as a catalyst for considering ways to improve pedagogy.

One faculty member who teaches writing commented that, both as an English teacher and a person “inclined toward the humanities,” he has long been “satisfied with a certain level of vagueness” in what he communicates to students. After teaching online and having to “think through things more explicitly for the online course,” he noted, he has now “come to sympathize with” students who need more specificity. And that realization has affected his classroom teaching. While he is not designing his conventional classes to closely resemble his online courses, he noted that insights gleaned from his online experiences “sort of filter in” to his teaching in face-to-face classes.
This idea of being kind of satisfied with a certain vagueness, which I think for those of us who were always more inclined toward the humanities…a lot of students are not so comfortable with it. And when you're teaching writing you're not necessarily teaching English majors at all. You’re teaching students who are going to be engineers [and other non-humanities professionals]. And they need specificity. And I think I've come to sympathize with that more and be able to meet that need better as a result of having to kind of think things through more explicitly for the online course... It's not like I'm designing my conventional classes in the same way that I do the online classes, but things sort of filter in (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b, emphasis added).

When faculty were called on to teach the same course both online and face-to-face, they sometimes found that teaching techniques, which at first glance seemed specific for one of the two formats, could actually be advantageously applied in the other. As noted earlier, one professor discovered that a teaching format he had adopted for students in an online class—creating short videos for students that they could control and view at their own pace—worked better than his customary lectures did to help them master tricky math-related topics. In fact, he observed, online students who watched the videos repeatedly typically did better on their homework and quizzes. As a result he decided to make the videos available to his classroom students as well. “Now when I go in and I’m doing net present value [in face-to-face classes], I’m thinking, you [students] think you’ve got it. But I know you don’t” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

This professor rethought his classroom teaching as a result of a close examination of his students’ learning processes that was thrust on him by his online teaching experience. Indeed, he noted, he formerly regarded classroom teaching as a somewhat off-the-cuff performance. “You make the lecture the night before you go in, you draw all over the board you come out you say, ‘It wasn't so bad or it was great or it was horrible or whatever it was, it was.’ [Then] you say, ‘Well next time maybe I'll do something differently.’”

After teaching online, he reassessed his classroom teaching and realized that he had never considered in detail what he wanted students to learn.

I never actually asked myself what do I want the students to learn. It was online, when you’re sitting there saying, ‘Oh dear, what do I want them actually to learn and how am I going to get there?’ So then I went back into the classroom, I had to answer that question in the classroom or for certain sections. And the result of it was, I threw out whole chunks of lectures. Much more interactive now (personal communication, March 24, 2011).
Professors who taught the same course both online and face-to-face discovered that they were able to improve assignments and activities by trying them out in both formats.

When I'm designing online I'll take what I've already done on campus, and then in thinking about what I'd want [the students] to see, experience, I'll change that and then I'll say, ‘Wow that works really great online, let me bring it back to the classroom...’ So they go back and forth. I'll change my objectives, I'll change the assignments. Sometimes I like having the same assignment so I can see how, have I done something different online that made it more effective? Or have I done something on campus, and can I do some switching (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Another instructor found that preparing and teaching an online class made her more aware of her students’ wish to know more about her plans for the course.

I think that one thing that [designing and teaching an online course] helped me to be more aware of, which I knew in the back of my mind: This desire for students to know what the plan is. I am not of the school of thought that believes that I have the trajectory, I know where students are and where I want them to be. And they just should follow along and they’ll get there. I'm not of that belief but I’m also, I wasn't always as transparent as sometimes students want you to be about the plan, about what the plan is for the course, where you are going, what you're thinking about (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a, emphasis added).

One instructor mentioned the value of learning what her students find particularly interesting in course materials through her reading of online discussions; she also discovered what students want more information about. She added that what she did in each teaching format impacted the other.

... the one impact it's had is that I get more feedback through the discussion sections online as to what students can find interesting. I do have to take that with a grain of salt because they're usually adults. You know, as opposed to these kids. But what they find that they're interested in pursuing more about could have an impact on some of the students. Especially if I see a lot of these students time after time trying to get more information or ask more questions about it, that's one thing. But it's more the other way around, whatever I did here, I did on the online course (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

Another faculty member discovered that the way he structured online discussions focused them more effectively than the way he had previously organized face-to-face classroom discussions—he now uses the more effective approach in all his courses.

I do some of the classroom [discussions] a little bit differently now because it's more structured...Now when I go into the classroom I draw five lines down the board, and a student will make a comment and I'll put it in the category. But I don't tell them what categories are and then I say, “Okay, what are these categories?” And so that way it
focuses each discussion. *I do it that way now because I realized that it needed to be structured I when I did the online, so...they do interact*, (March 24, 2011, emphasis added).

As instructors became proficient with technology used in teaching online courses, such as course management systems, they found they could readily use the technology for add-ons in their face-to-face classes.

One thing that online teaching has done to help me be a better on-campus teacher is that I'm a little bit more comfortable with the use of technology. And Blackboard, again it's another way, another tool to use to get students to learn and I like to use discussions on blackboard for my on-campus students, which I never did before, and so that's a good way for me to use all different kinds of methods. So that when they take the course with me week to week they know they're going to experience different things and, of course, won't be, at least I don't think it will be, boring, predictable things (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

**Summative points for new learning environment.**

The participants faced a number of challenges accomplishing in online courses what was important to them as experienced, effective and passionate classroom teachers. These were potentially fruitful challenges, for they motivated the faculty members to reflect on what it means to teach well as a necessary first step in working out ways to connect with students in productive ways in the novel context they faced as apprentice online instructors. Whether the participants ultimately experienced the challenges as catalysts to enhance their overall teaching, or as barriers that limited their successes as online teachers, bears importantly on this research.

Designing and teaching the same course multiple times in the two formats—online and face-to-face—afforded faculty opportunities to experiment. That is, they could test different materials and techniques in the two different contexts, and they sometimes found that materials designed for one context worked unexpectedly well in the other. Additionally, they sometimes found that skills that seem tailored for one format could be used quite effectively in the other. Importantly, this iterative borrowing could prompt them to become more flexible in how they thought about teaching in both contexts.

**New forms of interaction.**

Teaching online changed the way faculty interacted with students, a topic treated in more detail below. As noted earlier, the distance learning department’s “facilitator” model in some cases impacted their direct contact with students, which made teaching far less rewarding. All of
the faculty emphasized that interacting with students was not only rewarding, it was through interaction that they were able to see their students learning.

When they talked about the rewards of teaching, most faculty members mentioned the gratification of getting to know students well enough to personalize their learning experiences. “What's rewarding is when I feel I can, when I feel I've made a connection” (personal communication, March 12, 2011). One emphasized the importance of “really staying connected” with students. Another talked about giving timely comments to students, because they “need that immediate feedback.” Giving immediate feedback is “another thing that’s really important…So we can change directions” (personal communication, March 28, 2011).

One faculty member emphasized the need to pay attention to good students as well as ones who were struggling. He noted that it is easy to get caught up with problem students, which can lead to a skewed view of student learning and student satisfaction.

It's like our department chair says you should interact as much with the good students as you do with the bad students and that was actually a shock because you know they're all the complainers and whiners. You wake up in the morning and there’s the email. You’ve got ten complaints and ten whiners. You take care of that and then you say, I should write to 20 students good things (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Many also talked about the satisfaction of witnessing students learn, which included “seeing students get really excited about their own ideas” (Personal communication, April 27, 2011 b) and “seeing them progress and grow and morph, you know, morph into different beings as writers” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Although some faculty could “see” their students’ learning process online via discussion boards or the students’ work, others found this difficult, if not impossible in an online context due to lack of the kind of immediate student feedback that occurs in the classroom.

That's why I teach, for that feedback. I want to help people learn. And I don't feel like I get enough of that when I'm teaching [online]. On campus if I'm explaining something to my students sometimes you can see the light bulb go off over their heads. It's like, oh yeah, they're getting it (personal communication March 12, 2011).

Another faculty member, however, noted that teachers would do well to change their expectations about the kinds of rewards they will get from teaching online.

“Don't expect the same kind of rewards that classroom teaching has. It may well have a lot of rewards, but they won't be of the same kind. Personally I haven't found much of the kind of reward that comes from human interaction from it. But I've learned a lot and I
think it probably has helped me become a better teacher” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

Faculty who felt that online teaching adversely affected their ability to interact with students were most concerned about the distance-learning department’s model for online classes at their university. This model includes a short, seven-week time frame and a format in which classes (which can be quite large, up to 100 students) are divided into sections of 15 taught by teaching assistants called “facilitators.” The facilitators interact with students, manage online discussions, and grade papers and tests. A faculty member serves as “the instructor of record,” a role that two of the research participants singled out as unsatisfying. One of these faculty members noted that teachers and students “are both hungry for each other and we just can't find…each other” in online classes (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

She also asserted that with the distance-learning model, the facilitators do the real teaching and get what she called “the good stuff.”

In class sizes of 15 or more, facilitators are hired by the instructor to take on the role of teaching assistant—grade assignments, clarify course content, enforce course expectations, provide feedback on academic performance, and offer support when it is needed. These are exactly the kinds of things I love to do as a teacher (personal communication, March 7, 2011, emphasis added).

The other instructor noted that while he liked teaching small classes online, he felt that his role within the large classes in the distance-learning model was mainly that of a “manager” overseeing facilitators and dealing with administrative issues. He added that he interacted with students only when there were problems, which he did not find satisfying.

One hundred students and seven TA’s I think I had, or maybe nine TAs ...It was a different ball of wax. Because every little tear in the fabric shows. And somebody gets all bent out of shape about it. Things come up that have to be fixed. That's really frustrating. It’s also, I found, much less rewarding when you're not getting to know the students because you’ve got all these TA's. You're basically just putting out fires and managing... I'm prepared now if I’ve got a large number of students, basically I'm just going to be a manager. I don't find that very gratifying (personal communication, April 27 b).

This instructor found that working with facilitators often distracted him from teaching, in part because he was required to act as a trainer for the facilitators. And although the facilitators sometimes proposed good ideas for improving the courses, putting changes they suggested into effect required the professor to arrange for all the sections to make the same changes in order to
insure consistency for the students, which became yet another administrative chore that reduced his time to focus on teaching.

[The facilitators] have got all kinds of questions, and they're confused by things so you're constantly explaining, re-explaining things. They'll have suggestions for doing it this way [that] might work a little better. OK, yeah I think that makes sense so if you’re doing it that way everybody else has to do it that way (personal communication, April 27 b).

The instructor added that interacting with students at a distance could complicate efforts to resolve problems stemming from their participation in classes he oversaw.

I think there's just that element of uncertainty because you can’t look a person in the eye, you know, you can tell so much just by demeanor and appearance and so on, which isn't available to you online (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

Online courses expose instructors to a greater variety of students than their face-to-face classes do. As noted earlier, students in the online degree-completion program are typically “mature students,” as compared to the young undergraduates who are enrolled in the College of General Studies. The opportunity to teach older students who tend to be highly motivated and engaged in the subjects at hand was rewarding, even inspirational, for several of the research participants. One noted that teaching such students was an enriching experience for both her and her entire classes.

There were a couple of really good students who made me think about things in a different way. Which was fantastic...some students had some experience, relevant experience, that they brought in. For example with issues of race. Or living in different parts of the country, and experiencing their race differently in different parts of the country. And I thought that was really, really good, and profound (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

**Summative points for new forms of interaction.**

The way faculty interacted with students was completely different within the online environment. For some it was difficult to find different rewards without face-to-face interaction. Those who were able to think differently about how to structure their relationships with students were able to think differently about what made an effective interaction. However, some held onto their views of face-to-face interaction as the only avenue to rewarding teaching and learning.

**New roles and relationships.**

All of the faculty participants found themselves required to negotiate new relationships and understand new roles as they designed and taught online courses. This included expanding
their relationships with colleagues, working in different ways with people outside their disciplines and finding new ways to connect with students, all within the context of a learning environment that was very different from the one to which they were accustomed. In many cases, they also had to find ways to manage or collaborate with course teaching assistants in unaccustomed ways. For some, these new relationships expanded the way they thought about teaching; for others they became an unwanted barrier between themselves and their students.

Several of the faculty participants were introduced to online course design by colleagues, and they were also supported by the colleagues as they continued to teach. Colleagues were valuable as mentors in a variety of ways. Faculty members new to online teaching were more comfortable simply knowing that their colleagues were available when they needed someone to talk to about online teaching. As fellow faculty members who were concerned with similar teaching problems, and who were, in some cases, experts in the same discipline, these faculty mentors spoke the same language, and shared the same role and status in the institution.

Faculty members found it reassuring to talk with colleagues about teaching online, which enabled them to hear about their colleagues’ experiences and acquaint themselves with examples on which to model their own online offerings.

“I had a few meetings with John about what the courses are like. He showed me. There was another rhetoric course that was being taught so I could look online to see...what books they were using etc. And then I also talked with another colleague of mine here who has taught through [the continuing education program] just to see what it was like (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

As they began the process of designing their own courses, they also appreciated the opportunity to show their own work to colleagues and ask for feedback. After being invited to teach online, one faculty member talked with a colleague in her college who was an experienced online teacher, largely, it seemed, to receive reassurance rather than to garner specific ideas:

I think when I first started, I showed John what I was doing just because I wanted guidance. There was no need for me to have to do that, but he just kind of said, “Great, it's going well” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Colleagues could also provide technical support geared specifically to the disciplines in which online offerings were being developed. One of Nancy’s colleagues, for instance, showed her how he did a close reading of a poem in an online context, circling certain words. “I wouldn’t have known how to do it myself,” she said (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).
Experienced online instructors offered reassurance at key times to faculty who were new to online teaching. After some initial training, Thomas recounted that he got up on the first day that his online course was offered, and, still in pajamas and holding a cup of tea, logged into the course,

And I went, “Oh my god, there're students here, and they're actually asking me questions. I have no idea what to do.” And I closed down the computer and came rushing in, and I went to see my friend Alex, who'd agreed to help me. I said, “Alex, what do I do now?” He said, “Don't worry, don't worry” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Faculty mentors also served as sounding boards, and they helped encourage colleagues to try out new ideas. A few weeks into the online course, this same faculty member felt comfortable enough to approach his colleague with some new possibilities for the course.

When I got into the middle of week three and I said to Alex, "These discussions are boring," he said, "You got a better one?" I said, “Actually I think I do, I've got one I've been using in the classroom, I'd like to try it online.” He said, “Go for it, and so I worked with him, we put it online and it exploded, and, Okay! ... And then he said "Okay, good, got another one?" Okay. And that's what happened because I had somebody who said go for it (personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

In some cases, former novice faculty members became mentors to other colleagues after teaching online. One of the faculty participants noted that “a newbie person coming in” really needs a mentor. And, she added, as someone who remembered her first course design experience, she felt that she would be a good one. “So that if they were faced with the same thing, they could call me up and say, ‘How did you do this?’ [So I say] ‘Take a deep breath.’ And that's why I feel like I am a good mentor for someone starting out” (personal communication, March 28, 2011).

Another commented that his department chairman now sends people who will be teaching online to him, telling them to “go see Thomas, he’s done it before.” “I mean part of the reason why I can tell you about discussions, and [why] I've thought about them so much, is the number of people who've been sitting in that chair who said, ‘This is my first online course—Help!’” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Talking to colleagues about teaching online was both an opportunity to share experiences that have worked and to consider collaboratively how to solve problems. Within Thomas’s department, partly because of pressure from students, faculty “compete” with one another to do the best job of teaching online.
Because it's almost self-preservation in a funny way. If you don't do videos as well as Thomas you're ready get trashed. If you don't do technology as good as Alex, your gonna get trashed, you know. If you don't do emails as good as Cathy…and so we needed to know…This has even led to discussions about online teaching as an agenda item on monthly departmental meetings, so that we say, “Well, what do you do? What you do? What do you do?” So we can try and learn from each other, which we never did in the classroom” (personal communication, March 24, 2011, emphasis added).

Before teaching online, the participants had never worked with professionals whose role was to think about the organization of course content, to add novel elements to the content, and to expand opportunities for student interaction—in other words, to “design instruction.” For many of these teachers, the give-and-take with instructional designers turned out to be a key motivator to rethink teaching.

One faculty member commented that the instructional designers with whom she worked thought about teaching from a different perspective and alerted her to new skills, which she termed a facility for “relationship building.”

I worked with two instructional designers the majority of the time for all my courses. It was fabulous. We developed a great relationship (personal communication, March 28, 2011).

For some this relationship included helping instructional designers understand important aspects of the faculty members’ face-to-face teaching styles in order to help translate them into online settings. Indeed, noted one participant, “a good [instructional designer] will show up in your on campus classes, see how you teach, and then try to figure out what enhancements can be made to your online courses so that your students get a feel for you as a teacher” (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Other faculty members saw instructional designers less as assistants and more as collaborators with whom they partnered to set up courses. “So [this instructional designer] was very helpful in my case and he really did a great deal. So I felt like I was sort of collaborating with him on the course, once I got the concepts in place.”

At times, faculty gladly deferred to instructional designers or course developers as authorities in online course design in the context of such collaborations.

It was a whole new medium. I knew that I'm a fish out of water in this online environment so I was, for the most part, very grateful for the help...They are the experts. They understand both the way the program is structured and also this whole milieu of online teaching in a way that I don't (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).
For this instructor, the realization that everything has to be thought through and completed in advance in online courses was a key motivation to reconsider what it means to teach well. In the following excerpt, he describes his thought process, the initial frustration, and then his “coming to understand” the necessity of what the instructional designer wanted him to do.

But at a certain point [I want to say to the instructional designer], “Okay, we worked through week 5 ten times now and you still see an area where it needs work. And I gotta be at something else.” And it gets frustrating a little bit. But I was never unwilling to do it because they are the experts…I did feel a little bit forced sometimes to make things explicit, clear, fully developed, but I didn't really mind it. I understood why it was necessary. Or I came to understand why it was necessary (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

Another faculty member described her growing sensitivity to online students’ experience. She noted, for example, that she realized that an online teacher should not make changes after a course has started because doing so makes students “crazy” as they contend with the especially demanding pace of such courses.

So with online, it forces you to be prepared once the course launches because there is no changing, at least in the way we do ours, once it launches I can't go into that course and make changes, or at least it's really frowned upon. It makes, I think change makes online students crazier than on-campus students because of the fast pace of the courses. And you know when it starts, it starts, and students, I think they approach their online courses a little bit differently. I think it forces you to be disciplined as a student, so if you throw a monkey wrench in there it just messes things up for them (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

As noted above, many of the participants saw instructional designers as expert technologists with whom they had valuable relationships. Several commented that it was highly rewarding as they worked with instructional designers who gave them advice on adding interactivity and videotaped them giving introductions to each week’s lesson.

Instructional designers also offered multimedia elements to help deepen students’ experiences. Working with an instructional developer, observed one instructor, helped her think differently about the sequence, amount and depth of material covered in courses; how ancillary material could augment lecture, and how to insure that the various components of a course neatly mesh.

I think I thought a different way about the ancillary material too. And that was helpful for me...Because you have to think it all out beforehand, you have to make sure everything's
there, whereas in the classroom you might improvise (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

The deft integration of an online course’s components, one faculty member commented, resulted in a “beautiful” and “very professional” version of her course. In fact, she added, she was able to include more detail in her online lectures than she could in her face-to-face courses, where she is limited to 50 minutes to go over what will be on multiple-choice tests.

Others saw instructional designers primarily as technologists or media specialists who could make their courses look better after the faculty members had completed their courses’ designs. The faculty, however, did not regard this assistance as adding trivial window-dressing to their courses. Indeed, they noted that they had received far more support than they typically get when developing face-to-face courses. Thomas was enthusiastic about this support.

We have the entire distance education department. They make the videos. You know, I send them the lectures, they clean them all up, there's a quality control department, and I go in and they video and I draw, they video me drawing on the board, and I go, "That was awful!" and they clean it up and make it look fantastic so we get a huge amount of support (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Barbara, too, commented favorably on the assistance instructional designers could offer.

The ideal instructional designer for me is someone who does the nitty-gritty work of identifying broken links, suggesting how to make coursework flow in a balanced manner, can read content and suggest "flashes" to make it come alive, and will be brutally honest and tell you, "Re-tape that introduction. You look too stiff" (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Faculty noted that they particularly valued instructional designers’ support when they were first dealing with daunting new technology, such as when setting up “live classroom” sessions, the synchronous weekly online sessions that many faculty members take part in with students enrolled in their online courses.

I had one instructional designer who "held my hand" when I did my first live classroom session. I was scared to death that I would make a fool of myself in front of potentially 100 students, using a technology that was foreign and unforgiving. Now my sessions are second nature (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

This instructor also mentioned suggestions that instructional designers had made for improving her courses, such as creating a discussion board where students could post questions
after a live classroom session ended—“a brilliant idea for those of us who like to chew on info for a while before the questions come to the surface” (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Importantly, instructional designers also introduced faculty to new technology, a sometimes challenging experience that, as one teacher noted, was valuable because it forced “me out of my comfort zone” (personal communication, March 7, 2011). Another observed that technology enabled faculty to stay connected with the students in online courses, and to respond to them quickly. Faculty used technology including Skype, email, webcams and Wimba, a web-based online classroom environment that allows faculty and students to view presentations, and interact synchronously via voice chat, a shared electronic “whiteboard” and instant messaging. Several mentioned that teaching online courses allowed them to keep up with developments in their disciplines.

I find that [the course learning management system is] a very useful and interesting tool for me to keep up with the field. It is easier believe it or not, because you're writing a lecture, to update the online course, about the most current stuff (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

When faculty members described what they thought of as good teaching, and again when they talked about teaching online courses, they emphasized the importance of interacting with their students.

If I didn't have the interaction with them, with the students, through their posting and talking about the lecture and talking about the readings, it would not be good. I mean it would feel very disconnected. I mean it would not be interactive to me. So I need that interaction either through online conversation or in a classroom. Otherwise it just seems to me to be lecturing at someone, not my idea of teaching (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a, emphasis added).

Faculty who felt that online teaching adversely affected their ability to interact with students were most concerned about the distance-learning department’s model for online classes at their university. As mentioned above, this model is based on a format in which students are divided into sections taught by teaching assistants called “facilitators” overseen by a faculty member who serves as “the instructor of record.” Two participants commented that they found acting as instructor of record unsatisfying. One faculty member noted that teachers and students “are both hungry for each other and we just can't find…each other” in online classes (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

She also asserted that with the distance-learning model, the facilitators do the real
teaching and get what she called “the good stuff.”

In class sizes of 15 or more, facilitators are hired by the instructor to take on the role of teaching assistant—grade assignments, clarify course content, enforce course expectations, provide feedback on academic performance, and offer support when it is needed. *These are exactly the kinds of things I love to do as a teacher* (personal communication, March 7, 2011, emphasis added).

Another instructor noted that while he liked teaching small classes online, he felt that his role within the large classes in the distance-learning model was mainly that of a “manager” overseeing facilitators and dealing with administrative issues. He added that he interacted with students only when there were problems, which he did not find satisfying.

One hundred students and seven TA’s I think I had, or maybe nine TAs ...It was a different ball of wax. Because every little tear in the fabric shows. And somebody gets all bent out of shape about it. Things come up that have to be fixed. That's really frustrating. It’s also, I found, much less rewarding when you're not getting to know the students because you’ve got all these TA's. You're basically just putting out fires and managing... I'm prepared now if I’ve got a large number of students, basically I'm just going to be a manager. I don't find that very gratifying (personal communication, April 27 b).

This instructor found that working with facilitators often distracted him from teaching, in part because he was required to act as a trainer for the facilitators. And although the facilitators sometimes proposed good ideas for improving the courses, putting changes they suggested into effect required the professor to arrange for all the sections to make the same changes in order to insure consistency for the students, which became yet another administrative chore that reduced his time to focus on teaching.

[The facilitators] have got all kinds of questions, and they're confused by things so you’re constantly explaining, re-explaining things. They'll have suggestions for doing it this way [that] might work a little better. OK, yeah I think that makes sense so if you’re doing it that way everybody else has to do it that way (personal communication, April 27 b).

The instructor added that interacting with students at a distance could complicate efforts to resolve problems stemming from their participation in classes he oversaw.

I think there's just that element of uncertainty because you can’t look a person in the eye, you know, you can tell so much just by demeanor and appearance and so on, which isn't available to you online (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

For those who felt disconnected from students while teaching online, unwieldy class sizes contributed more to the feeling of distance than did the courses’ online format. Indeed, one
professor noted that when acting as a facilitator for a small online class, he was able to frequently interact with students and thus had no sense of being disconnected from them.

[In small classes] I’m also a facilitator as well as the instructor of record. So I'll take both those roles...and then I'm coming into contact with students more. I'm able to follow their online conversations rather than just peep in now and then. Very different things. Participate in those conversations because I'm following them. Feel like I'm getting to know them, feel like I'm interacting with them, feel like I'm making a difference (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

While the “facilitator model” seemed to diminish some professors’ interactions with students, other instructors found ways to mitigate this problem. For example, one set up her course so that she would be involved with both students and facilitators as they interacted. In this way she played the role of a very hands-on facilitator of facilitators.

I also set it up so I was going to be pretty involved with [the facilitators]. I think there are people who aren’t very involved, and I didn't want that because I feel like we’re all teaching the course in some way. And also I wanted the students to have continuity. You know everybody should be sort of on the same page of what we’re expecting. And so I was very available to them if they had any questions and, as I said, we had a conference call every week. And also I wanted the students to have continuity (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Among other things, she held a weekly conference call with the facilitators to discuss what they should be looking for in their students’ writing. She also was “very available” to the facilitators and continued to interact with the students by posting to the discussion boards. “And then sometimes in my discussion post, I would say to a student, ‘I really liked what you said in your paper about this. Here you might be interested in this’” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Another faculty member observed that the facilitator model let him to do more of what he enjoyed as a teacher because, as he put it, the facilitators did the “boring” work of grading, which enabled him to spend more time interacting with the students.

I just finished an online course that had 80 students that are divided into groups of 15, so we had 6 sections with what we call facilitators that do the grading. And for me that's, I think that's really cool because the boring work is the grading, right, so they do all of that. I get to play in the discussions (personal communication, March 24, 2011).
Summative points for new roles and relationships.

As suggested earlier, designing and teaching online courses typically expanded the participants’ existing contacts with colleagues and required them to collaborate with educational specialists outside their teaching disciplines, both of which exposed the faculty to provocative new ideas about teaching. They also found themselves dealing with types of students they rarely encountered in the classroom. Such ongoing exchanges did more than simply expose the participants to new ideas. In a number of cases the new relationships prompted them to reflect on and articulate ideas about good teaching to their new educational partners. This offered them an opportunity to reconsider their usual classroom teaching practices and consider how they might be revised in an effort to improve students’ learning experiences.

In some cases, this was a disquieting experience, and at times even disheartening. In many other cases, it was an engaging, enlightening and cognitively invigorating one. For all of the faculty, however, these novel interpersonal experiences provided a critical impetus to rethink teaching, which potentially led to broadening and deepening of their perspectives on what it means to teach well.

Reflection on the Catalysts

For many of the participants, reflecting on the process of designing and teaching an online class while taking part in this research project helped to crystallize their realizations that their views about effective teaching had indeed changed as a result of teaching online. Here, in an email message written to the researcher two months after the initial interview, is how one teacher summed up what she had learned from online teaching:

We teachers are always prepared; sometimes overly so. We want to “cover” material, comment profusely and cogently, and straddle the sometimes blurry line between letting our students grow and evolve as writers and telling them how to grow and evolve. Online teaching has taught me the beauty of foregrounding ‘the big picture’ and mapping a border without filling in all the details (personal communication, June 23, 2011b).

Another teacher, also writing in email, put what he had learned from online teaching very succinctly: “I became more aware of the value of being specific and explicit in my teaching” (personal communication, June 23, 2011a).

Blogs.

As noted in Chapter Three, two of the participants created blogs after the interview, and wrote a number of blog posts. Barbara posted multiple times, and used the blog as a way to
Catalysts for Re-Examining Pedagogical Assumptions

examine her own evolving opinions about online teaching. She semi-whimsically titled her first post, “Blogging, an exercise in defogging.”

One of the most fascinating things about blogging in this research project is that it has given me a way to think more clearly about online teaching. I am deeply grateful for this. I am surprised at how strong my negative feelings are toward online teaching. The positive feelings are like teeny tiny voices being shouted down by the loud, rambunctious ones (personal communication, March 22, 2011).

The blog format encouraged Barbara to elaborate on her views, and it enabled this researcher to post follow-up questions that she responded to in a remarkably forthright way that seemed to reflect an engaging process of self-discovery. For example, she wrote, “The blogging process, and I am hesitant to admit this, is making me realize that I experience a lot of dislike, resentment and dissatisfaction toward online teaching. I think I hate it.” She subsequently responded to this researcher’s request that she imagine an online teaching scenario she would like. She described being closer to the students in “smaller classes without facilitators (except for one teaching assistant), [but with] an instructional designer who is part of my two-person team...[and] academic freedom and a process to update and revise my courses that does not feel so rushed” (personal communication, March 25, 2011). Through this exchange the researcher and the participant were able to become “co-researchers,” as described by Smith, et al. (2009, p. 215). Since blogging took place over time, using blogs as data enabled both to see the unfolding of her thinking processes. It also facilitated the collection of different perspectives at different times, something that Smith et al. (2009) recommend. And it was possible to use blog posts in conjunction with the interview to clarify what participants wrote, and in some cases, encourage them to reflect more deeply on selected key issues.

Barbara continued to use the blog to reflect on discoveries she made about herself as a teacher. Two months after her first entry, she wrote about how an online student might have different goals for an online class than the teacher does. She had been an online student herself six years earlier, but had not previously thought about that experience in relation to her teaching.

Maybe students and teachers see education differently. Maybe students are purely goal-oriented in terms of wanting to finish courses as soon as they can, with as little effort as possible, and the higher the grade the better.

And maybe this teacher wants validation, through connection, that her students are learning because of what she does as a teacher—an interesting assignment that inspires and motivates, a "perfect example" that illuminates a complex concept, a viewpoint or
story that captures an important idea. There is a look on students' faces that tells teachers when they understand something or not; or are interested in what you have to say or not. I kinda like that look (personal communication, June 6, 2011).

About a week later, in an email message she emphasized that her views of teaching had changed through the process of teaching online and reflecting on it. “I can say with confidence that online teaching (and your project!) has made me rethink what ‘teaching’ is” (June 14, 2011).

And, ultimately, she wrote a post in which she concluded that it was possible to do “good teaching” online.

Good teaching is good teaching. I say this because a committed teacher will find ways to engage with students virtually and otherwise. A good teacher can be creative in both classrooms – virtual and face-to-face. An enthusiastic teacher can communicate her enthusiasm just by the way she walks into a classroom or “walks” into an online classroom. I think it comes down to preparation, command of the content, creativity, and presence. These things are evident to students no matter where they sit (personal communication, June 29, 2011).

The other participant who kept a blog wrote about an influential teacher, and later about iPads and teaching. He used the blog to post his thoughts related to “teaching with technology” after attending a conference and returning to his campus, where he was presented with a “shiny new iPad.”

I spent the weekend at a conference [on] Studies in Discourse and Writing. Which got me thinking again about teaching, as well as teaching with technology...I’d like to fit multimedia, interactive texts into my course somewhere, but maybe in the first few months the focus ought to be on texts that really make demands on the attention spans of students, and ask them to trace complicated arguments that are not leavened with images and buttons (personal communication, June 3, 2011).

Even though most did not keep blogs, it was valuable to use email to continue the conversation about teaching with several of the other participants. Writing down their thoughts gave them an opportunity to formulate their thoughts more carefully than they could in the interviews. For example, when asked via email how she would describe what she had learned from the experience of teaching online, Linda expanded on a comment she had made during the interview about “staying current in her field”:

Both classroom teaching and online courses give me the opportunity to do more research on subjects that I am interested in, especially on modern Chinese history. Research that is not specifically focused on what I write about. Also, because I teach a course that’s part of a core curriculum that includes Russia and US foreign policy, it’s possible to see
connections to what is going on in China that I may never have thought of (personal communication, March 31, 2011).

The informality, ease and iterative nature of online interactions with research participants was especially helpful in meeting the particular challenge of phenomenological research, as well as in realizing the special promise of this approach. Indeed, this ongoing blog and email exchange elicited richer, more detailed interactions than the single interviews did. This kind of interaction makes it possible for a researcher to closely track participants’ unfolding thought processes in the effort to understand the essence of their lived experiences, and thus illuminate subjective matters in ways that more objective methods cannot.

Designing and teaching the same course multiple times in the two formats, online and face-to-face, afforded faculty opportunities to experiment. That is, they could test different materials and techniques in the two different contexts, and they sometimes found that materials designed for one context worked unexpectedly well in the other. Additionally, they sometimes found that skills that seem tailored for one format could be used quite effectively in the other. Importantly, this iterative borrowing could prompt them to become more flexible in how they thought about teaching in both contexts.

**Findings Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined a series of catalysts that prompted faculty to rethink teaching. The central themes and key findings are listed in *Table 12*, below. Some faculty members described moments in which insights on good teaching suddenly crystallized as a result of their online experiences. But for most, insights were attained more gradually as a result of grappling with the many issues that must be addressed to design and teach an online course. The long-term, iterative nature of the process itself was the necessary prelude to thinking differently about teaching well. As noted earlier, for some professors this process was largely an autodidactic exercise initiated by requests, invitations or mandates to teach online. Some, however, had mentors who afforded them opportunities to talk not only about online courses, but also about teaching more generally, and they continued these discussions by becoming mentors themselves. For one instructor, talking about online courses with colleagues represented the first time he had discussed teaching with his peers.
Catalysts for Re-examining Pedagogical Assumptions while Designing and Teaching Online Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Summative Points (challenges)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Course Design Process</td>
<td>• Invitation or mandate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Designing the online course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Learning Environment</td>
<td>• Constraints as catalysts to re-thinking good teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Replicating good teaching online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintaining one’s teaching persona in an online environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preserving a discipline-specific teaching culture in an online environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaching both online and face-to-face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Roles and Relationships</td>
<td>• Mentoring and being mentored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working with instructional designers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working with facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Forms of Interaction</td>
<td>• Finding rewards when teaching online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working within the “facilitator model.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning from teaching different kinds of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12. Key findings associated with catalysts for re-examining pedagogical assumptions during the process of designing and teaching online courses.

Having time to think about and design online courses, as well as the opportunity to interact with support staff, helped make online teaching a positive experience for most of these faculty members. It seemed a rare chance to be creative and thoughtful about teaching in ways that they could not while preoccupied by the demands of the classroom. For some, it prompted new ideas, such as Thomas’s realization that he had to decide precisely what he wanted his students to learn, and how to make sure that they got where he wanted them to go.

Most found that they needed to take on new roles as learners, content experts and collaborators with new colleagues with technical expertise, which in some cases provided an impetus to rethink good teaching. Through a collaborative relationship with an instructional designer who insisted on specificity, for example, Will and Nancy came to a somewhat reluctant recognition that everything had to be thought out in advance. Some professors also found that using new media revealed new ways to organize valuable learning experiences for their students.

Others found themselves changed by other aspects of online teaching, including its sometimes frustrating constraints, as well as the mind-opening experience of being anxious about performing well as teachers in an unfamiliar setting. For two instructors, the lack of interaction with students while teaching online was discouraging, something they felt powerless to change. Others, however, found new ways to insure that they connected with students, such as by putting...
in place collaborative relationships with facilitators, or working to recreate a classroom atmosphere in a synchronous or “live classroom” setting.

Several said that they had come to “think differently” about their course material from being exposed to new kinds of students in online courses. Some were inspired by the constraints of the online environment to try new teaching techniques. After being forced to break his long lectures into a series of short videos, Thomas discovered that students watched them repeatedly and learned concepts better. Will discovered a new way to engage his students via peer review. In both of these cases, the faculty members integrated new approaches from online courses into their classroom teaching.

For some the experience of teaching online was particularly satisfying because it allowed them more time to focus on what they valued, such as interactions with students via discussion boards. Others characterized online teaching as unsatisfying, particularly in large classes, because of the lack of student interaction, and their perceived inability to convey the passion, patience, humor, and intellect that they feel is readily communicated in their face-to-face classroom teaching.

For many, the opportunity to reflect on the entire process of designing and teaching an online class played a crucial role in their coming to realize that their views on teaching had evolved. This opportunity was afforded by talking about teaching online with colleagues, by answering questions during the interview and in email, and by keeping a blog. One of the more memorable summary statements that emerged from these opportunities for reflection was Barbara’s comment that whether online or face-to-face, “Good teaching is good teaching” (personal communication, July 29, 2011). One might add that good teachers are good teachers regardless of the setting in which they employ their knowledge, wit and wisdom to engage and educate students.


The interview transcripts contain echoes of the theoretical framework, both in the ways that the faculty members described interacting with colleagues and instructional designers, and in the catalysts for changes in their views of teaching. In phenomenological research, it is necessary to attempt to put the theories aside and listen intently to participants’ words to allow the themes to emerge unencumbered by preconceptions. After attempting to faithfully identify the themes
that emerged from the interview transcripts, the researcher can explore how participants’ views of the process of designing and teaching online classes connect to, in this case, the dual theoretical perspectives for the study: developmental psychologists’ views of the process learners go through when absorbing new concepts and online-learning theorists’ views of the ways novel technologies and a new learning environment impact how people connect and interact.

The next chapter describes how the findings intersect this theoretical framework. It also suggests the scholarly significance of these findings and their implications for practitioners and offers avenues for further research.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings gleaned from interviews with six participants concerning their lived experiences while designing and teaching online courses, with special emphasis on how their views of good teaching might have changed during that process. The findings highlighted a series of catalysts that in most but not all cases helped to bring about the faculty members’ reexamination of pedagogical assumptions as they planned and taught online courses and reflected on the experience. The catalysts, shown in Table 12, include new online learning environment, new roles and relationships they encountered during the process, the new course design process, and new forms of interaction.

The chapter begins with a brief recap of the phenomenological research process that was used for this investigation. The second section discusses how the findings connect with the two theoretical perspectives that inform the research. Section three delineates how the findings have provided some answers to the study’s primary research question. The fourth section addresses the significance of this research, both as a modest addition to thinking about catalysts to learning that can be incorporated into the course-development process that was studied, and as a source of practical insights on how to instigate online teaching in a way that truly enhances education. The conclusion offers some specific suggestions for those who work with faculty in setting up online courses and identifies avenues for future research that could build on this study.

The Phenomenological Research Approach

As noted earlier, the phenomenological research approach aims to achieve a deep understanding of individuals’ lived world. Phenomenology concerns “the study of the lifeworld...as we conceptualize, categorize or reflect on it” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Instead of presenting us with “effective theory with which we can explain and/or control our world...it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9) by exploring “the nature of a selected human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 42). It allows us to look beyond what is immediately practical, to understand the world by “maintaining a thoughtful and conversational relation” with it (Van Manen, 1990 p. 16).

Conducting phenomenological research necessitates assuming a “phenomenological attitude” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 87), focusing on how an individual or a group of individuals experiences a selected phenomenon rather than what has actually, or objectively, occurred. This
requires “attentive thoughtfulness”—listening to the stories the individuals tell, the way they use words, their hesitations, and what they emphasize. It also necessitates creating a text for analysis by transcribing the participants’ words, looking for patterns and reducing the patterns to themes. This leads to the researcher’s interpretation of the essence or “that what makes a thing what it is and without which it would not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

The choice of a phenomenological approach stimulated this researcher to listen deeply to what the faculty said about good teaching, inquire into their experiences as they designed and taught online courses, and explore how these experiences might have encouraged them to change their views of good teaching. While the immediate concern was to elicit and scrutinize participants’ lived experiences, this approach helped to foster new insights on relevant issues, including practical strategies that instructional designers who work with faculty to fashion online programs can employ to help make online teaching as rewarding as possible for both educators and students.

**Discussion of Findings**

Van Manen states that “human science,” which includes phenomenology, “does not see theory as something that stands before practice in order to inform it. Rather, theory enlightens practice. Practice (or life) comes first and theory comes second as a result of reflection” (Van Manen p. 15). As noted in Chapter Three, this researcher followed an approach laid out by Creswell (2007), Moustakas (1994), and Smith et al. (2009) to undertake this phenomenological study. In keeping with this approach, the researcher now returns—after closely examining the lived experience of the participants related to the phenomenon of interest—to the two theoretical perspectives that were selected to inform this research: (1) the sociocultural theories of Vygotsky and the cognitive constructivist theories of Bruner and Piaget, and (2) the work of online learning theorists, including Dede, Ally, and Mayes and others, who have extended the earlier thinkers’ concepts.

**Developmental psychologists’ views of the learning process.**

The first theoretical perspective bears on the learning process faculty members go through when they design and construct online courses. Specifically, these theorists’ ideas provided an analytic context for singling out and understanding themes related to the social context within which the process takes place, the advantages of learning from and with peers, and the value of cognitive dissonance as an impetus to learning.
Of special pertinence was Lev Vygotsky’s idea that children move through what he terms a “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD), the gap between what a learner has already mastered (the actual level of development) and what he or she can achieve with the support of a guide, or more knowledgeable other (MKO), while learning a new concept (P. Miller, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s depiction of traversing the ZPD and the extension of his concept by others (Borthick, Jones, & Wakai, 2003; Welk, 2006) suggested insights on the parallel process that faculty undergo as they grapple with the cognitive challenges encountered when developing online courses.

Vygotsky’s emphasis on the importance of learners’ supportive relationships with MKOs, for example, suggested that the ability of faculty to forge fruitful relationships with instructional designers and course developers may be critical to their making successful ventures into the potentially forbidding landscape of online teaching. For some of the faculty participants in this research project, relationships with these more knowledgeable others also provided catalysts for their reconsideration of effective pedagogy.

Working relationships between faculty and instructional designers typically began after the faculty members developed first drafts of their online courses, which they did on their own, much as they did when developing traditional face-to-face courses. This sequence of events potentially set up a provocative juxtaposition between the faculty members’ deeply-held beliefs about good teaching, which were reflected in their first drafts, and the sometimes different views on teaching and learning held by their MKOs in the new realm of education they were entering.

The relationships between instructional designers and faculty members that tended to prompt faculty to rethink and sometimes retool their educational practices manifested striking similarities to relationships between MKOs and learners envisioned by Vygotsky. For instance, instructional designers attempted to engage faculty members via their “prior learning” or what they already knew (in this case, their expertise with the courses at hand), and then to connect this existing learning to relatively unfamiliar educational strategies, such as thinking through courses in their entirety in the kind of detail necessary to lay out specific learning goals and expected outcomes at the outset of the courses. Such similarities were identified by Welk (2006), who describes the engagement of faculty via their prior learning in an article on applying Vygotsky’s ZPD to online training of faculty facilitators. This research project added color and detail to these general considerations, suggesting valuable insights specific to rethinking teaching through
developing online courses. For example, interviews with faculty participants brought home that instructional designers should take pains to strike a balance between exposing faculty to cognitive dissonance, which, as Vygotsky and others have noted, is an essential step in opening minds to novel concepts, and providing the kind of timely support that can turn potentially frustrating cognitive challenges into teachable moments—although in some of these cases it would be more appropriate to term them “self-taught moments.”

A case in point, noted earlier, showed how this balance was achieved in a way reminiscent of successful interactions between MKOs and learners described by Vygotsky: After working with his instructional designers, Will proved amenable, though initially grudgingly, to being more explicit about his expectations for his students in his online course. It seems unlikely that he would have altered his view about the importance of being explicit had he not valued the designers’ guidance in a situation that presented him with challenging novelty. As he put it, “It was a whole new medium. I knew I’m a fish out of water in this online environment…I was never unwilling to [make the course more explicit] because they are the experts, they understand both the way the program is structured and also this whole milieu of online teaching in a way that I don’t” (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

Importantly, however, he didn’t feel that acceding to the instructional designers’ advice on this issue put him in a subordinate position in developing the course. In fact, his comments made it clear that the designers had achieved the essential balance mentioned above via a give-and-take that brought home to him their respect for the primacy of his extensive knowledge on the subject of the course. As he said, “They completely deferred to my area of expertise” in matters related to course content (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

Other participants also highlighted positive aspects of their relationships with instructional designers, which often extended throughout the online development and teaching process. Emphasizing that it is critical to “feel confident in your instructional designer,” Olivia characterized her interactions with designers as a kind of pas de deux that, as in Will’s case, fostered a sense of partnership with her more knowledgeable others in the new world of online teaching. “It’s a dance,” she said, and “it takes a while to get the rhythm” (personal communication, March 28, 2011). Nancy noted that she worked with an instructional developer who was “great” and who talked with her about doing “more interactive stuff” in the course.
Linda, too, had a positive relationship with her instructional designers, who she said made her course look “beautiful” and “very professional” (personal communication, April 27, 2011a).

It might be said that a truly skillful instructional designer seeks to create a dynamic with a faculty member in which the two continually exchange places as MKO and learner. Vygotsky termed this situation “intersubjectivity,” in which mutual understanding takes place and both parties successfully learn from each other. Will effectively highlighted this point when describing his relationship with an instructional designer: “So he [the instructional designer] was very helpful in my case and he really did a great deal. So I felt like I was sort of collaborating with him on the course” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b). The relationship became a shared learning experience, in Will’s view, and his comments shed light on how an instructional designer, by giving free rein to his or her natural human curiosity, can contribute to a productive sense of collaborative mutuality with a faculty member: “The thing that I liked about this particular instructional designer,” Will tellingly commented, “is that he was really interested in the subject matter. He really seemed to be sort of turned on by the whole theme of the course” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b).

It should be noted that faculty members were also cognizant of the fact that at times their views were in conflict with those of the instructional designers they worked with. Several faculty, for example, commented that they felt forced to become more explicit about directions for students in their online courses. Such cognitive dissonance, however, sometimes acted as a catalyst for desirable change. As Will said, “And I think I’ve come to sympathize with [students’ need for specificity] more and be able to meet that need better as a result of having to kind of think things through more explicitly for the online course” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b, emphasis added). He also noted, “I’ve learned a lot and it has probably helped me be a better teacher.”

In other situations, discord between instructional designers and faculty did not serve as a catalyst for rethinking teaching. For example, Olivia described her first experience with an instructional designer as confusing and frustrating.

[When I met with an instructional designer for the first time] I didn't know anything...My instructional designer was on a level that was so miniscule. She told me what fonts I had to use and I was like, ‘this is ridiculous.’ She made me retype things, and I'm like, ‘that's not how it should be’ (personal communication, March 28, 2011).
Olivia commented that some faculty new to online course design probably would not have continued teaching online if they had had a first experience like hers. She added that the university “got rid of” the irritating instructional designer. This instructional designer’s focus on technical minutiae clearly worked against the development of rapport with experienced teachers like Olivia, who are primarily concerned about the larger issues of engaging and communicating with students in a wholly new context.

Barbara characterized her instructional designer as obliging, someone who helped her “fine tune things and work out bugs.” But the support was limited. Interestingly, when asked to envision the kind of relationship she would like to have with an instructional designer, she described one strikingly similar to the kind of fruitful partnerships delineated by Will and some other faculty participants, in which the instructional designer served as a collaborative and supportive MKO.

[Although] the instructional designer is present and accessible in the weeks leading up to the course... I believe the role needs to be much larger than that. I need someone who can take my teaching vision and apply to the online format. I bumble around trying to improve my teaching methods, but I would like the ID and me to be a team working closely together before, during, and after my course launches (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Another drawback, in Barbara’s view, is that the distance learning program represents “a sacred cow (read ‘cash cow’)—never to be questioned and spoken ill of” (personal communication, March 22, 2011 blog). This perception seemed to greatly diminish her interest in experimenting with new teaching methods, and in particular it contributed to her “hate” of online teaching.

Besides stressing the importance of MKOs, Vygotsky favored learning that occurs in a social context with peers who happen to have more expertise on the subject at hand, or “co-constructing” (P. Miller, 2001, p. 393) in conjunction with reflection (Kozulin, Gendis, Ageyev, & S. Miller, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Eun (2008) and Huang (2002) have set forth a cognate idea related to online teaching: As they create online courses, faculty members may benefit from working with faculty colleagues who have already designed and taught such courses.

It appears that such partnerships are common among many of the faculty participants. Several noted that when they began preparing online courses, they sought out more experienced colleagues as mentors who introduced them to new strategies and practices. As noted in Chapter Four, Nancy described how she asked colleagues for tips and reassurance as she developed her
online course and then checked in with them throughout the semester while she taught the
course. Thomas discussed his course design ideas with a colleague who had online teaching
experience and continued to seek him out when teaching the course. These faculty members’
opportunity to learn from colleagues, who both challenged and supported them, helped prompt
them to rethink teaching in a way that differed from their catalytic experiences with instructional
designers. For one thing, the colleagues were fellow teachers who understood their departments’
cultures and thus could share insights on online teaching related to online neophytes’ particular
to university environments. And because they were not employed by their university’s distance-
learning department, the more knowledgeable colleagues did not have to subscribe to that
department’s views about course design.

This mentoring typically occurred in familiar settings in which groups of well-acquainted
colleagues regularly gathered. Examples include Thomas’s departmental meetings and Olivia’s
faculty mentoring group. Researchers note that within such groups—which include Faculty
Learning Communities (FLC’s), Communities of Practice (COP’s), and Faculty Inquiry Groups
(FIG’s)—faculty can engage in reciprocal meta-reflection about teaching practice. After Thomas
had gained online teaching experience, he became a mentor himself, and was responsible for
leading the discussions about online learning with fellow teachers during a monthly staff
meeting.

Talking with colleagues about online learning, expanding relationships with colleagues
through seeking help with teaching online, being mentored, and later becoming a mentor to other
faculty members can all provide opportunities for faculty members to reflect on teaching. When
carried out in a supportive environment that exists in part to encourage faculty to discuss
teaching practices and solve problems, such reflection can lead to rethinking good pedagogy in a
way that is reinforced by what might be called friendly peer pressure. The fact that faculty often
engage in amicable, and occasionally not so amicable, rivalries in such settings can inspire
competition to achieve excellence in online teaching.

Such competition represents one of the several sources of cognitive dissonance that, as
highlighted by Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, serve as a critical enabler for learning. Indeed,
Piaget proposed that peer interactions engendering cognitive conflict can assist the learning
progress (P. Miller, 2001). For his part, Vygotsky suggested that cognitive development can
occur via the resolution of conflicts (P. Miller, 2001).
For this study’s participants, cognitive dissonance also arose in a non-public way as a result of differences between their deeply-held views on effective teaching strategies and compelling new ideas they encountered, or in some cases were pushed to adopt, while developing online courses. For example as noted earlier, Will described how he had initially shied away from what he termed very specific, articulated learning objectives because the “culture of writing” sees writing “as something rather holistic and nurturing.” But he went on to describe how he later came to regard such specificity as a good thing, noting that the ability to make detailed assertions “about what we're doing [in a course] and how we’re doing it is the direction I’d like to go in.” He added,

“I think probably online teaching has fed into that, you know. It’s not that I’m going to set up my course the way an online course is run...There’s going to be more spontaneity. But I think that the emphasis on specific goals that online teaching has is something that I can bring, and I have been bringing to some extent to my conventional classroom teaching. So it benefits from that (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

Piaget, too, suggests that cognitive growth occurs during times when there is a conflict between what one knows and the new. It is in the act of mentally stretching to assimilate new ideas that learning, and then adaptation, occurs (P. Miller, 2001). Both the opportunities and constraints presented by a new online teaching environment can cause faculty to experience this kind of mentally expanding cognitive cacophony.

For example Thomas, a seasoned classroom teacher, experienced what for him was a rare perplexity when pondering how he would teach an online course, eventually leading him to rethink how he taught in the classroom. He described his customary approach to preparing to teach a face-to-face class as rather perfunctory since, as a veteran teacher, he tended to rely on his improvisational skills in the classroom:

You make the lecture the night before you go in, you draw all over the board you come out you say, "It wasn't so bad, or it was great, or it was horrible or whatever it was, it was. You say, well next time maybe I'll do something differently (personal communication March 24, 2011).

It was not until he was preparing an online course, asking himself “what should I type,” that he began to think more deliberately about his teaching:

I never actually asked myself, ‘What do I want the students to learn?’ It was [while preparing the online course], when you’re sitting there saying, ‘Oh dear, what do I want them actually to learn and how am I going to get there?’ So then I went back into the
classroom, I had to answer that question in the classroom or for certain sections. And the result of it was, I threw out whole chunks of lectures. Much more interactive now (personal communication March 24, 2011).

While developing an online course, he also became aware of various logistical and administrative aspects of the course’s face-to-face counterpart that had to be made explicit—written out in detail—for the online course. Taking account of what Thomas termed “bookkeeping,” the routine chores of face-to-face classes, such as taking role, collecting papers, going over upcoming assignments, et cetera, in order to reconstitute them in an online format may seem at first glance no more than an immersion in pedestrian details. But, as suggested by Thomas’s experience, this chore can serve as groundwork for rethinking important aspects of teaching.

The challenge of finding new ways to get difficult concepts across to students in online classes strikes some faculty members as an interesting puzzle. For teachers like Thomas, who, as noted in Chapter Four, was inspired by this challenge to create short videos for his students, this communication conundrum can serve as a catalyst to thinking creatively about pedagogy. However, others teachers may find the puzzle frustrating. Defusing this frustration is important to help maintain faculty enthusiasm about online teaching. But as Drago-Severson (2004) suggests, it is important to frame the problem as an invitation to explore new educational strategies, which necessitates striking a balance between drawing attention to the challenge while providing reassurance that solutions are within reach. Thomas’s productive, can-do stance on this issue represents a model that instructional designers and others who work with faculty to develop online courses would do well to seek to engender in teachers.

Why not simply supply faculty with ready-made solutions to such challenges, insofar as such solutions are available? An answer is suggested by Piaget’s theory that emotions provide the energy necessary to engage in challenging thought processes, including ones generated by the sometimes anxious rethinking that inevitably accompany efforts to expand one’s repertoire of skills and knowledge (P. Miller, 2001).

The emotional energy that drives creative thinking and cognitive growth is also provided by the professional pride, which for the participants in this study is tightly linked to their longstanding passion to teach well. Statements they made about teaching made it obvious that they were passionate about their callings and their students’ learning. Nancy focused on her
desire to see students learn and grow. “I love [teaching]. It’s what I do...I like seeing [students] progress and grow and morph into different beings as writers...finding their voice as a writer” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a). Will singled out the satisfaction of witnessing students experience the pride in ownership of their ideas. “Seeing students get really excited about their own ideas...they might be having this sort of really life changing experience of an intellectual nature in my class...that’s hugely exciting” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b). For Barbara, teaching was an opportunity to be creative and connect with students. “I absolutely love on campus teaching, face-to-face teaching because it really allows me to be creative. It allows me to be funny. And I get to really connect—I feel like I connect with my students face-to-face” (personal communication, March 7, 2011). And Thomas made an insightful comparison between performers connecting with audiences and teachers hitting resonant chords with students. “It's a performance. I enjoy performing, and I mean, you know, bottom line is if I do a good job the students like me, I like to be liked, there's a real feedback loop here that we should probably admit more than we do” (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

These faculty members’ emotional engagement in their profession was clearly an important contributor to their interest in ways to improve their teaching. Indeed, besides providing emotional energy to tackle the challenge of developing online courses, it helped make them open to consideration of new educational strategies. This, in turn could lead to deeper, meta-level reflections about the nature of teaching and how best to convey knowledge to students, a necessary prelude to significantly revising or expanding their teaching strategies.

However, this study highlighted an important factor that potentially works against these participants’ engagement with the challenge of mastering the art of online teaching. It relates to the font of emotional energy that good teachers draw on both to perform with enthusiasm and rigor in the classroom day after day, and to remain open to new teaching tools and techniques. That is, when teachers saw online teaching as diminishing their ability to connect with students, they understandably became frustrated. And unlike other forms of cognitive dissonance that arose as they tackled the new challenges of online teaching, this one tended to induce disenchantment and disengagement rather than to encourage efforts toward greater mastery and potential rethinking of teaching. This is not surprising in light of the importance these passionate faculty place on lively interactions with students. Thus, this aspect of the online-teaching
challenge deserves special attention, and this study suggests that it, more than any other factor, could result in lost opportunities for pedagogical engagement, reflection and growth. Accordingly, it is explored in more detail in the following section.

As outlined above, the theories of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner and those who extended their ideas provide a valuable framework for identifying catalysts that prompted participants in this study to reconsider their views of good pedagogy when developing and teaching online courses. As noted earlier, of particular interest to this study are their views related to interacting with more knowledgeable others, to learning from and with peers, and to the value of carefully modulated cognitive dissonance in the process of learning and changing. Their insights can serve as valuable touchstones for those who hope to encourage teachers to seize the opportunities offered by the trend toward more online teaching to improve pedagogy.

**Online learning theorists.**

The second theoretical perspective underlying this study illuminates the ways that innovative technologies and web-based learning affect how people interact; among other things, it suggests activities that can be used as levers to encourage faculty to rethink teaching. More specifically, insights gleaned from this perspective pertain to how certain of the participants’ encounters with online technology and the altered mode of teaching it requires served as catalysts to provoke fruitful rethinking of good teaching.

**Interaction.**

For all of the participants, a hallmark of good (and satisfying) teaching was interaction. The examples they cited correspond to the three forms of interaction that Moore (1989) defined for online learning: “learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction” (M. Moore, 1989, para. 3). Swann (2004) slightly expanded Moore’s set of interactions to include those with course interfaces. In variations on this theme, Ally, (2004), Mayes (2006) and Swann (2004) emphasized the importance of purposefully shaping students’ interactions to achieve desired learning outcomes.

Earlier research showing that more-satisfied online instructors report a higher degree of student-to-instructor interaction than less-satisfied ones, despite the heavier workloads that such interactions entail (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001; Hiltz et al., 2007; Shea et al., 2002; Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009), is also highly pertinent to this study. All of the study’s faculty participants singled out student-to-teacher interactions as important to both their
satisfaction and belief in their teaching effectiveness. In fact, the participants’ experiences in 
thinking through teacher-to-student interactions, as well as other new kinds of student 
interactions, in new online environments served in some cases as catalysts that encouraged them 
to rethink teaching.

Content-to-student interactions.

All of the instructors addressed issues surrounding the selection of content that they 
expected their students to interact with online. Several noted that preparing the content for the 
online classes “forced” them to think it through in advance in a more detailed way than they 
customarily did for face-to-face classes. The need to spell out and fix course content in a detailed 
way may be seen as a constraint for teachers accustomed to connecting with students via 
spontaneous, face-to-face interactions in ways that enhance learning. But most of the participants 
in this study did not regard this aspect of online teaching as a problematic constraint.

Nancy, for example, simply noted that she thought more deliberately about the 
organization and sequencing of the material “to make sure everything is there, whereas in the 
classroom you might improvise or you might right before you’re teaching think ‘Oh, I’m going 
to tell them about this’” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a). Preparing an online class, 
she said “forces you to do it all beforehand...to think in a different way about the ancillary 
material too” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Online learning theorists, including Dede (2005), Hartman (2007) and Foreman (2003, 
question the value of heavy reliance on traditional lectures for teaching. But this study offers an 
intriguing counterpoint to this point of view: It suggests that, in fact, lectures when carefully 
crafted, still have a role in education. As noted in Chapter Four, Thomas rethought one of his 
traditional lecture courses when developing the online version, and subsequently improved it 
without changing its basic format. After mulling over his students’ difficulty in grasping a 
particularly difficult concept, he decided to create a series of short videos explaining the concept 
for the online environment instead of covering it all at once in his usual lengthy lecture on the 
topic. When planning the videos in detail, he took pains to break down the difficult topic into 
easily grasped chunks that were as concise, clear and coherent as possible. He commented, 
“Because instead of recording a one-hour lecture where you’re all over the place, you’re forced 
to do it in sections, each one is now crisp, clean” (personal communication, March 24, 2011). Of 
special interest in light of this inquiry’s guiding question, his efforts were rewarded both in the
online and face-to-face environments: After discovering that students were repeatedly viewing the online videos in order to thoroughly master the concept, he began using them as supplementary content for his face-to-face classes as well.

Other instructors similarly rethought their students’ experiences with content as they designed and taught online courses, sometimes enlisting the aid of instructional designers and course developers to make improvements. Linda pointed out that course designers added a collapsible timeline to her online course and also suggested specific videos to complement its customary face-to-face content. Will noted that the instructional designer he worked with “had good ideas” about multimedia elements that would give students “a sense of the period you’re working with” (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

**Peer-to-peer interactions.**

These instructors used a Learning Management System (LMS) with an online discussion board that enabled students to post responses to teachers’ questions and to respond to each other’s posts. This permitted a level of interaction that did not take place in the classroom and reflects the kind of individualized, semi-informal learning within online communities that Siemens (2006) describes.

For example, Linda pointed out that students often correct each other when interacting online. Although she sometimes responded to students’ discussion posts, either to say something positive about a student’s post or to comment about something “that is egregiously off the mark,” she said that most of the time it was not necessary “...because between the other students and the facilitators, especially the other students, they'll zoom in on” such off-base posts (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

She found online discussions were actually “more successful” than trying to draw out students in her face-to-face courses, in part because students had time to think about their responses online and were encouraged to respond by peers.

[They] figure out, well, what can I say about this, think about it, write it and then say, ‘OK, I'll improve it.’ And then, also, on the discussion boards you have people responding to them in a way that gets them to respond back. Whereas I think that that's a very difficult thing to do in the classroom...You know, the fact that they can actually sit there and think, maybe as long as they want, really. But you don't get that opportunity in the classroom to sit there and think because you are going on to the next topic (personal communication March 29, 2011).
Will was able to expand his pedagogical repertoire by designing a way to use the discussion board to induce students to read and comment on one another’s work. In an effort to increase the amount of individualized attention that students received in an online course, he introduced a form of peer review to insure that the students had stimulating, course-related interactions with their fellow learners. Instigating this form of student-to-student interactions online prompted him to think of adding similar peer review sessions in his face-to-face classes.

Basically it was impossible for [online teaching] facilitators to read the papers, give the students feedback in the time available when it’s so compressed. So there has to be an alternative. And I thought, okay, this peer review thing is the best alternative if they're going to write drafts for them to have those draft count as anything. So that's why it got structured in the first place. But you know I believe in that process enough and I guess it seems to be borne out in enough cases that I think it’s also a valuable pedagogical tool to have more sets of eyes than just your facilitator read your paper, comment on it, give suggestions...When it does work I think the students do find it very rewarding (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

In addition to the structured discussion areas in the online courses themselves, the LMS featured a specific online discussion area called the “water cooler.” Intended as a virtual space where the students could “gather” online and chat, as they would around a physical water cooler, it was considered more or less off limits for faculty members. Nevertheless, Linda, as well as a few of the other faculty members, said that she sometimes read it because it gave her insight into the students’ learning that she would not get in a classroom setting. In particular, it resulted in her learning about one student’s wrenching plight, and making allowances for it, in a way that would never have occurred without her ability to monitor her students’ online interactions.

The very first time I taught that online course I had a young woman who was stationed in Iraq. And she, we didn't hear from her for about 10 days and then she e-mailed and said that the barrack had been blown up. The way she put it was the computers were blown up too. So she couldn't pass in this paper and I said well that's really a good excuse. And then it turns out on the water cooler, which is where they discuss, someone else found out that several of her colleagues had died and I just...And then it got to be, OK, a perfectly reasonable excuse to pass in Chinese history paper 10 days late (personal communication, March 29, 2011).

Not surprisingly, this experience reinforced her view that good teaching includes flexibility in dealings with students. She put special emphasis on creating an online course that was described as “forgiving” by her students, an ambience she already attempted to establish in her face-to-face courses. “I'm not a very rigid person and I don't call out people,” she said, using
the vivid example of the student in Iraq to show how her online experience had helped to reinforce her teaching persona in a way that she feels is helpful to students. She added that she had “gotten some flack from” other teachers for “not putting her foot down” by setting hard deadlines for assigned papers. Her response to this criticism underscores one of the major advantages of online teaching, its ability to more readily accommodate students’ varied paces and styles of learning than face-to-face lectures: “Not all students are straight and narrow and can pursue their goals...you have to have some flexibility” (personal communication, March 29, 2011). Both she and Nancy mentioned that they learned about their students’ desire for more information from monitoring discussion boards associated with their courses and thus were able to provide the students with additional resources related to their particular interests.

Such examples are among this phenomenological study’s potentially most valuable findings, for they address, via convincing, lived experience, what may be the most important single concern that faculty have when they enter the online arena, a concern that, as mentioned earlier, can potentially rob the experience of its potential to motivate pedagogical rethinking and improvement: that online teaching will necessarily make it harder for them to connect with students.

*Student-to-teacher interactions; teacher-to-facilitator-to-student interactions.*

As noted by Dede (2005, 2008), teaching online requires faculty members to take on new roles as learners and collaborators with instructional designers while developing courses. Most of this study’s participants taught their face-to-face courses individually and were accustomed to acting as their courses’ sole instructor. But their distance-learning department’s preferred protocol for online courses was based on a “facilitator model” in which a faculty member, designated “the instructor of record,” oversaw teaching assistants, called “facilitators,” who interacted with the students and graded papers. While some of the faculty members may have taught large classes with teaching assistants in traditional face-to-face classes, they generally regarded classroom lecturing as a teaching format that enables continual interactions with students whom they could see and hear.

The online facilitator model affected their accustomed teaching practice in several ways. Most importantly, it removed them from direct contact with students unless they made a special effort to interact with them. It also made them responsible for overseeing the facilitators and insuring that multiple sections ran smoothly, administrative chores that potentially reduced their
time and energy for interacting with students. Depending upon how they managed this new role, it could be frustrating, challenging or satisfying. For all it was provocative.

Nancy and Thomas easily adapted to the new role. Nancy embraced it by becoming a sort of facilitator of facilitators. She viewed the facilitators more as co-teachers than teaching assistants, saying “I feel like we’re all teaching the course in some way.” She acted as their coach, insuring her availability to address their questions, organizing conference calls with them before grades went out, and letting them know what she was looking for in good student writing.

I wanted them to be aware of exactly what I was looking for in the assignments. I also wanted them to have discretion. I mean they’re very good teachers themselves, but I wanted there to be kind of continuity to that (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Thomas also enjoyed the role of instructor of record because, as he saw it, the facilitator model actually allowed him to focus more on interacting with students.

I just finished an online course that had 80 students that are divided into groups of 15, so we had 6 sections with what we call facilitators that does the grading. And for me that’s, I think that’s really cool because the boring work is the grading, right, so they do all of that. I get to play in the discussions (personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Some instructors, however, did not find their new role satisfying. Although Will felt that it was important for him to respond to facilitators’ questions and help solve their teaching-related problems, he regarded this coaching role as a time-consuming chore that offered little gratification and hindered his ability to connect with students.

..with 100 students and like eight or nine TA’s you know there's little unanticipated things.. [that] became like huge things. That's really frustrating. It’s also, I found, much less rewarding when you're not getting to know the students because you’ve got all these TA's. You're basically just putting out fires and managing. I don't find that very gratifying (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

Will, who had served as both a facilitator and as an instructor of record, saw the former role as a more satisfying one. As a facilitator, he noted, he was able to be directly involved with the students and thus to have an readily visible effect on their learning.

I'm coming into contact with students more. I'm able to follow their online conversations rather than just peep in now and then. Very different things. Participate in those conversations because I'm following them. Feel like I'm getting to know them, feel like I'm interacting with them, feel like I'm making a difference (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).
In contrast, as an instructor of record, he saw himself more as a manager whose role forced him to remain at a distressing distance from students, sharply limiting the kind of personal interactions that both teachers and students find inspiring.

I don’t feel like I'm making any difference. I'm just trying to help other people make a difference and hope that they’re doing that (laughs). But I'm just trying to keep things moving, that's all (personal communication, April 27, 2011b).

Barbara found her role as instructor of record entirely negative. Indeed, she described what facilitators do—grading assignments, clarifying course content, conveying and reiterating course expectations to students, providing feedback on academic performance, and offering support when it is needed—as “exactly the kinds of things I love to do as a teacher.” In contrast, she derisively characterized her role as instructor of record as a kind of “customer service rep” or “education manager,” terms similar to those employed by Will. She added that as instructor of record, she was expected to reset timed quizzes, extend deadlines and listen to complaints about overly difficult quizzes. These were, in short, duties that included “very little of the good stuff, e.g. reading an exceptionally written essay, engaging in a lively discussion, and learning from my students” (personal communication, March 8, 2011).

Barbara also got little satisfaction responding to online students’ discussion posts.

On the rare occasions where I've read and commented [on discussion posts] in a positive way, I got nothing back, not even a "Thanks for the comment, Prof." As a result, I have concluded (maybe wrongly) that the effort it takes to really go in there and read all of those posts and find something thoughtful to say is a royal waste of my time. So, the class doesn't seem more alive. The silence is deadening (personal communication, April 14, 2011).

Regardless of how these faculty members responded to their new teaching roles, their online experiences motivated them to step back from their daily work routines and take account of the kind of interactions they regarded as the 

\textit{sine qua non} of good teaching, as well as major contributors to their professional satisfaction. And even though Will and Barbara felt that their roles as online educators lessened desired interactions with students, they found themselves grappling with basic issues related to education in a way that expanded their concepts of what it means to be a teacher. As Barbara commented,

Because large online classrooms are structured this way out of sheer necessity, I have had to re-frame the meaning of teaching. I guess a good on line teacher is someone who lays a strong foundation in terms of creating meaningful lectures, chooses interesting and
affordable textbooks, designs valid assessments that cater to a variety of learning styles, and has a presence in the course that is impactful and not smothering (personal communication, March 8, 2011).

But she went on to say that this role does not make her feel like a teacher.

If I create optimal conditions for learning and then hire committed, bright facilitators am I a teacher? I don't feel like one. Instead I feel like I am an "education manager" (March 8, 2011).

Barbara and Will apparently felt trapped in unsatisfying roles as online instructors. Barbara’s frustration was exacerbated by the perception that she could do nothing to alter her university’s online teaching format because, in her view, they were considered lucrative “cash cows” by the institution’s top administrators and thus were “not to be questioned.” This makes me dislike [online teaching] even more” (personal communication, March 22, 2011).

Barbara’s and Will’s experiences underscore the point, discussed in more detail in the section on implications for practice, below, that flexibility in online course design is necessary to allow for true participation by the faculty members.

A common thread among participants in this study who had positive online experiences was the perception that they could successfully translate key aspects of their face-to-face teaching strategies to the new educational medium. Nancy, for example, collaborated with a colleague to work out an online version of one of her standard face-to-face lessons in which she carried out a close analysis of a poem. Among other things, translating her classroom performance to an online context afforded her a new detailed perspective on one of her routine teaching practices, putting her in a position to analyze her own analytic technique.

I mean I analyze the poem myself but I would not have known how to put online, circle certain points and explain them. Explain something to them. But that's the kind of thing I would do in the classroom (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).

Olivia described how moving back and forth between the online and face-to-face formats helped enhance her creativity as an educator, a phenomenon that Russell & McCarron (2009) noted is one of the special pluses of teaching in two environments.

When I'm designing online I'll take what I've already done on campus, and then in thinking about what I'd want to see, experience, I'll change that and then I'll say, ‘Wow that works really great online, let me bring it back to the classroom’ (personal communication, March 28, 2011).
For several of this study’s participants, translating face-to-face teaching practices into the online environment offered an opportunity to “amplify,” as Siemens (2006) put it, some their most effective face-to-face teaching techniques. Linda emphasized, for example, that she was able to learn a great deal about her students’ interests via online discussions, which in turn made it possible for her to provide them with additional material relevant to those interests. Further, all of the participants took note of creative aids to learning that had been incorporated into their online courses, such as images, videos, and interactive timelines.

The process of translating face-to-face courses into online formats also helped make several faculty participants more aware of their students’ desire for clarity when it comes to teachers’ expectations and goals in courses. Taking up this issue, Ally (2004) and Mayes (2006) stress that teachers should provide students with detailed information on the learning outcomes that are expected of them. While competent teachers routinely do this, at least to some extent, many traditional face-to-face courses are often not completely mapped out in a highly detailed way in advance. This means that students in the classes may be unable to get a fine-grained view of the ground they’re supposed to cover in the courses and where they are expected to go in the classes. For some, this lack of detailed roadmaps for courses can seem a source of frustrating vagueness, and can even result in unpleasant surprises. As suggested by certain experiences of this study’s participants, the process of developing online courses, by its very nature, can help mitigate the problem.

Will, for example, found himself becoming more attuned to this issue when planning an online course. As he acknowledged, “I think I've come to sympathize with [students’ need for specificity] more and to be able to meet that need better as a result of having to kind of think things through more explicitly for the online course” (personal communication, April 27, 2011 b). He added that this experience “has probably helped me be a better teacher.”

Nancy also noted that designing an online course prompted her to focus on students’ need for transparency in a way that she hadn’t in face-to-face teaching.

I think that one thing that [planning the course] helped me to be more aware of, which I knew in the back of my mind, this desire for students to know what the plan is... the course, just the specifics of it, you know, the fact that it had to be all online in a certain time, and the fact that I had to have it all planned out this way, I think I was made more aware of making transparent to students where we were going in the course (personal communication, April 27, 2011 a).
**Interacting via blogs.**

A special point of interest in this study was the occasional use of blogs by two of the faculty participants, which effectively enabled their conversations with the study’s author to continue after interviews were completed (All of the faculty members were invited to keep blogs, but only two did so). Van Manen notes that diaries, journals and logs can be used as sources of lived experience in phenomenological research, and they may “help a person to reflect on significant aspects of his or her past and present life.” Such aids to analytic contemplation “may contribute to the learning process as people are encouraged to reflect on their learning experiences, permitting them to discover relationships they might not otherwise see” (Van Manen 1990, p. 73). Blogs can clearly serve this purpose too, and they represent a particularly fitting way to motivate such reflections in a study concerning the effects of expanding online interactions.

Will wrote three thoughtful blog entries. All were contemplative explorations of his teaching in relation to topics discussed during the prior interview. His first entry, at this researcher’s request, elaborated on how one of his most memorable teachers had influenced him. This teacher, he wrote, “does a better job of ‘joining the dots’ than anyone else I know, of revealing the connections between the classroom, academia, society, politics, culture and spirituality” (personal communication, April 28, 2011). This is something Will himself says tries to achieve as a teacher both in face-to-face and online courses.

Another of Will’s thoughtful blog posts, prompted by his receiving an iPad from his college’s “tech guy,” described his ambivalence about the new technology. He wrote that he had assumed his school provided the iPad “at least in part, to help us understand how students today are reading and working, and perhaps even stay a step ahead of some of them!” After downloading an application that he described as “compelling and beautiful,” a sort of interactive book exhibit concerning the 1939 New York World's Fair, he mused that “I couldn't help thinking about the contrast between this shiny toy (so to speak) and the very traditional texts I'll be asking students to read in my course, at least in the first few weeks.” Continuing this line of thought, he reflected that while not opposed to multimedia, he felt that for his course, “maybe in the first few months the focus ought to be on texts that really make demands on the attention spans of students, and ask them to trace complicated arguments that are not leavened with
images and buttons...It's the ability to shut out distractions and follow a single thread that characterizes this kind of reading” (personal communication, June 3, 2011).

Although not specifically about an online course, this post highlights the fact that teachers increasingly find themselves facing issues related to new online technologies even when not developing and teaching online courses. In light of this point it is arguable that studies on online teaching, including this one, have broader implications for educational practice than indicated by their ostensible topic areas. As Will’s post showed, contending with issues posed by new technology in traditional face-to-face courses can prompt faculty to think about how educational practices are changing, as well as how teachers must take account of these changes in order to successfully engage youngsters who have grown up in a technology-imbued world. Indeed, it seems likely that many teachers who have yet to develop online courses, and who may never do so, are beginning to rethink what it means to be a good teacher along the lines investigated in this study.

Barbara wrote six primary posts and eight supplementary comments in her blog. Her blog became, in some ways, a collaborative reflection with this researcher as she wrote about her evolving views of online teaching. In one blog post, which she titled “Blogging as an Exercise in DeFogging,” Barbara wrote, “The blogging process, and I am hesitant to admit this, is making me realize that I experience a lot of dislike, resentment, and dissatisfaction toward online teaching. I think I hate it” (personal communication, March 22, 2011).

With the exception of two topics suggested by the researcher—one about good teachers who influenced her and one about her experience as an online student—Barbara chose her own topics. She blogged about instructional designers; facilitators; what she termed the loss of academic freedom, privacy and control; how blogging helped her think about teaching online; incivility from students; and what her experience as an online student had taught her. She was quite frank about specific things she disliked about online teaching in her blog posts. Barbara’s candor was particularly valuable to this researcher, given that her negative experiences with online teaching helped to illuminate what could become stumbling blocks to teachers’ productive rethinking of pedagogy as they develop expertise with the new technology. In one post, for example, she noted, “I am frustrated that I have had to figure much of this out on my own, after many trial runs.” Her comment underscores the critical need for technical support staff to closely
monitor the progress of beginning online teachers in order to prevent their early cognitive
dissonance as learners from spiraling into permanent frustration.

In another intriguing post, after commenting that she had earlier been an online student
herself, she thoughtfully considered a disparity between students’ and teachers’ basic goals that
her online-teaching experience had brought to her attention:

Maybe students and teachers see education differently. Maybe students are purely goal-
oriented in terms of wanting to finish courses as soon as they can, with as little effort as
possible, and the higher the grade the better.

And maybe this teacher wants validation, through connection, that her students are
learning because of what she does as a teacher—an interesting assignment that inspires
and motivates, a "perfect example" that illuminates a complex concept, a viewpoint or
story that captures an important idea. There is a look on students' faces that tells teachers
when they understand something or not; or are interested in what you have to say or not. I
kinda like that look (personal communication, June 16, 2011).

As noted earlier, Barbara tended to elaborate on her dislike of online teaching by
imagining what to her would be a satisfying online experience. In one of her blogs, this tack led
to an important insight: The large size of online classes was a more important contributor to her
negative reaction to online teaching than their format was. “I truly believe that if my on line
courses had fewer students (ideally 15) the teaching experience would be far more positive
for me” (June 16, 2011). In a final email, she concluded with a statement that suggested her
earlier starkly negative reaction to online teaching was evolving toward a more nuanced view in
which she conceded that the most important aspects of good face-to-face teaching can indeed be
translated into the online environment.

Good Teaching is good teaching. I say this because a committed teacher will find ways to
engage with students virtually and otherwise. A good teacher can be creative in both
classrooms—virtual and face-to-face. An enthusiastic teacher can communicate her
enthusiasm just by the way she walks into a classroom or “walks” into an on line
classroom. I think it comes down to preparation, command of the content, creativity, and
presence. These things are evident to students no matter where they sit (personal
communication, June 29, 2011).

This apparent evolution of Barbara’s view underscores one of the major advantages of
phenomenological research: By encouraging study participants to reflect on their own lived
experiences, it can serve as a catalyst to deepening their insights about themselves and their
experiences. Consistent with this idea, Shareski (2010), a Canadian teacher, recommends that faculty keep blogs in which they reflect on teaching, and also share their blogs with fellow teacher bloggers, a practice that could encourage the social aspect of learning highlighted by Vygotsky and others. This practice may be of special value to teachers, like Barbara, who are not participating in other kinds of learning communities.

The ability to witness and, to some extent, record ongoing reflections by study participants about their lived experiences can be highly revealing to phenomenological researchers in their efforts to extract the most salient aspects, or essences, of the experiences. Thus, one of the significant messages of this study is a methodological insight: The interactive nature of blogs makes them a uniquely useful new tool for eliciting and capturing such ongoing reflections. It almost seems as if blogs were invented, in part, to facilitate phenomenological research.

Conclusion

Practitioner and scholarly significance.

This study was designed to shed light on both scholarly and practical issues. The study’s practical goal was to identify programmatic strategies or institutional structures that facilitate faculty members’ rethinking of what it means to teach well as they design and teach online courses. Such knowledge could help institutions encourage more faculty to teach online courses by, among other things, adding weight to the idea that teaching online can lead to enhanced classroom teaching. This research could also help inform policy decisions related to online course development.

As a scholarly investigation, this study focused on details of the cognitive process faculty undergo as they enter the new world of online learning, and as such it represents a modest addition to the neo-Vygotskian literature concerning catalysts to learning. A key overarching finding of this study is that there are indeed striking parallels between the cognitive processes illuminated by developmental learning theorists and those teachers undergo as learners in the sometimes formidable, rapidly changing world of online education. It follows that many insights by thinkers such as Vygotsky, though drawn from their examination of learning in early life, can be fruitfully applied to the context of developing online courses. In particular, catalysts to learning identified by learning theorists represent factors that encourage faculty to think deeply
about teaching, to take the risks necessary to change their pedagogical approaches, and to integrate similar changes into their face-to-face courses as they update their pedagogical repertoires to include online teaching skills. These catalysts, which have to do with the social context in which the course design and development occurs, provide important, possibly essential, support for fruitful re-examination of longstanding professional practices in the context of online-course development.

Concepts derived from the second theoretical perspective, which was drawn from the work online learning theorists including Dede, Ally, Mayes, Seimens, and Swann, connected to the ideas in the findings concerning the ways new technologies and learning environments impact how people interact, and the importance of reflection for learning and change. Also of importance were these theorists’ and practitioners’ research on what contributes to faculty satisfaction in online teaching, and what they perceive as barriers.

Taken together these two theoretical bodies of thought can be seen as a framework for understanding how the elements inherent in designing and teaching online courses can become catalysts when appropriate levels of challenge and support are provided. Thus, when faculty work within new learning environments in which they encounter new relationships, new course development processes and new forms of interactions, they may experience cognitive dissonance, which may prompt them to reflect on their views of effective pedagogy. This can encourage them to change (or confirm or amplify) their teaching practices. Instructional designers, academic department chairs, and college deans can shape these elements into catalysts by providing a balance between challenge and appropriate support as outlined below.

**Implications for practice.**

It is important to keep in mind that phenomenological research is primarily useful to help understand the lived experience of a specific group of individuals, and thus it does not directly lend itself to making prescriptive utterances. Still, the deep understanding of past experiences that it affords can give valuable hints about factors that can shape similar future experiences in desired ways. This investigation of the experiences of faculty new to the world of online teaching has brought to light a number of such factors, which are closely tied to the catalysts mentioned above. These factors suggest the kind of things that instructional designers, distance learning department directors, and academic department chairs can do to make the most of the catalysts for learning that are inherent in the process of developing and teaching online courses.
New roles and relationships.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, designing and teaching online courses tends to make faculty more aware of their fundamental goals as educators and the rewards they get from teaching. But different faculty members respond differently to this experience. Some re-examine their views about good teaching with a view toward becoming better educators as they master online-teaching skills; others feel discouraged and powerless because they conclude that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to completely fulfill their basic teaching goals, and experience their customary rewards as teachers, in the online realm. This study’s findings suggest that the instructional designers who work with faculty to develop online courses play crucial roles in determining which of these two scenarios unfold throughout the online course design and development process.

Instructional designers would do well to begin their collaborations with faculty by asking them about their views of good teaching, the qualities of good teachers, their perceived teaching personas, and what they value about teaching. Besides encouraging fertile self-reflection by the teachers, such queries can provide the designers with information they need to form optimally productive working relationships with the faculty members—true partnerships based on shared knowledge about basic goals and values. It is probably no coincidence that Barbara, the participant in this study who had the most negative experience with online teaching, was the only faculty member who did not describe a positive relationship with an instructional designer or course developer. In fact, she noted in one blog post that she was frustrated at how much she had been required to figure out on her own.

This research also underscores the value of faculty’s ongoing, supportive, and challenging relationships with their colleagues. Facilitating faculty members’ interactions with veteran online teachers, who may serve as trusted experts on the value of new technology, can help this process unfold smoothly. Additionally, distance-learning departments, teaching centers and academic departments should consider working together to establish faculty learning communities focused on online teaching and learning (Cox & Richlin, 2004; Gottesman, 2000; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Valencia & Killion, 1988; Vaughan & R. Garrison, 2006). Participating in such learning communities could reduce the isolation faculty members who are teaching online the first time may experience by providing an avenue for talking with colleagues about challenges and frustrations. Within learning communities, faculty can see themselves as learners,
collaborators and even mentors. The absence of such mentoring relationships with colleagues can be a lost opportunity for getting faculty to think and talk about teaching. Barbara, whose experience with online teaching was almost wholly negative, indicated that she did not have other faculty colleagues to consult about online teaching.

**New course design process.**

To best assist faculty, instructional designers should seek to understand the context in which the instructors have come to online teaching. Were they invited or required to teach online? Are there certain aspects of their disciplinary cultures that could complicate, or facilitate, their development of online courses? Getting answers to these questions can help instructional designers shape the process of designing an online course so that it becomes an engaging opportunity for faculty to think about their learning goals for students and how they will achieve them through the selection and sequencing of online content, as well as the way they set up various online interactions.

Designing a course provides time devoted to learning new tasks, solving problems, designing interactions, and finding new ways to organize content. Some faculty members gladly embrace all this novelty and challenge; others, however, may find it overwhelming and frustrating. Thus, instructional designers and other course development staff should take pains to insure that support is made available to faculty before the challenges lead to disenchantment with online teaching, robbing it of its potential to spur better pedagogy. However they should balance this support with encouraging faculty to see challenges as puzzles whose solutions can lead to revelations about teaching and learning, as Thomas did when he formulated complicated concepts into short videos for his students.

Instructional designers and other technical support staff should also emphasize to faculty how new technology can facilitate their learning goals for students. This is often a multistep process that involves supporting faculty as they try out new technology and come to recognize its value only after they have gained some facility applying it.

**The new learning environment.**

All of the new elements faculty encounter as part of their introduction to online teaching—new technology and interfaces, the requirement that they conform to unfamiliar teaching models, the need to determine course content in advance, the expectations of their students that they will always be available—can help motivate them to reconsider their long-held
assumptions about teaching. Conversely, dealing with these novelties can be an exercise in frustration. Instructional designers can help faculty navigate this new environment so its constraints and challenges become catalysts, as occurred with Thomas when he refashioned his lectures into short pithy videos, and with Will when the compressed course timeframe prompted him to form peer review sessions for his writing students.

As noted earlier, the most successful relationships between instructional designers and faculty appear to be those in which the two exchange places as MKO and learner, each successfully learning from the other. Instructional designers who are engaged as learners as well as teachers can assist faculty in reconsidering how they present learning materials.

*New forms of interaction.*

More-satisfied teachers consistently report a higher degree of student-to-instructor interaction than less-satisfied ones, despite heavier workloads (Fredericksen et al., 2000; Hartman & Truman-Davis, 2001; Hiltz et al., 2007; Shea et al., 2002; Wasilik & Bolliger, 2009). Thus, helping new online teachers formulate courses that foster such interactions as well as their students interactions with their peers, with content and with the course interface, may help motivate the instructors to become fully engaged in online teaching, which is likely to result in better courses for students.

Instructional designers can also help faculty consider how to make the best of specific course structures used in online learning, such as, “the facilitator model,” in which teaching assistants interact closely with students, leaving the instructors as “managers” of the learning experience. This study suggests that this model can diminish desired interactions between teachers and students. But the study also suggests there are ways to circumvent or mitigate this shortcoming. Instructional designers, for example, can advise faculty on how some lead instructors, or “instructors of record,” have managed to stay involved with students while teaching facilitator-model courses, for instance, by regularly participating in online discussions with students, as Thomas and Linda did, or by taking on the role of facilitator in addition to that of instructor of record, as Will did, or even by taking a wholly new role, that of facilitator of facilitator, as Nancy did.

In sum, this research suggests that online learning units should put in place a structure for regular, ongoing communication among all of the members of a course design team, including faculty members, instructional designers and course developers. This will help insure that each member of the team
understands the processes, roles and responsibilities involved in the development of online courses. Regular communication will also insure that each participant understands the perspectives of the others, that faculty are well-supported and that safeguards are in place in case of misunderstandings.

Additionally, instructional designers and academic department chairs should seek ways to encourage faculty members to reflect on their teaching throughout the online course design and teaching process. As noted earlier, this can be achieved within faculty learning communities, or by encouraging faculty to keep blogs, ideally with other faculty members, in which they reflect on what they are learning as they develop online courses. Even when such reflections do not lead to changes in teaching practices, they can help affirm good educational practices, as well as make faculty more aware of what works best as basic teaching strategies.

**Further research.**

This study raises a number of questions for further research. It was conducted from a phenomenological perspective, focusing on faculty members’ lived experience with the phenomenon of interest. Other studies could investigate this question from different perspectives. For example, a program review could take advantage of a variety of data sources to allow a fuller look at how the views of a particular group of faculty within a department might change through the online course design and development process.

Additional practical applications could be explored, such as how to integrate specific dialogic techniques into faculty development to allow instructional designers to listen deeply to faculty members’ aspirations for achieving outstanding pedagogy. A quantitative study could be carried out, using the findings—the specific catalysts identified in this research—as a basis for developing surveys that could be administered to a large number of faculty members.

As highlighted by the study’s participants, each academic discipline has its own culture and teaching practices, and some are more easily translated to the online design framework than others. For Linda, the translation of her lecture-based history course into an online setting was comparatively easy. In fact, the online format’s ability to add audio and video aids offered an opportunity for her to be more creative than she could be in the classroom. For Will and Nancy, translating a highly interactive English course to online format was much more challenging, and required them to reconsider their pedagogical approach. These participants’ varied experiences raise two questions: How can a specific discipline’s teaching culture be best accommodated in
online-course design? And further, can interdisciplinary collaborations among faculty engaged in online teaching elicit shared strategies that work well across disciplines?

Of particular interest in this research study was the potential that blogs hold for phenomenological research. More work is needed on optimal contexts and formats for valuable, ethically sound use of blogs in research. The study of blogs to encourage faculty to think and write about their teaching practices in ways that contribute to enhanced pedagogy, including instructors engaged in both online and face-to-face teaching, may be a particularly fertile area for future investigations. For example, a phenomenological or case study could be carried out by enlisting a group of faculty members who are engaged in a new teaching project (such as the use of a new technology) to keep blogs about their experiences. Faculty would be encouraged to post regularly and read and comment on one another’s posts. The researcher would monitor the blogs, watching the conversations unfold. At the end of a specified period, the teacher bloggers in this “virtual” learning community could be asked a series of questions about how the process of blogging with their fellow instructors had affected their experience with the new technology, their relationships with colleagues, and their teaching. Such a study could shed light on the use of blogs in a learning community to foster improved teaching.

Finally, the message that emerged most prominently from this study’s scrutiny of the lived experiences of faculty members is that it is critical to find ways to enable veteran educators, as they enter the world of online teaching, to incorporate what they find most compelling about teaching, to feel that they are part of the learning process, and to see students learn. It should be noted, however, that teaching students, not maximizing their instructors’ professional satisfaction, is the real goal of education. Indeed, these two agendas are not always in perfect alignment. But when they are, the learning process is most likely to become a highly rewarding life experience. Thus, the architects of online education should never stop asking themselves two major questions: How can we most effectively incorporate the enthusiasm, humor and passion for teaching that faculty members who love to teach so memorably employ to engage students? What can we do to insure that faculty and student needs are in harmony as new technologies continue to change education?

This is by no means an exhaustive list. These questions and others related to these topics deserve further study.
Concluding statement.

This research highlights the importance of prompting faculty members to take stock of their long-held views on what it means to be a good teacher and thus potentially to enhance their teaching strategies in both online and face-to-face courses. As more students take courses online and more faculty members are called upon to teach such courses, institutions of higher education have an opportunity to improve both by tapping into teachers’ passion for teaching and making the most of catalysts that can encourage them to reflect on their teaching practices.
References


zones of proximal development (ZPDs): enabling collaborative learning on-site and online. *Journal of Information Systems, 17*(1), 107-134.


Hartman, J., & Truman-Davis, B. (2001). Factors relating to the satisfaction of faculty teaching
online courses at the University of Central Florida. In *Learning effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, cost effectiveness* (Vol. 2). Needham, MA: Sloan-C.


McQuiggan, C. (2007). The role of faculty development in online teaching’s potential to question teaching beliefs and assumptions. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 10*(3).


Van Manen, Max (1990), Albany, NY, SUNY Publications.


Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Dear Faculty Member,

I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research project during the spring of 2011. The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of faculty members who are developing and teaching online courses. I am particularly interested in understanding how this experience affects faculty members’ views on what it means to teach well.

I would like to speak to university faculty members who have taught online and face-to-face courses to undergraduate or graduate students. Ideally, I would like to interview faculty members who have taught some face-to-face courses to undergraduates.

My investigation will consist of a phenomenological research study in which I conduct one or two face-to-face interviews of no more than 60 minutes each, followed up with some reflection via blogs, email, phone or Skype. If participants choose to create a blog, I will offer assistance, as necessary, in setting up the blog via Blogger.com. I anticipate that the time commitment for participants will be from two to four hours over the course of three or four months. At the conclusion of the study, I would be happy to share my results with participants; However, participants will not be identified by name in any reports.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with taking part in this study. There will be no direct benefit to faculty members for taking part in the study. However, the creation of detailed accounts of their experiences related to development of online courses may help participants develop useful insights on teaching, and also to enhance their technical facility related to online offerings.

Please contact Alicia Russell (a.russell@neu.edu) (617) 373-4584 if you would like to hear more about the research. Alicia Russell is a doctoral student at Northeastern University.
Appendix B: Informed Consent

Northeastern University, Department of Education, College of Professional Studies
Investigator Name: Alan Stockeoff, Alicia Russell
Title of Project: Molding the Old and the New to Revitalize College Teaching

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be in this study because you are a faculty member who has designed and taught online and face-to-face courses.

Why is this research study being done?
This study is being done because the creation of detailed accounts of faculty members’ experiences related to development of online courses may help them develop useful insights on teaching, and also to enhance their technical facility related to online offerings. It could help inform policy decisions related to online course development as well as those aimed at improving teaching.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to participate in this study, we will ask you to take part in one or two face-to-face interviews of no more than 60 minutes each, followed up with reflections and clarifying dialog via email, Skype, phone, or a Blog. Follow-up interviews will be an opportunity for you to expand on specific questions or ideas addressed in the initial interview. Interviews will be audio taped for transcription and analysis purposes only.

If you elect to keep a blog, we will assist you in creating the blog on Blogger.com. Blogger.com is an online “free weblog publishing tool from Google, for sharing text, photos and video.” After creating an account, you can determine who can read the blog. Blogs posts usually appear in reverse chronological order. They can be short or long, depending upon your interest. We will provide specific questions for you to respond to in your blog after the initial interview and after the follow up interview, but you may also write about other topics if you wish. We will make use of only those sections that are relevant to our research by copying them and noting them as “blog transcripts.”

During the research only you and the researchers will have access to the blog. The researchers may post comments to your blog asking for further clarification on your posts. At the conclusion of the study you may decide to discontinue (or delete) the blog or continue it and make it available to whomsoever you wish.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
You will be interviewed at your university, or at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will take about one hour. Two to three weeks later we will send email with follow up questions that will take 20–30 minutes to complete. Alternatively, we can schedule a phone call, video phone call via Skype or assist you with developing an online journal (Blog). These modes of communication would take from 20 minutes to two hours to complete. We anticipate that the total time commitment for participants will be from two to three hours. If you choose to write a blog, you may need to spend additional time, depending upon how much you write.
Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
The researchers do not anticipate any risks to you to participating in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There will be no direct benefit to faculty for taking part in the study. However, the creation of detailed accounts of your experiences related to development of online courses may help you develop useful insights on teaching, and also to enhance your technical facility related to online offerings.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way. Audio recordings of interviews will be destroyed following the research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit during the research study, you will not lose any rights benefits or services that you would otherwise have at your university.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have questions, contact Alicia Russell (a.russell@ness.edu) or (617)-373-4584. You may also contact the principal investigator who is overseeing the research, Dr. Alan Stokopf, at (a.stokopf@ness.edu) or (617)-373-3107.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Projection (617) 373-4588, email: n.regina@ness.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
No.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
No.

I agree to take part in this research.

Signature of person agreeing to take part

Date

Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent

Date

Printed name of person above
Appendix C: IRB Approval
Dear Faculty Member,

I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research project during the spring of 2011. The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of faculty members who are developing and teaching online courses. I am particularly interested in understanding how this experience affects faculty members' views on what it means to teach well.

I would like to speak to university faculty members who have taught online and face-to-face courses to undergraduate or graduate students. Ideally, I would like to interview faculty members who have taught some face-to-face courses to undergraduates.

My investigation will consist of a phenomenological research study in which I conduct one or two face-to-face interviews of no more than 60 minutes each, followed up with some reflection via blogs, email, phone or Skype. If participants choose to create a blog, I will offer assistance, as necessary, in setting up the blog via Blogger.com. I anticipate that the time commitment for participants will be from two to four hours over the course of three or four months. At the conclusion of the study, I would be happy to share my results with participants; However, participants will not be identified by name in any reports.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with taking part in this study. There will be no direct benefit to faculty members for taking part in the study. However, the creation of detailed accounts of their experiences related to development of online courses may help participants develop useful insights on teaching, and also to enhance their technical facility related to online offerings.

Please contact Alicia Russell (a.russell@ecn.edu) (617) 373-4584 if you would like to hear more about the research. Alicia Russell is a doctoral student at Northeastern University.
Appendix – D: Interview Protocol

**Interview Protocol:** Change in instructors’ view of “good teaching” prompted by designing and teaching online courses

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

**Position of interviewee:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>√</th>
<th>Primary Questions per Category</th>
<th>Probing/follow up Questions</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does it mean to you to teach well?</td>
<td>What is it like to teach well? Can you tell me about times you have felt that you were teaching well? Can you also tell me about a time when your teaching didn’t go as well as you hoped? What aspects of your overall teaching philosophy are most pertinent to your views on good teaching? What do you like about teaching? What made you choose it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has preparing and teaching an online class affected your views about what it means to teach well?</td>
<td>Nature of f2f classes? Content? Student activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F course design?</td>
<td>Nature of f2f classes? Content? Student activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F strategies?</td>
<td>Delivery?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F student engagement?</td>
<td>Fostering? Facilitating interaction? Assessment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F2F relationships with students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your F2F teaching “persona”?</td>
<td>Think for a moment about an example that embodies that.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial reactions to Online instruction?</td>
<td>When you were first told? When you first embarked on process?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your experience developing OL</td>
<td>Surprises? Concerns?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategies are new to you?</td>
<td>What strategies seem to overlap the two formats?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategies seem to engage students online?</td>
<td>Story?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your online teaching “persona”?</td>
<td>Example?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your relationships with your students in the online environment?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Transfer: Online⇔Face-to-Face</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What concepts and strategies might transfer from your experience designing online courses to the process of developing F2F course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give another faculty member who is new to online design and course development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find that your views of what it means to teach well changed after teaching online?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Follow-up Invitation e-mail to participants March – June 2011

From: director of distance learning department  
Sent: January 21, 2011  
To:  
Subject: Invitation to participate in doctoral research study about online teaching

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Attached is an invitation to participate in a research study regarding online teaching being conducted by a colleague who is currently a doctoral student at Northeastern. She is currently looking for faculty members who have taught both online (any level) and in the classroom at the undergraduate level.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Alicia Russell (a.russell@neu.edu) (617) 373-4584. Alicia has promised to share her findings with the participants and with us as well.

Thanks for your interest.
Best Regards,

[Director of Distance Learning]  
Any University Northeast

From: Russell, Alicia [mailto:a.russell@neu.edu]  
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2011  
To:  
Subject: Re: study

Dear ____________,

[Your colleague ____________ ] suggested that I contact you to see if you would be able to participate in my research study on how teaching online affects faculty views of good teaching. Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour interview and some follow-up questions? I interviewed [your colleague ____________ ] two weeks ago. She was kind enough to agree to take part in my study after receiving email from [the director of the distance learning department], who sent my invitation to “AUN” faculty who teach online and face-to-face. The specifics are described below in [the director’s] email and my attached invitation. I realize that this is a very busy time of year, but perhaps you could spare an hour or two sometime between now and May 13. I would come to your office at a time that is convenient for you.

Thanks for considering this.
Regards,
Alicia

From: Russell, Alicia [mailto:a.russell@neu.edu]  
Sent: March 4, 2011
To: 
Subject: Re: study

Dear ____________,
Thank you again for agreeing to take part in my research study.
My research protocol has been approved, and I am eager to talk with you.
I would like to arrange a time for us to meet for a one-hour interview at a time and place that is convenient for you, and also talk about whether you would like to keep a blog (this is completely optional).

Would you like to send me times that are good for you to meet, ideally sometime within the next two or three weeks? 

I have attached again the invitation to participate (very slightly revised) that [the director of distance learning] included in her earlier email as a brief reminder of my research goals.

I look forward to speaking with you soon!
Regards,
Alicia

From: Russell, Alicia [mailto:a.russell@neu.edu]
Sent: March 8, 2011
To:
Subject: Re: study

Dear ____________,

Thank you for your time today. I appreciated hearing about your teaching experiences, and am looking forward to our ongoing conversation. I am in the process of transcribing our interview, and will follow up with some questions soon.

Thanks also for your willingness to try out a blog. I have signed up as a “follower,” and will read your posts shortly after you make them.

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday.

Regards,
Alicia
Hello __________________,

Sorry not to have been in touch for so long. I completed all of the interviews and have written lots of comments as I begin organizing and analyzing my data. I plan to send you the transcript of our conversation later this week, along with some thoughts. I hope you’ll have time to check it over and let me know what you think.

I’ve enjoyed reading your blog posts.

Here’s another question for you if you have a moment to respond. You can either send me an email or post this to your blog.

You seem to have had a challenging, but positive experience as an online student. You said you never worked harder. And yet you’ve come to realize how much you dislike teaching online. Can you talk about that? Here’s the quote in which you talk about that experience.

I want to tell you that I think [the course I took online] was one of the most challenging courses I've ever taken in my academic career in the sense that you cannot be a fly on the wall. You have to engage, you have to be active you have to be present and, and I was surprised. I like, I believe so many other people think that when they take an online course it's going to be easier. My experience is it was more difficult than anything I've ever taken on campus because with an on-campus course you could choose show up or not or you could show up and sit in the back of the classroom with your arms folded and not say two words and when I posted my very, very first discussion in my online course, I posted maybe a short paragraph and promptly heard back from my professor who said “________ you're going to have to do better than that . We want, I'm looking for some substance here.” And that was a real eye opening experience. And then every discussion after that I set the bar for everybody else in the class. (laughs) So it was it was difficult in terms of really having to be present and engaged and not sitting back and being passive. I had to be an active learner and participant.

June 10, 2011

Hi __________________

As promised, I’m sending along the transcript of our conversation and a document that includes many verbatim excerpts along with my summaries/interpretations of the quotes. This is still an early stage of my analysis. I am beginning to organize your statements into themes associated with my research question.
If you have the time, please check over the transcript to see if there’s anything that you would like me to delete (this is all confidential, of course) and also take a look at the document listing the excerpts and my summaries/interpretations. Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions. You’ll see that on page 8 of the profile document, I have listed excerpts from the transcript related to my research question, and my interpretation.

Here’s my research question again. Please let me know if you have any additional thoughts:

**How and to what extent can designing and teaching an online course prompt faculty members to rethink what it means to teach well?**

I’ll be in touch again soon. Thanks again for all of your thoughtful comments on this topic!